“Only takes one tree to make 1,000 matches
Only takes one match to burn a thousand trees”
- ‘A Thousand Trees’ by the Stereophonics

Chameleon Project Tmi

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Thinking of these two years of Ovi magazine, it is like a great adventure of the mind and it might sound like a cliché, but Ovi magazine is like a kid for me and its growth was just like a kid growing.

One of the first meetings with Asa and John talking about Ovi magazine was in my house with my daughter being only a few days old. Actually, I have a photo from that day with John looking shocked and scared carrying a baby so young.

Looking back over these two years there have been many moments when we were thrilled with our creation, there were moments when we were angry with the problems and there were other moments which I can laugh at now, but back then I was a nervous wreck.

One of the hilarious moments worth mentioning happened during these days exactly two years ago. After going to the provider with a CD with our new site and all the material, we found out that there is a technical problem that needed correcting otherwise nobody would be able to see the first issue.

Asa and I stood lost in front of the computer wondering what to do it in…two seconds! The man said, “Very seriously he turns to Asa and I when the assistant exclaims, “I got it!”

In addition, we had to deal with somebody who tried to steal the whole Ovi concept and we discovered, even though he thought he knows everything, that we had idiotic copycats like Jone Nikula and his laughable attempt to imitate the whole Ovi concept.

However, nothing can compare with the joys Ovi magazine has given us. It’s not only the joy of creation, it’s not only the joy of knowledge and the recognition, but it is the joy of getting to know people from all around the world, either from their writing or their comments and mails. Sometimes these small comments become a precious friendship like the one with Eva, a Finnish girl who lives in Ireland, or the much-appreciated company of Jan Sand and his endless adventures of the mind.

Most of all, it was the satisfaction of doing what we love most and we have put a lot of effort into it.

This is a funny thing, through these two years we have done a lot of things and added many new parts in Ovi, from political, social, environmental and cultural articles to cartoons, short stories, poetry and photography, yet still we often feel that we haven’t done as much as we wanted to and we still make new plans all the time by coming out with all sorts of ideas. This is further proof of how much we love what we are doing.

Our biggest improvement till now over these two years, with a lot of help from Tony Watts, was the ‘Daily Ovi magazine’ - a real test to our capabilities and will. Now in its fourth month, it has been connecting us with more friends across the globe.

We have plans for the future, big plans, but, after all, Ovi magazine was never something small; one new concept and an old one to improve, plus to be more active, Ovi project is a result of our beliefs and ideals for which we stand, such as fighting racism, prejudice, domestic violence, environmental destruction, war and more. The other new concept…well, you will know soon.

I can’t help comparing my daughter with Ovi magazine, since they both started seeing the world and still they walk around full of questions for the unknown. They both always need to hold our hand, they both learned to talk and be heard and the adventure has only just started.

Two candles: Make a wish!

By The Ovi Team

Two years old; can you believe it! Thanos and Asa certainly can’t, which is why they have produced this birthday issue PDF.

Contained within these pages are all the covers and all the cover stories from our seventeen monthly issues of the Ovi magazine beginning back in December 2004. This PDF is a stroll down memory lane, glimpses of the past, slices of nostalgia, well you get the picture.

Ovi magazine has also become known for its outrageous and innovative front covers, which is why for our second birthday issue we are honored to have one Miss Sarah Beetson design something out of the ordinary.

Sarah is an English fashion-based illustrator who lives and works in Melbourne, Australia, and her work reflects her energy and innovation. We are sure you agree that the energy of Ovi has been captured sensationally in our front cover. Thanks again, Sarah! You can see more of her work at www.illustrationonweb.com/SarahBeetson.

For the contents of the magazine we included the editorials from the very first issue that clearly express our dreams. The second issue was an alternative view of racism, followed by the third that was about women’s power and life. Issue number four featured crime, including genocide and wars, and then came the fifth about graduation, with articles about education and mainly life after graduation. The sixth was about parenthood, since Asa had just become a father and Thanos’ daughter was celebrating her first birthday. The seventh issue was about love.

Number eight was a pun with ‘ate’, so it was all about food, although we still have serious doubts whether anybody understood the joke; one thing for sure, many found it a taste issue. Issue nine was our first on religion because we feel that we have so many more things to say that another religion issue will come soon; we manage to cause some controversy though. Issue ten was more...academic and theoretical being about time and since we had become so theoretical we dived into computers in issue eleven.

Controversy became a buzzword at Ovi magazine, so issue twelve was about sexuality with some very interesting articles that made Asa’s mother a bit worried! Issue thirteen was all about radio and introduced Thanos and Asa’s Ovi Bad Boys Radio Show that you can hear online via the special pages on the Ovi magazine front page.

Issue fourteen made us consider the difficulty of keeping all our promises, since all the difficulties found us during that period, and issue fifteen tackled boundaries because that is one of our biggest difficulties living as immigrants in a foreign country. Issue sixteen was dedicated to the people who were too hard to copycat our ideas and finally our latest issue, number seventeen, was released just after we went daily; number seventeen was a special for our blogger friends who help us so much.

17 cover stories, 17 covers, a few editorials and a few special bits are contained within the pages of our birthday issue, so sit back and imagine Thanos and Asa blowing out the candles on their huge chocolate chip chocolate cake covered with chocolate icing discussing the next issue of Ovi’s monthly PDF...what will it be?

Stick around and find out!
Two candles on the cake
By Asa Butcher

It has been two years since I penned my opening editorial for issue one of Ovi magazine and since then a great deal has happened.

"I was once asked by a friend how it is possible for me to write so easily… I believe it is because I love what I do. I am motivated by writing and entertaining people. I have no motivation for peddling my fat ass on an exercise bike but give me a topic and I will happily burn a few calories typing at the keyboard. My fingers have an hourglass figure." ‘An hourglass figure’, what a beautiful turn of phrase, even if I do say so myself. Yes, it has been two years since I wrote those sentences in my debut editorial for issue 1 of Ovi magazine and what a difference a couple of years makes, huh!

December 20th 2004 witnessed the launch of the combined Finnish for door, pronounced 'Of- vourite Euro-traveller, was there at the very beginning with his "I'm Just Sayin'" column and American stance on the world and he is also in our thoughts as Thanos and I split his slice of chocolate cake between us. John, we miss you and…mmm, this is good cake… what was I just sayin'? Anyway, Ovi is still going strong after two years. No surprises really with the quality team of contributors we have submitting work on a regular basis and the fresh outlook we have now that we are daily. The best result of Ovi becoming a daily online magazine is that my fingers are looking positively anorexic through the calories they burn tapping at the keyboard every day.

What will the next two years hold in store for Ovi magazine? What will I be writing for the fourth birthday editorial? Knowing me, it will be probably littered with quotes from all my previous editorials, just like this final paragraph summarising why we started Ovi;

"We are writing and maintaining this site because we want to be known. We want to become either famous or infamous. We want to be able to afford a laptop to go and write outside while the sun is shining. We wanted to have a website with our work and we have done it. What have you done recently?"

Well, what have you done recently?

Facts about Ovi

1. They open inwards, outwards, sideways, up and down, round and round, and automatically.
2. It took a seven-man team to operate the automatic doors in Star Trek.
3. The film around the door frame is called the architrave.
4. Doors were first invented by the medieval architects.
5. Jehovah's Witnesses are magnetically drawn to them.
6. Most people knock on doors in the musical note G.
7. How does an Native American lock the door to his wigwam?
8. Doors do not come pre-numbered.
9. Swing doors really prefer jazz.
10. Door guilty of murder! It's an open and shut case.
12. The door at 10 Downing Street was not always black.
13. A doorknob is not sexual appendage for a door.
14. Ireland's famous for Paddy o'Doors.
15. A key works better than "Open sesame!"
16. Would you say a crazy door is un-hinged?
17. Doors hate 'knock-knock' jokes.
18. Doors are emotional; they really like to open up.
19. Doormen are not doors with arms and legs.
20. There are no doors on the moon...yet.

Ovi Poem 2006
By Asa Butcher

Festive greetings to you all
Thin and fat, short and tall,
No prejudice over creed or race
Because Ovi readers have good taste

You've logged on daily to our site
Read opinion about wrong and right
We've roasted Turkey and mocked Mahmoud
Some of it has been quite rude

We hope Ovi has made you think
And you've given us a reciprocal link
2006 has been hard work
Even for someone like Captain Kirk

Thanos and Asa may head the team
But our contributors are the cream
Without their help and support
Ovi daily would soon abort

A big thank you to each of you
Our readers, our team; the Ovi crew
There's nothing more for me to say
Except Happy New Year and come back every day.

December 20th 2004 witnessed the launch of the combined dreams of Thanos, John and myself in the form of a monthly online magazine called Ovi – you know, Finnish for door, pronounced 'Of- vees'. It has become a word that buzzes about my head every day, it has influenced my favourite colours to now include orange and it still as close to my heart as the day we uploaded our work to www.ovimagazine.com.

Two years have flown by faster than the Starship Enterprise at Warp speed 9 and we are still exploring strange new worlds, namely blogs, and they were pretty alien back in 2004. Since the launch of issue one, both Thanos and I have had daughters, I have moved a couple of times, my Grandma passed away, I have seen Paul McCartney in concert, I had read dozens of books, watched countless movies, I have won a couple of arguments with my wife…okay, one…and too much more to mention here. Many of the memories are now closely associated with Ovi through articles inspired by their occurrence and it has also meant that I can go back and relive those moments through my writing. I am sure Thanos is writing his memories and nostalgic nuggets in his editorial, so I will leave him to this final paragraph summarising why we started Ovi:

"We are writing and maintaining this site because we want to be known. We want to become either famous or infamous. We want to be able to afford a laptop to go and write outside while the sun is shining. We wanted to have a website with our work and we have done it. What have you done recently?"
And then we saw the light!

Suddenly we were all aware of our responsibilities and the work to be done!

And what we had just done.

It was a dark rainy night

And we were criminals

Provokers, a controversy to their ethics

We were ... editors...

...and it was a door called Ovi magazine!

by Thanos & Asa

3 Men & I Dead-line
For the last two months I tried to come up with an idea of what I’m going to write for the first issue of the Ovi magazine. I kept making drafts but none satisfy me - one thing is for sure: the why. The Ovi e-magazine is born of a real necessity. Not the necessity of another internet magazine, another opinion, or another alternative artistic opinion and contemporary stand, but as a live portfolio for people who want to show their work and their ideas.

One measure of the success for people, who are involved in the media world, writing or designing, is how often your work has been published, when and what reaction it provoked. And this is what judges you for the real world. When you just finished college your only past is inside the very school magazines which don’t really count as experience but more as warming up before the reality comes.

To become a journalist or an art-director of a magazine is a long journey and part of it is to create a unique personal style. The only tools you have are your brain and constant reading, anything from sports magazines to comics, everything that helps you to understand and evolves your own style. The days when Ernest Hemingway was writing in a newspaper when he was only sixteen have long passed, nowadays the first question you get in an interview is what degree you have and where else you have published your work. And coming to the degree, we manage all right but coming to the last published article...hmm, I think for me it was in the last century in a different language.

Asa, John and I met a few months ago and somehow the chemistry worked. We are the same and so different at the same time. I have enjoyed long political conversations with John and cultural jokes with Asa.

Both native English speakers even though coming to John, Asa and I have some objections, he is native American speaking and that’s how we first met whilst I was making him angry joking about his Americanisms. Asa is working to create his own style but the sure thing is that he has his own accent and when we first met I could understand less than half of the things he was saying and to make it worse I’m not native English speaking, even though I have spent a big part of my life in England. So I have my natural Greek accent that confuses them both or provokes many linguistic jokes from their side.

Asa and I live in Finland which means that we definitely have no former experience in the local media and our personal past doesn’t count since it obviously happened on a different planet. John lives in the States which makes it more challenging to create something through the net and correspond from the other side of the ocean. But that is what we trained for, that’s what we love and that’s what we want to do for the rest of our lives.

So an e-magazine was the natural next step since financially we couldn’t afford the publication of any other kind of media. Ovi will become our live portfolio. It will become our free stage to perform what comes naturally to us.

As I mentioned in the beginning, the three of us represent different opinions, different cultural backgrounds and different ages which makes a good cocktail, occasionally an explosive cocktail.

The Ovi magazine reflects our personalities and our ideas. It is political in the sense that we have our political ideas and they are influencing our writing but they will never be the magazine’s line. As a magazine we are not going for or against anybody but to quote Balzac: “I’m going to defend your right to say whatever you want.” And we want to have your opinion on our articles. We want your opposition to our ideas because that’s exactly what built the democracy Socrates dreamed.

Of course, there are certain issues we are against in principal. We are against racism, any kind of racism. We are against any kind of prejudice. Unfortunately prejudice is something that expands from race and religion to sexuality, beliefs and appearance. We are against any kind of fanatics, our society suffers from fanatics. We are against violence, especially the one that starts inside the house. Last, the name Ovi came from the Finnish language and it means ‘the emigrate’ in French. In this in-magazine we are going to talk about our experiences on moving country, the difficulties we had to face and how we solved problems. In this part, a number of friends are joining with their experiences and opinions with the hope that will be able to communicate things it took a bit for us to learn.

The Ovi begins modestly but we strongly believe that it will grow from day to day. We are planning to start with monthly issues but we hope to update it every time we have something to say.

We merely ask your cooperation so this project will become a live portfolio for all of us and a place to exchange thoughts and ideas.

Thank you
Thanos Kalamidas
Following those weeks after Christmas and New Year, when the decorations are returned to the attic and you are sick to death of mixed nut selections, you suddenly realize that your new trousers from Aunty aren't exactly fitting you comfortably. You resolve to exercise and return to your former slender physique, so you scour the New Year Sales for a cheap exercise bike and set yourself a rigorous exercise plan. Summer arrives, the bike has a thick layer of dust and Auntie's present is still hanging in your wardrobe.

“What has this to do with anything?” I hear you grumble, well I was once asked by a friend how it is possible for me to write so easily and so well because he had a nightmare trying to compose an article of just one thousand words. After careful consideration I tendered a response to his question, “I believe it is because I love what I do. I am motivated by writing and entertaining people. I have no motivation for peddling my fat ass on an exercise bike but give me a topic and I will happily burn a few calories typing at the keyboard.” My fingers have an hourglass figure.

Writing has always been an obsession in my life and when I enrolled at university the restraining order was lifted leaving me free to pursue it with a passion. One issue that had haunted me all my life was the belief that I wasn't very good at...err, anything. My athletic confidence was dented the first and only time I attended school and my heart went out to him; he's always picked last at school and our hearts went out to him.

I wasn't very good at...err, anything. My primary interest in people has always been their stories, experiences and the anecdotes that they bore everybody with a thousand times. I believe this comes from growing up in a household where stories eventually became the joke. My Dad is teased whenever he begins to tell a story to my wife that we have all heard before. My Mum is the last to laugh. We want to be able to afford a laptop to go and write outside while the sun is shining. We wanted to start a website with our work and we have done it. What have you done recently?

Am I drunk on my own self-importance or is it just my brand of self-deprecating humour, which has served me well for years - a personal necessity when you run like Mr. Bean and have a ‘unique’ name. I love to take the piss out of myself and to try to find the humour in any situation, this has enabled to make friends easily and my personality has been described as infectious, which is probably a good thing.

We want to become either famous or infamous. We want to be able to afford a laptop to go and write outside while the sun is shining. We wanted to start a website with our work and we have done it. What have you done recently?

We are writing and maintaining this site because we want to be known. We want to become either famous or infamous. We want to be able to afford a laptop to go and write outside while the sun is shining. We wanted to start a website with our work and we have done it. What have you done recently?

Axa
(Chicago, 06/04)—It’s comforting to know that whoever and wherever you are, you and I have at least one thing in common: we’re both wondering just what this Ovi magazine is all about. I’m tempted to answer this question by confessing all my hopes and aspirations for this three-man odyssey into online journalism (if we can call it that). But years of Batman reruns have taught me not to reveal a plot for world domination before it’s hatched.

I arrived in Helsinki January 2nd. Merely hours after stepping off the plane, I found myself poised to take a plunge into a frozen lake. Before realizing exactly what the hell I was about to do, I was floundering in the frigid water and gasping. I emerged from the icy hole as naked as the day I was born (a mere 21 years earlier in beautiful St. Cloud, Minnesota, where people are sane enough to merely fish through holes in the ice) and scurried back to the sauna with the urgency of a true foreigner.

After the burning sensation wore off, I started to think about how—just a few hours earlier—I was celebrating the first day of the New Year back in Minnesota with friends. It was hard to realize that I was now somewhere outside of Helsinki, Finland recovering from a polar plunge. I certainly didn’t anticipate this excruciating introduction to my semester abroad. But I learned quickly how to strip down, leave my expectations in the dressing room, and jump right in, no matter how cold the water or uncomfortable the situation. This attitude served me well as I braved everything from “humpa” karaoke (a strange Finnish combination of polka music and pop ballads), to pickled herring on toast. And it’s this same adventurous spirit that drew Thanos, Asa and myself towards one another and towards the concept of an online magazine.

The exact form and trajectory of this project has yet to be finalized, but a few months ago we decided to give this momentum a name, The Ovi Magazine (Ovi is Finnish for “door”). The plan was to expose our opinions, concerns, skills, personalities and humor to the world and open the door for honest and intimate cross-cultural dialogue. Where this initiative will lead is anyone’s guess. But hopefully it won’t be as painful as a plunge into icy water or as embarrassing as the naked sprint back to the sauna. But who’s to say.

If there’s one thing Yankee learned abroad, it’s that expectations leave little room for inspiration. So let’s just leave the Ovi open and see what happens!

Cheers, Efharisto and Kiitos

John
EVERY YEAR WE FIGHT TO END RACISM

And we will keep on fighting until we do.

@T baloney
U Do I Don’t
S#&T Happens
Escape
iFormat
fART
flash
“There was an Englishman, Scotsman and Irishman and they walked into a joke…” Don’t worry, it isn’t racist or prejudice if an Englishman, Scotsman or Irishman is telling it, or is it? Today it is bloody hard to work out the boundaries of humour; when does a joke become offensive to somebody?

I’ll try to be careful writing this article because I don’t want to be called a racist. I’m not racist – my best friend’s a limey red-coated pommy bastard…a.k.a. British. Here is the first complication that derogatory terms and jokes raise. I am British/English and am perfectly allowed to use these terms quite freely about my fellow countrymen.

Other nations can escape criticism when insulting the Brits, such as Americans, Australians, the Irish, Scots and also French and Germans, because we share a common cultural and historical animosity that has lasted centuries and has led to the terms almost losing their bite and becoming nicknames. This issue shares similarities with African Americans permitted to call one another ‘nigger’ but should an Ahab use the term then it is severely frowned upon.

Q. What’s the difference between the English and a jet engine?
A. A jet engine eventually stops whining.

How do the English react when other cultures laugh at us or poke fun at our way of life, such as the British comedy sketch show Goodness Gracious Me? The show features sketches about Indian culture and pokes fun at the English from their point of view, such as mimicking the antics of drunk Brits in an Indian restaurant. The show attracts huge audiences of all backgrounds but could you imagine a 21st century primetime BBC show that had the opposite idea?

Goodness Gracious Me’s Mr ‘Everything Comes From India’: The royal family? Indian! Have arranged marriages, live in the same house and all work for the family business. Indian!
A change in what is accepted in humour is a sign of the over-cautious times we live in. You can’t say that, you can’t do that, what happened to the days of comedians like Bill Hicks? Hicks joked about blowjobs, the joys of smoking, pornography and so much more; not only was he incredibly hilarious with subtle and complex humour, he was intelligently challenging the very fabric of society and that moved him beyond being offensive to the majority.

Bill was threatened after a show by three God-fearing thugs who said: “Hey buddy, we’re Christians, we don’t like what you said.” “So forgive me,” he answered.

Raising an issue within society through humour or gently mocking another culture for its peculiarities is one way of dealing with the issue; the problems arise when jokes are laced with hatred and dehumanising terms. Often ignorance, a lack of understanding or claiming it is the norm are trotted out as excuses, but, in defence, some are quite funny. No one section of society escapes ridicule, everybody has endured a joke at their expense at some time in their life, jokes were told the day after 9-11, Princess Diana jokes were told, the war in Iraq has many and even tsunami jokes made the rounds via text message.

How many Iraqi’s does it take to screw in a light bulb? Four.
One to screw in the light bulb.
One to claim that they’ve actually screwed in 300 light bulbs.
One to claim that they’ve unscrewed 150 American light bulbs.
And one to claim that they’re screwing and unscrewing light bulbs for the Palestinians.

How many Americans does it take to screw in a light bulb?
Only one, but he does it from 30 miles away using laser targeting, and at a cost of $800,000.

Is that fair? Both sides are equally mocked and, I think, no harm has been caused. Humour is a human defence mechanism and living in a multicultural society, we must learn to laugh at one another and ourselves. Jokes can be a source of alternative education and, used properly, it relieves tensions.

It feels as though being white is the new minority and it is incredibly difficult to suddenly change your approach to the world after years of playground joke telling. When I was growing up it is embarrassing to think how many jokes were told about the Ethiopian famine. I am not alone in this and many of my generation were desensitised, in a manner of speaking, to the cruelty of the humour.

Currently everybody is in a state of near panic over what they can say after years of saying whatever they want, perhaps the next generation will find a balance between
the two. It is hard to believe that as a white straight man you can find yourself feeling like a minority and feeling as though you need to apologise for being what you are. I guess that telling the occasional racist joke is one form of venting the stress at the situation we are finding ourselves battling each day.

Vacancy: Wanted a disabled black gay lesbian to fill immediate position…  
Vacancy: Wanted an obese ugly arrogant and stupid employee needed to…

Should an employer advertise a job vacancy but upset somebody with an –ism then they may find themselves facing a discrimination charge. It doesn’t get any easier because if the disabled black gay lesbian arrives for an interview and does not receive the position then they can claim any number of discriminatory reasons – perhaps the employer just thought they were an absolute wanker.

No! You are not allowed to personally dislike any ethnic or physical minority now because you will be labelled with one of those –ist tags. When did employers lose the right to choose who they want to work with based on their personality, skills and that certain je ne sais quoi? On the other hand, what does the disabled black gay lesbian feel when they get the job? Do they feel as though they were chosen for the job because their skills best suited the job or are they there to fill minority quotas and make the company look good?

Exasperating, frustrating and outright confusing are a few of the words that immediately come to mind, while there is also no end in sight. Every joke is going to offend somebody, no matter how innocent it may seem:

Big chimney says to little chimney: You’re too young to smoke.

Sorry about that pro-smoking joke. I am now in the position where I should include a witticism about all minorities so I am not accused of being prejudiced against any one particular group…

Disabled and racist: Stevie Wonder is asked how bad it is to be blind. He replies,”It could be worse, I could be black.”

Homosexual: Three gays in a Jacuzzi and a condom floats to the surface. One says,”Ok, who farted?”

Sexist: Why did the woman cross the road? More to the point, what was she doing out of the kitchen?

Middle East: Why are camels called “Ships of the Desert”? Because they’re full of Arab semen.

Finland: How many Finns does it take to change a light bulb? Zero, they can’t do it. When they notice the bulb is glass and there are threads on it, they spend the rest of the night trying to open it.

Religious: What’s the difference between Jesus Christ and an oil painting? You only need one nail to hold up a picture.

Sorry, that is enough. However, if you smiled at any of them, and I tried to pick some of the worst, then you are just as bad as the rest of us. Join us in battling our demons, at least in public, and, now I come to think of it, isn’t all this a case of censorship and freedom of speech…but that is another story.
“Daddy, loves Mummy. He kicks her, punches her, shouts nasty words and makes her cry. And Daddy loves me. He burns me, slaps me, locks me in a cupboard and calls me a failure.

I hate love.”
Ms. Villain

By Asa Butcher

Name the top five movie villains of all time? No problem, Darth Vader, Hannibal Lector, Gollum, Khan and the Joker, but where are the women? Do you need testosterone to be capable of master villainy? The silver screen has had its fair share of feminine nemeses, antagonists and megalomaniacs with deep-rooted evil desires.

Villainesses are a rare breed but when they appear, it makes women with PMT appear like the Virgin Mary. No amount of chocolate, self-help books or pampering will cure these individuals; the courageous knight in shining armour would rather slay them with his sword. The question we must ask is ‘Who’s the uber-villainess?’ Which of these could chill your blood with, “I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Babycham” or a Norma Bates shower scene?

In over 20,000 movies, how many female villains have made your skin crawl? I am well versed in the world of movies and know I can tackle this question with ease. Criteria eliminating the candidates of evil needed to be intricate, infallible and incredibly insane; with, “I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Babycham” or a Norma Bates shower scene?

Many female anti-heroes are the victim of male actions and are seeking unadulterated revenge - Lorena Bobbitt style. The empowered duo of Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon in Thelma and Louise, Uma Thurman in Kill Bill, Nancy Fowler Archer in Attack of the 50 Foot Woman and Michelle Pfeiffer as Catwoman in Batman Returns are examples of their inner conflict of good and evil. The only female anti-hero that doesn’t fit into this category is maternal Mindy Sterling’s Frau Farbissina in the Austin Powers trilogy.

These anti-heroes have enslaved our hearts, but now we want the definitive bitch. We want some real cold-hearted bitchiness, none of that diluted pre-menstrual hormonal rubbish, something like Nurse Mildred Ratched in One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest. She was a character that men and women could both loathe, unlike Demi Moore in Disclosure and Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction, which terrified every single man, while Rebecca De Mornay’s nanny in The Hand That Rocks the Cradle that sent the shivers down every mother’s spine.

Film bitches have serious psychological problems caused by inhaling the acetone in nail varnish. Compare Jennifer Jason Leigh in Single White Female and Nicole Kidman’s ambition in To Die For to the psychopathic tendencies of Kathy Bates in Misery and they are left looking like cherubs. Academy Award-winning Rebecca was Hitchcock’s best, helped by the mind games that Judith Anderson’s Mrs. Danvers inflicts upon poor Joan Fontaine.

The line of human decency and moral adherence has been crossed; we are entering the dark side of the soul. Few of these women have killed, except boiling the occasional innocent pet rabbit. Before we judge the solo queens of evil, we should pay homage to the occasional innocent pet rabbit. Before we judge any villainess, we should pay homage to the occasional innocent pet rabbit.

Juliette Lewis in Natural Born Killers and Kalfornia does terrorific work as a sidekick to any enthusiastic serial killer, while Faye Dunaway’s portrayal of Bonnie Parker in Bonnie & Clyde had to have inspired Miss Bobo in NBK. Comics have produced many partners in crime, with Uma Thurman (again) in Batman & Robin as Poison Ivy and Superman II’s female Kryptonian criminal Ursa.

Ursa and Poison Ivy are technically aliens or mutants from other worlds and are not counted among the truly immortal humans. Likewise, Natasha Henstridge in Species, supermodel Slavitza Jovan’s Gozer in Ghost Busters, Cameron’s Sexxxy Spacek, and her telekinetics, Rebecca Romjin-Stamos’ shape-shifting Mystique from X-Men and The Exorcist’sRegan MacNeil are all barred from claiming the crown.

Bond has also served up anti-heroes that become good in the end, such as Honor Blackman’s feisty Pussy Galore in Goldfinger and Grace Jones’ asexual May Day in A View to a Kill. Bond has had plenty of practice between the legs of women, but the never faced death until Famke Janssen’s thighs attempted to crush him in GoldenEye or Rosa Klebb’s knife-in-a-shoe attack in From Russia with Love. The World is Not Enough featured the best Bond villain, Sophie Marceau’s Elektra King, which made a refreshing change from megalomaniacs stroking white pussies.

It would be intolerable to skip the villains with which we grew up. Our childhood innocence was pulverised and real psychological damage was inflicted. The Wizard of Oz’s Wicked Witch of the West was terrifying, but she was the Fairy Godmother compared to Oz’s headless Princess Mombi. Disney has much to answer for, with Wicked Queen Grimhilde’s apple delivery service (Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs) and Cruella De Vil (101 Dalmations) insanely driving her car directly at the viewer – I shudder even now.

The road to ultimate female villain is winding to an end, as we approach the turning for outright insanity; the moment when a woman becomes a cold-blooded movie killer. The recently released Monster, starring Charlize Theron as Aileen Wuornos, is a great, almost perfect, candidate. It is based on the true story of America’s first female serial killer and does not win because of its lack of originality; we want an original villain, although some sympathy should be offered - she was a second generation American with Finnish maternal grandparents.

Lady villains from original screenplays are not that rare. Jeanne Tripplehorn in Basic Instinct, two from Kill Bill (Daryl Hannah and Lucy Liu), Barbara Stanwyck in Double Indemnity, while Madonna in Body of Evidence was just plain evil in her acting. However, each of these characters paid for their crimes with their life, a prison sentence or nudged back into the recording studio. How many ‘get away with it’?

Male villains rarely escape punishment before the credits roll, so what chance do the girls have? Maintaining the equality is Catherine Zeta-Jones in Entrapment who escapes but didn’t kill anyone, while in Chicago she did kill someone and does get away with it, as does her co-star Renee Zellweger. Joan Cusack in Arlington Road rides into the sunset with Tim Robbins and All About Eve’s Anne Baxter leaves a trail of emotional destruction in her wake acheiving her goal. That leaves one only…

Kathleen Turner in Serial Mom is the ‘uber-villain’. She fulfils the credentials and is the ultimate baddy, with the contradiction of being an anti-hero. Not only is she a psychotic serial killer, she is a loving mother who only has her family’s best interests at heart. There is no regret or remorse. While at the end of the movie, she is a free woman and, the piece de resistance, she kills a female juror who pronounced her innocent. Can you get any more evil than that? Well, can you?
In 1987, California’s Office of Traffic Safety warned that an “alarming population trend” - meaning more teenagers - would increase highway deaths and drunk-driving accidents. From the early ‘60s, Marlon Brando and James Dean starred in films that were about the rebellion of youth and how it wasn’t far from committing serious crimes.

Underage crimes

By Thanos Kalamidas

Since the ‘60s and now, the group The Boomtown Rats recorded I Don’t Like Mondays and Aerosmith recorded Janie’s Got a Gun, both songs were inspired by kids who lived for the last three years in a country that boasts of being the most secure country in the world, already I’ve heard about two incidents.

When I was a teenager in ‘70s, it was just a case of semantics the distance of having fun and committing a crime. It was very naïve and stupid blaming everything on rock and roll in the early ‘50s and ‘60s, just as it is the same blaming Marilyn Manson today.

Before the 20th century, you could really talk about underage crime because you could identify what you meant by ‘underage’. Even more, you have to identify what you mean by ‘kids’, when 14 and 16 year olds were part of the productive society working in mines and factories, drinking in pubs with the adults and taking part in adult social life.

Nowadays, underage is under-16 and that’s why the crime is punished in juvenile courts with very few exceptions; from my side I can only compare what happened in my time with what’s happening now.

Firstly, in my opinion this is good that an underage crime is getting more coverage. Of course, the media are not all naïve and helpful, they try to sell more but still it helps people’s awareness of the problem. They are also doing it by interviewing terrified young kids but it makes you think what’s going on around you. Back in the ‘60s and ‘70s, this was very rare and I think the society then, including the media, was too eager to cover a crime story when a kid had committed the crime. The underage crime was a taboo and, a familiar reaction, society preferred to ignore the problem than talk about it.

Secondly, it is the overpopulated urban area. This comes because of unemployment in the countryside and the poor level of life, since everything happens in the big cities including a chance of a job. As a result, people live in overcrowded apartment blocks with the kids spending most of their free time in front of artificial screen games. Again, I don’t blame the computers and the game consoles for that; on the contrary, I have enjoyed some of these games myself.

Third is that society used to have the rich and the poor, or if you prefer the proletariat and, in the middle, a middle-class representing mainly the strong civil servants and the small business owners. After the ‘70s, we have the distance between rich and poor becoming huge, an indebted middle-class transforming into a hopeless middle-class depending upon banks and plastic money, plus a homeless and hopeless working class. Finally, the distance of becoming middle-class to homeless is very short and is up to the bank manager.

Fourth is the future, and the future looks very dark for young people. From their teenage years, they know that money brings money and the honest working way exists only in the novels. They have seen parents and surrounding losing everything, including dignity, most of all, especially on a Friday night when they try to forget their misery with alcohol. If you don’t have the right connections, the best you can get with a PhD in the best university is the position of an office clerk in the private sector. They know that the old motto ‘money doesn’t bring happiness’ doesn’t really work without the addition, ‘but it bloody helps’!

Fifth are immigration and race problems. The black and Hispanic community in the USA, plus the Arab and African community in Europe, suffer more from unemployment and isolation, while the kids have to do something different most of the time, maybe even bully if they want to survive in a suspicious and often hostile society that they more often don’t understand.

There are far more excuses and differences but there is one main reason, at least in my opinion: Boredom. Marlon Brando and James Dean were bored in these films and they wanted to attract some attention. That led them into crime. How many times has it crossed our mind when we were kids to ‘punish’ a teacher without thinking that the ‘punishment’ would result in a crime? We said before that everything is a case of semantics; how far is the distance from spaying his car with red paint to actually getting a machine gun to shoot him?

Underage crime did exist for long time, the difference is that now we are aware of it and we should do something to prevent it. These kids are not criminals, they are bored. Dispirited kids demanding hope and attention, this is where you should start. It makes me angry when I think that a millionth of the western population holds enough money to buy not only for themselves, their families and probably another ten generations, but enough to urge hope to the whole globe.
Imagine a future in which cows are extinct. Imagine your children can only see them in books. Imagine you could have done something to save them. Don’t wait until it is too late.

Act now and protect our planet.
Graduation was great...both times. The first time must have been so much fun that it demanded repetition and, to the horror of my parents' finances, it was achieved. Participating in two graduation ceremonies allowed me to experience two sides of the day, the first was fraught with nerves and the second had him antagonizing his friends' nerves.

Upon the completion of my Higher National Diploma, we were awarded with a graduation ceremony complete with gowns, mortarboards and a single sheet of paper that involved the GNP of a small country. My Mum, Dad and girlfriend (future wife) attended this joyous occasion each complete with cameraderie, cameras and full make-up (my Dad).

I sit here seven years later attempting to recollect this day, with three beers being slowly absorbed into my liver, trying to distinguish between the nostalgia and the reality. That day my hair was perfectly gelled in place, but strangely, I had not used gel; due to nerves, even my hair follicles were stressed.

It brings a wry smile to my lips to look back at that fresh-faced young urchin stepping upon the road of life, but then I tell myself not to be influenced by Charles Dickens and the alcoholic nostalgia. The day scared me, the prospect of walking across a stage in a dress, balancing a square hat on my head scared me, the idea that my education was over scared me; it was scary day.

The graduation photographs that would adorn my parents' wall was taken before the ceremony and this took me by surprise. I was the only one to give a wave to my fans. They cheered and began chanting my name until...

Anyway, there were no casualities to gravity and no filmic moments of streaking, so it was out to the fresh air and a hundred photo opportunities. Once we realised a litter bin was my sidekick, the exterior location was swiftly moved to a refine-free locale and a mini photogenic nightmare was avoided. The next photo opportunity is one that will stay with me for ever, due to the unbridled joy rapidly replaced by terror.

We have all seen the scene in the movies when all the happy graduates throw their mortarboards to the heavens, but they edit out the part when the rented mortarboards, with reinforced metal corners, spin to earth like ninjas throwing stars causing pain and lacerations to the young faces below.

Upon the completion of my Higher National Diploma (HND) graduation, a friend joked that HND meant 'Have No Degree', so off to university for three years and another graduation ceremony. This time I was ready and even wore a tie for this one. My day was spent instilling the fear into my young friends as they approached the stage I helpfully whispered, "Don't fall!", then proved what a confident bastard I was with another hearty wave.

Half the county, or so it seems, graduated that day. The hall was packed with thousands of individuals all about to apply for the same job or head for the local dole queue, but before we could do either we needed that expensive A4 certificate. The local mayor had been shanghaied in to the honour of shaking hands and presenting the said piece of paper, but he was to bring his own form of amusement to the graduating masses. He was a pervert, a fully-fledged, card-carrying perv, who physically turned around to check out every female arse that walked passed.

My first walk across the stage was multi-skilling at a professional level. The hat was wobbling, the masses were staring, cameras were clicking and whirring, the stage was a mile wide and Mayor Pervert stood with a windy hand extended, but I was the only one to give a wave to my fans. They cheered and began chanting my name until...

Graduation and the difficulties young people are facing was original theme, but a news story caught my attention. When a 19-year-old girl in UK got a low grade for her Latin A-levels, instead of blaming herself, bad luck or wrong timing, she decided to prosecute the school for poor preparation and she’s asking for compensation of £150,000.

Her logic is very simple. Her expensive school cost around £12,000 a year and, according its brochures and advertisements, it guarantees good preparation, good grades and success for the future. That the young woman didn’t succeed with grades proves that the school didn’t do its job and didn’t fulfil its obligations, so her future as a lawyer in the City is in danger; this grade might stop future law firms from giving her a chance or even interviewing her. So she’s asking for this compensation for a supposedly future loss of money.

However bad or comedic the whole thing sounds, it is a scary truth because this case can become a legal precedent for a huge number of similar cases. If the she was here then she might have difficulties as a lawyer but she will definitely have success in marketing, since she managed to do the unbelievable. She transformed school exams into a product that demands a certain guarantee. That’s fine when it comes to a television set or a car, but when it comes to school, except the legal issues, we have to face ethical issue too.

Even if we accept the idea that the school can predict the success or failure of every student in the exams, it’s very difficult to know what will happen on that certain day. The school has the responsibility if they had ignored the fact that the student didn’t study or if they approached the student or notified her family, perhaps if they hadn’t followed the programme or if they had omitted parts of the curriculum, but in her case none of the above is admissible. It’s just that she didn’t get the grade she was hoping for, which, as she says, will never make her a partner in one of the big law firms.

What drove this young woman to do what she did is going to be a mystery for sometime. What we can see from this case is that there is something definitely wrong with our system and here I include our social and working system with our education. The truth is that competition between new graduates has become ruthless. Twenty-five years ago, when I graduated from college, a Bachelor of Arts’ Degree was important and a Master of Arts’ Degree rare. Nowadays, it seems to me that everybody has an MA – maybe soon you’ll get one with a Happy Meal.

Working in an international company in the mid-eighties, I discovered that in the company’s central warehouse there were 42 employees with an average age of 26, which included two Ph.D.s, four MAs and, I think, eight BAs. The senior management had an average age of 46 and no Ph.D.s.

The first thing we noticed was that unemployment leads all these young graduates to do any job just to have an income, while from the other side companies face a Masters tsunami finding new ways to pick the right ones. After trying interviews, physiological tests and then style tests, they ended up checking the grades from the final exams and A-levels.

Another thing is the cost of this education and in many cases the idea that people pay, very expensively indeed, their education which makes it natural to ask if the result is not the expected one. The whole thing began in east Europe during the late 70s when, in exchange for a few of the much-needed US dollar, you could get any degree you wanted from Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary and even the former Soviet Union.

Most of the time these degrees weren’t exactly ‘guaranteed’ but the story continued in two ways, either the big number of private universities that open all around Europe or when universities became dependant from the founding of the private sector or students fee.

The result of all the above, the pressure moved on to 16- and 17-year-olds kids, who suddenly found themselves carrying the dramatic responsibility of making sure that they will have a future for the next three or four decades of their life.

Education is a very serious issue and all the participants have an equal responsibility. What happens when it all ends up becoming a commercial exchange? In this case, either the education system has tried more to improve the social and professional status of the students or the students missed the point seeing the school as an academic supermarket, just like the young lady from the UK. 
A buzz in Wisconsin

By John Pederson

After a cup of coffee, sweetened with a spoonful of crystallized honey, Mary Celley, a.k.a. “The Bee Charmer,” emerges from her log home wearing a faded red baseball cap, blue jeans, a tattered brown jacket, small golden specs, and a playful grin. Two eager friends follow close behind her. Jack, a rambunctious young black lab, seems almost as excited as Celley, but even old Winnie, Jack’s 9-year-old mother, has an extra bounce in her step today. It’s time to get to work on the Celley Farm and help in the way.

“It’s going to be a good day,” Celley announces as she buzzes down the steps on her way to pick up the shipment of 400,000 bees that will sustain her honey crop this season. Beekeeping is more than a business for this Wisconsin native. Celley depends on the honey harvest to fulfill her spiritual, social, as well as monetary needs. She fell under the bee’s spell when she was just four-years-old.

While her siblings feared them as unwelcome picnic guests, she was enchanted by these buzzing beauties. Her fascination with bees eventually developed into an entomology degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a part-time job at the honey bee lab. Today Celley is a full-time beekeeper with over 100 hives. “I feel like I’m doing what I was put here to do,” she says.

Celley is not the only Wisconsinite stung with affection for the honey bee. According to Annette Phibbs, the head of the apiary on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus bee lab. Today Celley is a full-time beekeeper with over 100 hives. “I feel like I’m doing what I was put here to do,” she says.

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Last month Thanos was taken by surprise at my review of a board game. Well this month I felt a profession deserved an iKritic, so midwifery goes under the microscope. Over the course of a week staying in hospital with my wife, I met a number of different midwives and was thoroughly impressed with each – most even spoke English. Naturally, they all had their own style, personality and good-humour, but what struck me was how much patience they have. I guess dealing with hormonally charged, whinging, worrying, emotional fathers would teach you that, but they were equally as good with the mothers and babies.

It is their job to be helpful, but we all know that just because it is your job does not mean that you always do it with a smile and desire to please. They are able to tell a parent that their newborn baby is the beautiful in the world while visitors scream and recoil in horror. They can gently massage the newborn parents’ egos with compliments about their child or adeptness at changing a nappy. Their skills with a baby are unbridled. They handle a baby as a Harlem Globetrotter handles a basketball. At one point, I was expecting one midwife to bounce the little babe and shoot a three-pointer into the cot. When they wrap a blanket or change a nappy their hands are a blur and following two hours of trying to put the baby to sleep they march in perform some ancient pressure point trick that triggers sleep instantaneously.

All the time the father is doing his fair share of the caring the midwife loves you and will praise you. However, don’t forget a breath mint or three after wetting the babies head, since fathers smelling of alcohol is strangely frowned upon in a hospital ward. When we initially arrived in our family room, the midwife offered to take us on a tour. Just as we were about to walk out, I asked, “Shall we leave the baby here alone?” I wiped my brow thinking that was one of their early tests of good parents.

The midwife was always a button away, which provided a sense of security and allowed you to build your confidence handling the baby – it seems babies chill out in the hands of a confident person. One complaint I do have about midwives is that some cannot take a photograph, but I guess that their job description does not require knowledge of aperture settings.

One final thing: Don’t forget to support her neck!
Parental panic

By Asa Butcher

Somebody asked me the other day if I was ready to be a father, to which I joked, “Hmm, sit up straight! Elbows off the table! Mind your manners! Don’t run in the house! Eat your vegetables! Yes, I think so.” Since then, the seed of the question has taken root in the fertilizer of my mind and been liberally watered with a dose of ever-groving panic.

What does it mean ‘to be ready’? We have all the equipment and a whole lot more. It appears as though my wife has been shopping in Q branch, shoving James Bond out of the way for the latest high-tech gadgetry. There are devices dotted around the flat that look as though they either torture the mother, pleasure her nipples or a twisted S&M mix of both.

Friends continue to offer advice to the father-in-waiting, but most of it is out of context and hard to comprehend. The friends are also beginning to have invites to the pub turned down, since I don’t want the story for the next twenty years to be, “Asa was in the pub when my waters broke.” Turning down invites could be a subconscious sign of my growing responsibility as a father, but honestly it is more to do with holding off embarrassing stories.

Can anybody be ready to be a father? My exterior façade has been brazen and brimming with confidence at the prospect, but when the lights are switched off and I see the silhouette of the bump become more than my wife’s covers…freak out! Tension headaches, sleepless nights and bruises from banging my knee against the cot on my side of the bed; she has not arrived yet and my physical condition is already deteriorating.

The local library has shelves full of books on fatherhood and parenting, while the net also has pages of conflicting advice, but my nervous energy hasn’t the patience to read all this information about bathing, discipline and nappy rash. My own personal argument is that my parent’s generation survived without any literature or guidebooks, humanity has managed this far, so there must be a genetic common sense when it comes to holding a baby the correct way up.

Waiting is the hardest part. The ongoing pregnancy has allowed me more time to dwell upon it’s and maybe, while the arrival of my daughter will force me to deal with the situation at hand and quit the daydreaming. I guess not knowing when the magic moment will happen has it’s share of frustration and tension because I am completely reliant upon my wife to send up the distress flare and push the panic button. We have both resigned ourselves to the fact that it will happen at 0330; the time that both our patience is at its lowest ebb.

I have digressed from the question, but that is how my mind has dealt with the situation over the past few weeks. I will continue to imagine, panic, chill, daydream and ignore the whole saga because nothing is going to change, except the quantity of painkillers perhaps.

Parental panic

By Thanos Kalamidas

I know that it will sound strange but thinking of my one-year-old daughter the secret of being a good father is not being a “father” at all. Counting a day with my daughter I found out that I have to act in a number of roles including cook, custodian, educator, playmate, warrior, but if somebody could stop me and tell me halfway through, “Now, be a father,” I would have no idea what to do and how to behave.

I suppose having parents that became a classic example of the sixties marriage generation my role model parents were divorced and my father was like all the divorced fathers of his generation who can only be in two categories: absent but generous or just absent.

I don’t want to say that my father was a bad guy. On the contrary, he tried to do his best considering that he had to be in his office twelve hours a day and then he had some homework for the next day at home. He was one of those guys who always wore a tie and smoked one cigarette after another, only having time to check my school grades and occasionally have a game of chess, which I always lost since his attitude was that you don’t learn if you don’t lose.

Later another role model of being a father came from television, where people like Ben Cartwright from the old Bonanza series and his behaviour to his sons was forming the idea of how a father should be and later I thought of Bill Cosby as a nice and cool father.

A result of losing my father early in my life was never enjoying real fatherhood and getting scared of two things. The first was that if I have kids I might die and they will be left alone and the second was that I will never have the time to tell him the realities of my life and here I mean that he never had the time to hear my dreams, help me or advise me.

The combination of those and a small health problem I had to face over the last few years gave me a shock when I found out that I was going to become a father. To add to that I’m not young, actually I have one-year difference from the age my father died.

Despite all my inner fears, I tried to find the manual of the good father and to my surprise I found out that there are thousands of books in nearly every language written to add to hundreds of thousands of internet sites; all of them with different options. To make it worse, every one of my friends with children had a different opinion on how to become a good father.

Finding out that there is no a leading way to the good father, I took the simplest decision I could ever take, follow my instinct and not listen to anyone. My first step was deciding that I don’t want my daughter to ever call me father, daddy or anything like that, just by my real name.

That was a couple months before my daughter born and since that day I’ve found myself in perfect balance with my identity because in the end that was it. It had nothing to do with the needs of the little finger holding my thumb but with my thoughts and ego.

I learned to love our mornings alone before she goes to day care, when we dance together to the music television and when father and daughter go to day care. I learn to love the sad look she gives me when I leave her behind in the day care and totally enjoy her breathing and her tears when she has a new tooth and most of all I love to love her. And I think this is the only thing she wants from me, to love her. I’m not getting hysterical when she tries to eat the ground - in fact, I have joined her and I suggest you to try it.

We do have good time and I know everybody could go on for hours debating whether I make a good father or not; anyway, my little daughter sure seems to enjoy it!
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Please do think seriously, what matters more to politicians? Perhaps it is image, money or fame? Only one thing matters: luck. Did Tony Blair plan to have a weak opposition? He was wishing, but he couldn’t plan it and while everybody was after him he was re-elected for the third time. Why did he win? Pure luck. If he had a new Thatcher in opposition then he would have no chance.

In politics there are two kinds of luck. One is the pre-birth lottery. George W. Bush is one of the best examples. His grandfather made the money, a lot of money. The father worked the connections, George becomes president. US presidents are a classic example of this, with John F. Kennedy another name on the long list.

Then there is the right man at the right moment. That’s luck as well. Politics is full of that. There are good and bad examples. Adolf Hitler is a bad example because everything worked for him from the beginning and this unknown loser nearly became the ruler of Europe.

The difference between the first and the second is mainly that the second kind needs hard work and individual effort. The first kind just needs daddy’s money. Ancient Greeks used to say ‘with the help of the gods you must move your hand a bit also’.

Luck doesn’t stop there. George W., after 100 days in administration was as popular as Nixon after the Watergate scandal and the leaders of the world were thinking if they should send him a congratulations telegram, but that was until 9-11 happened - however sad it sounds. George was not only re-elected for another four years but the leaders of the world were queuing in front of his Texas ranch for a photo with him.

Think about playing the odds, the probability of an event happening, such as all the traffic lights being green along a stretch of road or being in the only part of England that lost its television transmitter during the Germany 1 – England 5 football match, which could be put down to timing and a technological glitch. Some people try to get by on luck more than judgment, such as the guy who phones a radio station to enter a competition, but the DJ informs him that it isn’t time yet, he replies, “Sorry, I just tried my luck. I don’t have a radio.”

For a number of months I had tried my hand at cutting a deck of cards to find the Ace of Spades, but with no luck. A group of friends were visiting, playing cards were on the table, in the middle of the conversation I suddenly exclaimed, “Ace of Spades!” The cards are cut and there it is in my hand. Cue silence. A one in fifty-two chance, which is nothing compared to finding the lost little gold cross from my Dad’s necklace on a full-size football pitch.

There are days when if it started raining money I would be suffering from diarrhoea in the toilet, such as catching a cold the day of a much-anticipated event or saying, “After you, madam,” and then hearing, “Congratulations madam! You are our millionth customer!” It could be worse, like taking a sleeping pill the night you have food poisoning or English novelist Arnold Bennet who drank a glass of water in a Paris Hotel to prove it was safe. He died two months later of Typhoid.

Luck can play cruel games on the uninitiated and unwary, such as my school’s summer fair one year when I was asked to run the Treasure Hunt game. Naturally, I had a few guesses and when my uncle drew out the winner, it was me. Looking rather suspicious, he did it again and it was again me, so a random stranger was asked to draw a ticket and she too picked me. The fourth time was unlucky though.

Whether it is my parents purchasing a random bag of wild flower seeds from a garden centre and growing a cannabis plant or locating a lost letter after popping into the local shop and overhearing people talking about it in the queue, luck does have a wicked sense of humour. In my opinion though, I am owed a few private moments alone with Lady Luck after she cast her evil eye upon my childhood pyjama suit and allowed my little guy to be trapped in the zipper.

My wife always comments that when we are unlucky in life I will at least have a story to tell later. Anecdotes are my weakness and Lady Luck usually plays a major role in their production. Either she is there in force, smiling upon me or it is ‘that’ time of the month and she wants to see me tortured.

You may argue that it is not luck at all, merely fate, destiny or coincidence, but since issue seven of Ovi is about luck, here we go. Luck is one of those issues that makes the lucky ecstatic and unlucky miserable, the rest of us flick back and forth between the two. There are observations about luck, such as, “If you buy a ticket on Monday, you are a hundred times more likely to die before the draw is held on Wednesday, than win the Jackpot!!” You still buy a ticket though.

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How can I play hide & seek when 21 children die every minute?

Who'll play football with me when 21 friends die every minute?

If I close my eyes and count to a 100, 35 children are dead.
We have all heard about the crazy bureaucratic rules and regulations that the European Union has been imposing upon fruit, vegetables, cheese, meat, eggs and, well every conceivable type of produce, but have you ever wondered where all the crap ends up? You would assume that it is recycled, tossed into mass compost heaps or fed to pigs, but my personal belief is that it is shipped to Finland and distributed to the supermarket chains.

Every week the selection includes golf ball-sized white onions, mouldy red peppers, squashed tangerines and bruised apples, what is going on with the import policy in Finland? The only produce that is ever edible are the ones that have the little Finnish flag sticker, for which you have to pay outrageous kilo prices. Finland is supposed to be a part of the EU, or have they misunderstood and are ‘apart’ from the EU?

The EU is aggressively promoting an ‘Aryan’ master race of fruit and veg; they are advancing the ideology of a pure selection of root crops, the elimination of ‘defective’ stone fruit and ridding the world of genetic deficiencies in citrus fruit. We all remember EC regulations 1169/93 and 3596/90 from 1998 that governed the size of peaches. It was illegal for greengrocers and supermarkets to sell size-D peaches, which is 2 - 2.2 inches in diameter and not the bra cup size.

Other measures included carrots having a top measuring 20mm in diameter; certain varieties of apples being at least 65mm in diameter; plums requiring a minimum size of 35mm to be classified Class 1; and bananas being at least 13.97cm long, 2.69cm in diameter and do not have “abnormal curvature”.

Initially I was totally against Brussels obsession with imposing correct size and weight upon items. It was forcing the closure of generation-old businesses, it was raising the prices in the shops, fines were being imposed and chaos was reigning. However, all of these anal directives are old news to the British who had to deal with the bureaucracy when it first started to appear in the mid-90s, but it is about time somebody enforced quality control in Finland.

During one of my summers, I worked as a vegetable packer that supplied three of Britain’s major supermarket chains. We were instructed to throw away produce that I now regularly find on sale at my local Helsinki store. I cannot understand why a major food store would have trouble obtaining quality food goods, when small greengrocers in the UK can stock their shelves with goods that look edible, although perhaps not always meeting EU guidelines.

Finland’s government and the Finns need to start complaining about the quality of their imported fresh produce to their EU representative before the fines begin rolling in. On the other hand, perhaps Finland knows no different and believes that the coconuts and bananas are grown up in Lapland.
Since this seems to be the issue of food, plus I will follow Asa’s example of top ten, here are the ten strangest dishes I’ve ever tried.

Micronesian Fruit Bat Soup
A thick soup with lots of onions and salt. The meat is a sort of jelly with many fibres. Here I have a personal issue with mice, I hate them, so I just tried to ‘taste’ the soup, but not eat it.

Spider soup
I never understood why, when it comes to the weirdest dishes, they are soups and always decorated with many vegetables. Spider soup with rice was served in India and, once I’d managed to push away the idea that I was eating spiders, I found the soup tasty.

Fried bugs
The Sahara, I mean just the place must make you suspicious of what you eat, but when I saw bugs on a small plate in front of me and everybody around eating them with their fingers and having such pleasure, I had to try. Lot of sugared tea helped.

Haggis
I do know that Scottish people like it, but I didn’t say love it. I do know that the tradition has it that people were poor and they had to eat every single part of the animal, but I think the Scots pushed it a bit too far. I managed a mouthful and this is where I stopped.

Elephant stew
Central Africa and another stew. I found out that the people were drying the meat for nearly two months before they start cooking it. I mean start because cooking elephant meat takes over 48 hours. It wasn’t bad; it just made me realize how much I love cows, even the mad ones.

Camel
North Africa. It was actually slices from the hump. I ate them fried with potatoes. The meat was smoked and I have to admit that even though it was too salty, they were very tasty. I have never drunk more water in my life than after that meal.

Crocodile
Served with roast potatoes in Australia. It was like a very chewy steak. I ate it just because I wanted to try crocodile and find out what else you can do with this animal except make shoes and handbags. I enjoyed the roasted potatoes more.

Cobra, with vegetables
China. I have already written about this in another article (>>>), including the ritual the cook uses to kill the snake and cook it.

Goat balls
On offer in Turkey. Ok, it was just the idea, like with most of them. I did eat them and everybody around me had a funny smile on their faces, but they all seemed to enjoy them as well.

And something for the desert:

Eel ice cream
Japan. It was tasty, even though you could not understand that there was an eel somewhere in there. The Japanese people love anything that comes from the sea, so I suppose that it came as no surprise to learn that they know thousands of ways to cook everything.

Thinking about it now, I can remember some more strange dishes I have had, but the main thing is that even though I have always been ready to try anything, I always thought that nothing compares to a plate of bacon and chips, roast beef with Yorkshire Pudding or a Greek souvlaki.

Bon appetit!
When you immigrate to a new country religious and ethnic minorities of our native land are left behind and one flight the later the positions have been dra-
matically reversed. You arrive as a minority, endure countless cre-
ations and face the same dis-
ernation the media back home often mentioned. It comes as a slap in the face for the un-
prepared, but a darker problem
lays in wait from somewhere quite unexpected.

Prejudice and discrimination between fellow minority groups is a sad and cruel irony that the participants fail to see. Instead of supporting one another in a shared situation, they continue their shameless bigotry against minorities from their home-
land. Racism between minority groups is micro racism and is the
nastiest element of immigration, due to its hypocritical and unex-
pected appearance.

Nationalities from around the world who have chosen to live in
Finland and, when the issue of
racism is raised, you naturally expect to hear their horror sto-
ries of对待对待在 regard Finns, but
instead you listen gravely about their treatment at the hands of
other foreigners. Their anecdotes reveal that they were given a job
and treated like a slave, physi-
cally attacked or verbally abused by a fellow immigrant, which
shames everybody, especially if
any Finns are present.

Generalising that the majority
of a population are racist is lazy and only serves to further the
myth. The term ‘racist’ is fright-
ening governments and people
into proving they are not before
being accused because once the
accusation has been thrown it is
virtually impossible to dispel it.
Financial support is given to fund
race awareness programmes, ed-
ucate the public and aid integra-
tion, but this is outrageous when
some minorities make no effort
to integrate.

Sanctuary is found within their
Dispora. Many socialise within
their own cultural group, ghet-
tos create a small slice of
homeland, they build their own
place of worship, their own
shops and businesses; they can
live their whole life without in-
teracting with the host country.
Nothing has changed, which
means that their own inner dia-
logue concerning their own prej-
udices also remains the same.

Escaping to a new country is
supposed to allow a fresh start
from the tyranny of a govern-
ment, shadow of a civil war, per-
sonal reputation or many other
reasons, so why not re-evaluate
your approach to cultures and na-
ionalities that you hate? Recre-
ating your homeland is provides
comfort and practicing your
religion strengthens your faith,
so why not integrate among the
general population and the other
minorities and alter your percep-
tion of them?

Every country has different po-
tical, historical and cultural
bonds with one another and this
has shaped stereotypes and re-
relationships. For example, when
a Greek assumes a Finn in a
Greek market in the centre of
Athens is Russian they be-
ing complimentary because Hu-
man nature does not usually tend
to insult complete strangers and
the Greek is oblivious of the ten-
sions between the two nationali-
ties.

Back in our native lands, Ca-
adians are aggravated by the
Americans, the Australians have
the New Zealanders, India has
Pakistan, England has Scotland,
Greece has Turkey, Finland has
Russia, and the list goes on, but
mainly the rivalry is playful and
we are friendly to each other
outside of our homelands.

Fearful of losing your own sense
of nationalism forces you to
adopt a caricature of your iden-
tity. As a minority, you begin to
fear that the dominant Finnish
culture will override your own
and you will lose that unknown
quality that makes you French, Tai-
wanese or Bolivian. Criticism of
your country’s foreign policy or lack of sporting achievements
breds your own disparaging re-
marks about Finland with which
to do battle.

Here lies the danger. Excessive
nationalism mutates from patri-
otism into feeling contempt for
other nationalities, including
the host country. One extreme
example is the Iranians who
bitterly complain about racism
across the world, yet in their own
country there are people joining
dozens of online communities,
including the “Adolf Hitler SS
Army Fan Club” and an “anti-
Jew” community, which advo-
cates death to all black people.

When it comes to Iranians liv-
ing in Finland, many prefer to
describe themselves as Farsi
and totally dispute the Ahwazians,
who claim to be of “perfect”
Persian origin. You will never
see an Ahwazian shake hands
with an Arab, especially Saudi
Arabians. Once again, you have
two minority groups in a foreign
country divided by the prejudic-
es they felt back in their home-
land.

Finland has organisations, such
as Caisa Cultural Center, and
online communities, such as the
International English Speakers
Association, which aim to unify
foreigners living in Finland and
organise gatherings in which
they can meet one another. Dur-
ing the get-togethers, the multi-
cultural groups try to stick to
light-hearted subjects, such as
the weather, but you can occa-
sionally see the friction between
nationalities.

For example, a Serbian student
usually chats to a Greek en-
trepreneur about holidays to
the former Yugoslavia, but the
Serb becomes alarmed when a
Croatian becomes offensive in
Slavic and they are then joined
by a Turk, who alarms the
Greek. However, the night ends
with a small group consisting of
an Englishman, Irish woman, a
Finn, a Russian, a Kurd full of
‘appreciation’ for the Turks, an
Armenian, a Jew and an Ameri-
can genially talking about the
Finnish weather.

Due to the Kurdistan Workers
Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdis-
tan or PKK), a controversial or-
ganization that fights for Kurdish
independence, Turks in Finland
severely dislike the Kurds. There
is also the case of the Sudanese
civil war, where the Muslim
north fights with the Christian
south, that has now moved from
within its borders to communi-
ties in other countries because
being an immigrant does not
mean that you choose were to go
without facing the other side.

The majority of foreigners form
cordial relationships and attempt
to place their prejudices behind
them, yet the stubborn actions of
the minority of the minority that
damages everybody’s reputation.
Facing racism from a native is
one thing, but being treated like
shit by another foreigner may
cut deeply in some and arouse
dangerous emotions of radical
nationalism in others.

The aspect that many often ig-
nore and fail to realise is that
should all the immigrants put
aside all their differences and
join together then we could ef-
flect real change in Finland.
There are over 120,000 immi-
grants living in Finland, all of
them have a vote in the elections,
many are eligible to run as a can-
didate and one day it is possible
that a second or third generation
immigrant will become Prime
Minister.

By Asa Butcher
There is one issue we always mix when it comes to religion. It is the connection between religion and the church, or the role of the church inside religion. Using the word ‘church’ I identify all those who are involved and not the building only, from the priest and the choir to the Catholic Pope, the Orthodox Patriarch to the mullahs and religious leaders in Japan.

Regarding the role of the church, I can have a better opinion only when it comes to Christianity, since I lived most of my life in Christian countries and grew up as a Christian myself. From its beginning, the church has been manipulative and a part of any kind of conservative and regressive ideas. In theory, it took twenty centuries for the church to admit that the Earth is a sphere and this has nothing to do with the Bible, the main book and reference of the Christianity, but with the church and its founders and members.

Christ, like Socrates, never wrote anything, the only written text we have from both of them is the text written from their students and followers. In the case of Socrates, we have Plato, an equally high-educated philosopher, who wrote his extensively long conversations adding his opinions and the opposition, while in the case of Christ we have only four books written by four of his students, who according to legend were simple every day people.

It is part of human nature to become pretentious when it comes to strong beliefs and that’s exactly what Paul did with his letters. For example, in his letters to Corinthians when he actually gives guidelines on how the church should act and behave. So the original preaching of equality between men and women, as it has often become in Christ’s preaching, becomes discriminatory with Paul, where the women carry the sign of the exile from Paradise should enter the temple with their head covered.

While in one of the most beautiful parables of the Bible, Christ teaches that you can pray to God wherever you are and you don’t need a temple, the priests over the last twenty centuries ask for bigger and higher churches, they demand from their faithful to follow every possible service and in the end they expect them to contribute financially in the construction of bigger, higher and more luxurious churches.

Christ taught with words and made it a lifestyle, the need to help the poor and especially kids, while at the same time fat priests with drivers and security hide inside expensive Mercedes Benz and don’t seem to care for the 30,000 kids that die every day somewhere in this world. On the contrary, they are there ready to convict any theoretical opposition and demand the exchange of money for our forgiveness. The Catholic Church was the first to teach that with the remission papers signed from the Pope.

The priests are the first to lead any prejudice from sexuality to rock music when the media is full of scandals that involve one of the most disgusting crimes in human history, pedophilia. Living in the period where the money buys everything and using the example of a known pop star and pedophilic they actually buy forgiveness with millions of dollars.

I could go through thousands of examples on how the Christian church has contradicted the very same preaching of its founder and how much they mislead the followers, but I’m sure that the same happens with the rest of the religions. Reading the Koran, one thing I didn’t find anywhere was that to kill thousands of innocent in the name of God guarantees a place in paradise or however they want to call it.

One of the richest owners in land and wealth in every country around the world and every religion followed is the church. The power of the Vatican is nearly mythical, being able to manipulate markets and lead governments. The Orthodox Church has equal power in Russia and Greece where there is a huge amount of poor people, people who need help here and now to survive the next day.

One of the first things our society should do is separate the state from the church and put in control the church’s income and expenses. In most of the western countries, the state is contributing in the expenses of the priests, salaries, insurances, for example. The people who become priests and in extent bishops and popes, didn’t make a professional choice but the chosen a way of life dedicated to the others. It is about time, after twenty centuries, to make that truth. The church should return to its real vision and objective.

However, there is only one who is the real enemy of religion and the only one who can make people refuse their beliefs and that’s only the church itself.
Selfishness

By Satya Prakash

What exactly is Selfishness? The popular usage of selfishness is for a sinful adjective where one person behaves in total disregard to consequences of his/her actions on others. The selfish person will be ever ready to do anything just to satisfy his/her whims. But is there any positive aspect of Selfishness; is it justifiable to be selfish? The answer lies in how we define selfishness.

One of the first people to speak about the positive aspect of selfishness was Ayn Rand which was illustrated in her book “Fountainhead”. The virtuous aspect will be clear if we see the alternate (correct?) definition of Selfishness. Selfishness is related to one’s own self. A person will be selfish only when the person is true to his/her mind, thoughts, values and all the actions by such a person will be out of his/her convictions. Such a person will go through all kinds of difficulties and obstacles but will never compromise with his values and thus be selfish. The most distinguishing feature of that person will be ‘integrity’ i.e. such a person will ‘walk his/her talk’. Such a person will never sacrifice others for own needs or will indulge in any ‘desire-satisfaction’ acts. Such a person will be ready to suffer all kinds of hardships to live for the ‘self’. A person will always strive to fulfill these needs and hence selfish. Humans live in social world and to satisfy the objective needs there will be interactions and those interactions has to have the virtues of benevolence, rationality, rationality etc. Hence such persons will never act in disregard to others rather act in regard to oneself. The concept of objective needs of a person can in some way explained by the theories given by Richard Dawkins in his book “The Selfish Gene”. Dawkins answers questions such as why are people. What is Man? Is there meaning to life? By saying that all this are there just to make the gene survive. Gene – the unit of heredity will do anything to survive, an animal is nothing but a machine made to survive the gene. Thus there is selfishness in any animal, there is this ‘objective need ’. Gene is the basic and abstract unit of selfishness. This explains the reason for objective needs and hence selfishness.

In fact if one has to judge whether the feeling of love, friendship, respect or admiration is true or not one should see if the person exhibiting such a feeling is selfish of not. If for that person love, friendship, respect or admiration to his needs then it is a true feeling and the person will always be committed. If they are for his whim-fulfillment then those feelings are shallow and there will be no commitment. Just for illustration, most of the time teenage love or friendships don’t last, why? Because at that time a person is not sure of his or her own self or objective needs so there is no way to find whether those needs are fulfilled by the present love or friendship. To understand ‘Self’ is the prerequisite to selfishness. A person is most true when he/she is selfish. Love, friendship, respect, nothing but token of satisfaction of those objective needs.

Although religion has always had the capability to raise dissection, there are times, such as the present, when the situation seems more exacerbated than usual. The range of emotion in three major religions covers a wide spectrum. Orthodox believers in the Christian, the Jewish and the Muslim religions tend toward radical reaction to criticism and the presentation of doubts by secular questioners. The reason for this strong reaction seems to betray something of insecurity in the foundation for faith and in the possibility that there is enough reasonable logic in these negative viewpoint to shake the power of these traditional beliefs. Fanatics within religious fundamentalist groups have factions which extend no bars to their expression of their hatred of criticism and the intensity of this reaction has become a threat to civilized society.

Nature of religion

By Jan Sand

Religion, on the other hand, has tended to provide deeper concepts which it does not accept as open to criticism. Some of them are so widely at variance with accepted scientific reality as to appear totally irrational. They make us, at minimum, exceedingly uncomfortable and reflect on the capabilities of the people making the claims. Oscar Wilde once noted: It is because humanity has never known where it was going that it has been able to find its way.
Thinking about time I always come to the conclusion that time is something totally personal. A few years ago I had a very bad accident and I’m sure that after one point time stopped. I could watch the other car coming towards me in real slow motion and then I could see the front of my car slowly smashing into pieces and the whole front of my own car, including the steering wheel and all the instruments coming slowly closer and gradually hitting me in the chest. I could sort of see drops of blood coming out from my direction and I could watch the other driver’s eyes in total horror.

Again, another evening was when my daughter was ill with a really high fever. We suddenly arrived at the hospital and the doctor asked me how long she’d been unconscious and without thinking I answered, centuries. Later, the same night, the doctor explained to me that whatever I thought it could not have been for more than seconds, maximum a minute.

Then there are some other moments. My first party, my first kiss that was so brief and the day I won something very important for me lasted only seconds and everybody said that it lasted for hours.

Strangely, my ten minutes of fame lasted only a few seconds while my most miserable minutes lasted for centuries. I’m sure that since that night I had to run to the hospital holding my daughter I got more white hair. Isn’t that a message for time passing? Don’t you get more white hairs with the years? I got them in only a few seconds.

Oddly enough, the reason we consider time as something totally measured is the language. All the verbs represent time. Go, I will go, I went, I had gone! Saying, I’m going to the cinema, I went to the cinema and I will go to the cinema identifies precise time. I went to the cinema yesterday. I will go to the cinema tomorrow and I’m going to the cinema tonight. It doesn’t matter if we add the chronic definition or not. The time arrow is certain and absolute. I base that on my knowledge in the European languages, but in eastern languages, for example, again language identifies time. In Japanese, it is ‘I go to the cinema tomorrow’ or ‘I go to the cinema yesterday’.

Day and night, seasons identify time, but the language is there to make time part of what we are. Returning to the beginning, time is something so personal and illogical at the same time. You see? Time again.

You watch a film, which is supposed to have ‘real time’, the hero moves around for 24-hours while the film lasts only two hours and you have the feeling that you lived the hero’s twenty-four hours. Sometimes we wish the day had thirty-six hours so we can do all the things we were planning to do.

To write this article took me four hours thinking and thirteen minutes to write it, even though I feel that I have been in front the keyboard writing for ages. Just imagine how much better use of time we would have if we could control time.
Imagine sitting at your favorite café when—all of a suddenly—an idea so original, and with so much potential pops into your head that you flag down the waiter for a pen to scribble it on your napkin. Pure genius! How did you not think of this sooner? A moment later, you decide to recite your epiphany to the entire table, fully expecting a toast to your brilliance. The waiter for a pen to scribble it on your napkin. Pure genius! The function of an idea refers to its specific purpose. For example, the UN was designed to promote world peace, electricity to bring light into our homes. But ideas have form long before they find an expression and purpose in our lives. The form of an idea is what allows it to grow and travel from one person to another building momentum, until finally, it realizes its function and purpose in our world. Every idea has both form and function. So what? The question remains: What makes a big idea a breakthrough? What is the common denominator that allows certain concepts to take hold and change the lives of millions? Epoch: a significant period in time or in somebody’s life. Great ideas serve a myriad of purposes and fulfill numerous needs in our daily lives. From salvation to silverware, you’d be hard-pressed to find any continuity in the function of breakthrough ideas. But the form of these ideas is another story—a story that that, for me, started in Finland.

Ten issues and nearly two years ago, Thanos and Asa taught me something that I’ll never forget. Maybe it was the Guinness at work, but it was a break-through epiphany at the time—and still is: breakthrough ideas have to resonate on both the individual and collective levels. They connect people through increased self-awareness. Connection through personal empowerment is the distinguishing mark of most any breakthrough idea, whether it’s a musical phenomenon like the Beatles, a communications revolution such as the Internet, or a journalistic epoch like the Ovi.

The tipping point is when the big idea becomes a reference point of public consciousness, giving a voice to something within each individual, while providing a way to carry this self-knowledge out into the world. This is exactly what Ovi has been to me: a connection to the world and myself. To know one, you must discover the other. Now I have been lazy in this pursuit, taking more from this relationship than I receive. But the Ovi has always been here for me, inviting reflection, introspection, and growth. And it’s here for you too, for you to read, for you to contribute, for you to love, and for you to hate. It’s all here—and it will be here for many issues to come! Time is on our side!

Time: A person’s experience during a specific period or on a certain occasion; a number, as of years, days, or minutes, representing such an interval. Time can fly, time can drag, time can be measured and time can be elusive. Pink Floyd sang, “Every year is getting shorter, never seem to find the time,” on the track “Time”, which proves that “time is of the essence.”

Time can be timeless, but you must bid your time, especially if you are ahead of your time all the time. A whale of a time can be had at all times, but we had to make up for lost time at one time in order to have a good time. At this point in time, I am behind the times and have no time to take my time.

I am living on borrowed time for the time being, although from time to time I play for time. Once upon a time, somebody served time, in at the same time he had to kill time, pass the time and in it was crunch time less than no time; just in the nick of time, it was a long time no see.

Tick-tock

Tick-tock

Tick tock, reaction time, speed equals distance over time, timekeeping, Time magazine, London and New York Times, prime-time, Daylight Saving Time and time out. Timetables and times table, time bombs and time delay, Time Bandits and Timecop, time share and time will tell, Time in Norway and Time in Illinois, time to go and we are out of time. Time’s up!
I'm sure my relationship with Mr. Bill Gates and his products is not unique and if you check the net you will find that others have worse feelings towards him than me. I simply hate the bastard! To get worse, there have been times I admire him!!! And these times are equally as many as the times I hate him.

Ok, imagine a life where you must eat and the only thing you can eat is raw cauliflower. And you eat the bloody thing day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. It is the same with Mr. Microsoft. For twenty years I have to eat the same cauliflower and like it is not enough I always look forward for his newest discovery. In the beginning it was MS Dos. Version 3 was good, version 5 a disaster, version 6 just saved some things to come to version 7 and lose everything, and then the next cauliflower, Windows. Supposed to be windows to a new environment, it was the bloody widest door possible to the nightmare. Elm Street seemed like a Disney film in front of Windows 2000. I lost two computers because of them. Windows Millennium? I found myself a couple of times ready to throw my PC out of the window and I was on the sixth floor.

But then, nothing would have happened without Windows. Think of it. There are millions of users all around the world, probably billions. And there are millions that their salary depends on computers. Millions that work for computers and other millions that work to improve computers.

In an interview a couple of years ago, the new king of Jordan, when he was still fresh on the throne, said that his country is very poor and even though in the middle of oil rich countries is a state without resources, so he was trying to lead his people to follow the example of India and become a computer power. And all that because of Mr. Gates. The one and only Mr. Gates.

And Bill Gates created the new Windows XP Professional and everybody said, 'now you are going to be happy, everything works'. Oh yes, it did indeed till I downloaded a security upgrade from the Microsoft site and my computer crashed so badly that I had to format the disk and lost two months of work. Of course, all of you cleverly will say why you didn't keep a backup! Yeah, when was the last time you took a backup?
Computers is the topic of Ovi issue 11, Thanos has dealt with Bill Gates and his Microsoft emotions, so it is up to me to write about Google. Over the past couple of years, there has been discussion about online book libraries and Google has been grabbing most of the headlines. There are already 17,000 free books in the Project Gutenberg Online Book Catalogue, but Google has announced plans to create an index to all the world’s books. This little venture has run into some opposition from publishers, authors and other copyright holders, but it is usually a matter of time before a giant gets his own way.

My issue with online digital catalogues is that I can’t read a novel on a screen. I have a dozen e-books from Project Gutenberg on my hard drive, but I use them for research and not to read. ‘Read’, now that is not the term. I would use because reading involves going from top to bottom, I’d say ‘scroll’ because the text moves in a different way compared to reading a printed book.

Do e-books encourage more people to read? I guess they are useful to download to your laptop and read on a flight, but then what am I supposed to do with the bookmark my wife bought for me? I can’t imagine sitting down in the future to read my daughter a bedtime story via Microsoft Reader, even if it does have ClearType.

Google may feel that this is a public service, but I don’t believe it is necessary. Reading a real book will take you away from the computer rather than another few hours in front of it. We need a break from the monitor and now we can install a TV card and watch movies and TV shows, the time in front of the screen is becoming dangerous.

On the other hand, if all my books were on the hard drive that would free up more space on my bookshelf for DVDs and my back wouldn’t ache after moving countless boxes of books each time we move house. I guess only time will tell concerning Google’s success in this venture, but until then I’ll read to my daughter traditional bedtime stories, “Once upon a time there was an ERROR 404!”

Today the business world has become highly competitive with most of the bargaining power shifting towards the customers. Those companies, which can give maximum value to customer at least cost are the order winners. All this has hurt the bottom line of the companies and those who managed to change themselves have survived while others busted. This race for survival has brought radical changes in how companies work and their greatest help in this era has been the computers.

The traditional workflow in any company had been on the lines of various functional departments, like finance & accounting, human resources, production, sales & marketing, etc. But now the workflow has to be changed on the lines as to how a customer interacts with the company. The customer does not see the company along the lines of functional departments but along the various processes, like the process of buying or requesting for information or getting after sales service. Consequently the functional divisions within an organization have merged and have taken the shape of a value chain. In this chain value is created and ultimately passed on to the customer while information flows back through the chain from the customer.

How are organizations managing these changes? Earlier the information of one department used to be with the same department, but now the data are required by all the departments according to the process. The amount of information flow has grown by volumes and also needed is high speed of transmission. An organization which can bring about this change successfully, is called an agile enterprise, and has the best chance of adjusting itself to the changing dynamics of market.

Today all the information sharing and processing work has been totally taken over by computers and the whole workflow is managed by network of computers. This kind of solution is often called as enterprise solution for their reach across the enterprise. They have made the process streamlined, efficient and quite fast. Earlier many operations used to take days for the amount of data processing which are now done in real time. For example any change desired by customer will be managed quite fast. This has benefit for both the customer and the organization, as it reduces waste in the system, thereby bringing down the cost. The information about the potential for the market is more accurately assessed and the production follows it.

Since the information flow is being handled by computers so management has become far easier. This has further resulted in the hierarchy getting flatter. Not only the senior management but most of the employee has access to the information creating democracy. This empowerment of the employees most often results in boosting the morale which is reflected in the increasing productivity.

Today computers have become backbone of any organization and both the customers and the producers are getting benefited.

www.greensatya.blogspot.com
Pardon, darling?

By Asa Butcher

Everyday my wife complains that I don’t listen to her, which is strange because I always seem to hear that part. Difficulty in communication is one of the greatest sources for arguments between the genders and is also a multi-million pound industry offering books, counselling and courses for relationships suffering from the ‘Men are from Mars’ syndrome.

Recently I read that a scientist studied 20 men and 20 women and discovered that men use the left side of the brain - traditionally associated with understanding language - to pick up conversations, while women also used the right side. The research revealed that women may need to use more of their brain to listen to conversations, but it could show women could listen to two conversations at once.

I cannot explain why my hearing switches off when my wife begins to talk, but my concerns were soon laid to rest when I heard my Mum, my brother’s fiancée, female relatives and friends all repeating the same complaint about their partners. What drives most of the crazy is the fact that men phase out a one-on-one conversation, but can hear the sports results when the volume is on its lowest setting.

My Grandad now wears a hearing aid and the family are slightly envious because he liberally uses the on/off switch to his advantage. Once Grandma has left the room, he nudges up the volume until he can eavesdrop on the ants, but he slips back into aural darkness upon her return, the cheeky man.

Women not only claim that men don’t listen, but believe that when men do hear something they miss the subliminal message being conveyed. In the stage show ‘Defending the Caveman’ - a comedy about the differences between men and women - there is an example of a conversation between a husband and wife on their way home after visiting some friends:

**Wife** - Jill and Jack have some real marriage problems. Jill was crying about the love going out of their relationship and believes that divorce may be the only answer. What did Jack have to say?

**Husband** - Errr, he’s got a new drill.

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

Tired of communication problems to emotionally unavailable in a few short paragraphs, isn’t it frightening? I must go now because my wife has been shouting something for the last ten minutes and I can’t hear her over the football results. Thought this was an appropriate addition:

Friday, 21st June 2002

**GIRL’S DIARY**

Saw John in the evening and he was acting really strangely. I went shopping in the afternoon with the girls and I did turn up a bit late so I thought it might be that. The bar was really crowded and loud so I suggested we go somewhere quieter to talk. He was still very subdued and distracted so I suggested we go somewhere nice to eat. All through dinner he just didn’t seem himself; he hardly laughed, and didn’t seem to be paying any attention to me or to what I was saying. I just knew that something was wrong. He dropped me back home and I wondered if he was going to come in; he hesitated, but followed. I asked him again if there was something the matter, but he just half shook his head and turned the television on. About after 10 minutes of silence, I said I was going upstairs to bed. I put my arms around him and told him that I loved him deeply. He just gave a sigh, and a sad sort of smile. He didn’t follow me up, but later he did, and I was surprised when we made love. He still seemed distant and a bit cold, and started to think that he was going to leave me and that he had found someone else. I cried myself to sleep.

**BOY’S DIARY**

England lost to Brazil 2-1. Got a shag though.
Sexuality

My gay growth

By Juhani Giers

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

Back then, I hadn’t had heard of the possibility of choosing civil service. Well, how could I have, living in the countryside where people vote for Keskiuuta (Centre Party)?

The rules are so simple there: As a farmer’s son you grow up to be a farmer and you vote for the same party as your parents and you definitely show that you are a real man by serving the compulsory time in the army.

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

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

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

I had a slight idea of my own personality, that I might be one of those different people. Again, I saw this matter in a very simple way. If everybody knows that they are somewhere, but it is a taboo to talk about them because they represent something which is weird and unacceptable, the books or by education. I used my maalaisjärki. I never disparaged myself because of being different: I thought that I’m a quite an all right bloke and there must be someone for an O.K. bloke somewhere.

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

A few years later in high school, I tried to have with my bisexuality to my best friend. We were having a break and we had a conversation about jealousy. He asked: “Can you imagine being in a situation where you find your girl-friend in bed with someone else? What would you do?” I answered: “I would jump into bed and join them!” His neutral attitude made me think: “Gods! This coming-out thing is so easy!” And again I was very relieved.

Many years later when we talked about my sexuality, my friend was surprised. He didn’t remember the whole conversation and he hadn’t realized what I had said! I was astonished because that moment was a turning point for me!

Well, my own cleverness wasn’t the brightest either when the same friend and I found a new magazine in the local super market. That magazine was called Mosse and had nude pictures of only men. How fascinating I found that! We read it in between the shop shelves and I remember that my friend wasn’t as excited as I was. It took me a while to understand that it was a gay magazine!

Quite soon I came back to see it again. I tried to have as closer look as possible, while letting the shopping women pass me with their trolleys and baskets. My disappointment was terrible when I couldn’t find it on the magazine shelf a few weeks later!

Many years later, I learned that the magazine - named after one of the public gays in Finland - had a very short life. It had also been a huge mistake by the shopkeeper to order a magazine like that and to try to sell it in a small village, but, God was I happy about having a glimpse of it!

By the time I had become an adult the world had to face a disease called AIDS. My generation got sex education in a way which shocked some of the religious groups. We got a newspaper each and condom was given to all. It was my maalaisjärki. I never disparaged the books or by education. I used my maalaisjärki. I never disparaged myself because of being different: I thought that I’m a quite an all right bloke and there must be someone for an O.K. bloke somewhere.

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

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

My first long-term relationship to a man was a few years later and lasted about a year, by then I was in the middle of my twenties and I had come out to my closest friends from my theatre school. I presented my boyfriend, who was twice as old as I was, to my family and I was surprised at how big a problem it was!

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

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

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

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

**So much porn**

By Mickey Hotlove

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

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

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

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

Because big names make people click. And quality productions make people buy. Although “amateur” is a popular genre, and “gonzo” porn films are the equivalent of reality television, a bad production makes everyone nervous. You can see it from the first frame if the photographer or director was a professional, or just a pervert with a camera. That’s why WebMistress only has to look at trailers for porn movies to know. And she’ll only look long enough at a photo gallery of some model’s nude pictures to grab a picture for the thumbnail that goes with every post on Wilt.be.

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

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

And when she gets tired of it all, she quits for a few days. But porn is everywhere: it’s in her news feeds, people mail it to her, there are “submissions” by wilt.be community members. So she takes care of it. It’s what she does. She’s the WebMistress. I don’t think she’ll ever get tired of it.

www.wilt.be
Radio is cheap

By Jan Sand

There are several creatures that can construct their world by the use of sound alone. There are bats, there are dolphins, and there are humans. Bats and dolphins confront the world with a precise sound capability involving a specialized nervous system. This can create a topological model of their environment with exquisite precision. Bats guided by sound alone can fly safely through a space crisscrossed with fine threads and can accurately locate tiny insects in flight to capture them and gobble them up.

Since it is the rare human who is fascinated by gobbling flying insects humans have a more generalized sound capability to create their surroundings. This permits sound to delude humans into a fabricated reality which is the magic of radio. In a radio studio a technician can crumple cellophane to create a roaring fire, can slap his thighs in a precise pattern to create a galloping horse, can repeatedly permit a loose bundle of dowels to hit a tabletop and an army relentlessly marches forward.

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

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

I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, back in the 1930s when radio was the emperor of the imagination. Each evening we kids listened to The Singing Lady, Uncle Don, Jack Armstrong (the all American boy), The Lone Ranger, Little Orphan Annie (with her dog Andy-arf, arf), Bobby Benson, The Shadow, Buck Rogers, and Mr. Keen, tracer of lost persons. On special nights there were Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Fred Allen, Jack Benny, Tim and Irene, Amos and Andy, Burns and Allen, Eddie Cunes, Jimmy Durante, Lam and Abner, The Columbia Workshop, The Mercury Theater, Fibber Magee and Molly, Grand Central Station, Major Bowes Amateur Hour, Can You Top This, The Sixty Four Dollar Question, Information Please.

There were others, of course. During the day there were the soap operas like the Story of Mary Martin, Our Gal Sunday, The Romance of Helen Trent, Stella Dallas, Myrt and Marge and the Goldbergs. In the evening, news people like Gabriel Heatter and Lowell Thomas and H.V. Kaltenborn were the early people to be succeeded by Edward R. Murrow and Eric Severe-ide; a rich and fascinating parade of personalities kept the nation enthralled and informed. And it created its own reality that occasionally even revealed the real world.

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

And, of course, after WWII, there was the rise of the wry funny men like Henry Morgan (who was chastised for claiming Life Savers candies cheated the public with the hole in the center) and Bob and Ray.

Radio today is submerged by all the other ways people have perfected to communicate throughout the world but I am still nostalgic over that couple of decades before the rise of television when immense talent created an era when the human ear overwhelmed temporarily the ever-dominant eye.
Radio memories

By Thanos Kalamidas

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

The show had dramatized stories of young men and women who been caught by the communist spider inside the web, trying to escape. They were some kind of light spy stories with stereotype dialogues, but in this radio play it was always Stalin, angry with a heavy Russian accent, making it the one aim of his life to catch the little boy or girl that was trying to escape from the big ugly spider. He was using all his forces and most of all the scary KGB. I’m sure that this sounds unbelievable for the younger generation but then it was reality.

The first time I came in contact with Shakespeare it was through the radio again. Macbeth, my all time favorite play, was broadcast on the radio and then came all the big Greek theater plays. Literature was to follow, believe it or not the first time I heard about Jerome J. Jerome and his three men was in a radio programme when a woman with a very soft voice read chapter after chapter in a daily programme.

In the late-60s Greece suffered from the dictatorship and more anti-communist programmes appeared, with rock & roll becoming somehow illegal since it was against the religious and nationalist ethic of the dictators. The American bases in Athens created a radio station that started broadcasting an all American programme with a lot of jazz, blues and an hour of rock & roll.

Wolfman Jack! I’m serious, that was the name of a DJ with a very wolfish voice who brought to me radio waves. The man was wow, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. The Vietnam War was going on and Wolfman Jack was playing Neil Young and Let Emily Play, the first Pink Floyd song I ever heard.

Later I got another transistor or better a cassette player with a radio, you might have seen them in some kind of Pop-Art museums, the ones where the cassette is on the top and the buttons are huge. That was the moment I started recording my favorite songs. I think that should be a reminder to all those record companies executives who going on about copying. Then we used to create our own cassettes with music from the radio. Believe or not… still have one of them.

The 70s gave me one of my most dramatic radio moments. The students of the polytechnic closed the entrance of the school killing more than a hundred kids a girl’s voice was screaming, ‘We are brothers, please don’t kill us, we are brothers.’ Only the sound of the voice in my memory still brings tears in my eyes.

The decade also meant another thing, the pirate radio stations. Suddenly student bedrooms and garages with a transmitter and a record player became radio stations. Boys and girls were sharing their personal stories or passions with the radio waves. Unbelievable moments, John loves Mary and he dedicates the next song. That was real fun but out of all this bad broadcasting came some really good DJs who really loved radio and made history. In Greece one of them was Giannis Petridis, a man with over 30,000 LPs and the first to bring punk to the Greek pirate stations playing Sham 69, Sex Pistols and Blondie.

The 80s was the era of the private radio stations which was nothing other than all the passion of the ones who survived the pirate stations becoming legal. The first radio station was a result of one man’s effort and surprisingly a politician who, at the time, was the mayor of Athens, Miltiadis Evert. The man, despite political and ideological differences, called around him people who loved radio to staff the first private radio station.

I was lucky enough to be part of that and I have some of the best memories from that time. Nobody ever told us what to say and how to say it, nobody ever told us what kind of music to play and as long we kept some kind of ethic code, no swearing, we were totally free in our choicen. I still think that this period, except mine, was the best period of Greek radio and many people who later had radio or television careers started from there.

The amazing thing is that the same man later became the leader of the conservative party, but I think his more modern touch on the contemporary life and his honesty didn’t let him survive long in a conservative party at least as a leader.

I know that I might sound bitter about the ‘80s, but I feel that the radio has lost something. I have a weekly radio show with Asa, but I still miss the hours spent in the radio station in Athems, helping each other and making shows for fun not for the numbers. You never know, this might be another period before the next evolution like it happened back in the ‘70s.

Do they have deep booming voices packed with Barry White bass or squeak like a couple of helium addicts?

Now you can hear for yourself...

the Ovi Bad Boys show

Every show online for your aural convenience
promises

My vow to thee

By Asa Butcher

“I promise to help when times get bad and to let you have your privacy. Not to take drugs or become an alcoholic. To be honest and to love and help in times of trouble, I, Asa, take you to be my lawfully wedded wife.”

These are my own wedding vows written at the age of eleven and I have not stopped laughing about them since finding them in one of my old school books last week. In the space of 45 words, I manage to promise my future wife that times will get bad and there will be times of trouble, both probably due to my losing battle against alcohol and narcotics.

It is reassuring that I promised her honesty and privacy, plus there was a mention of love in there somewhere. Thankfuly, my views on marriage have altered a great deal since my bachelor days in high school, although my parents are currently concerned about who were my role models at the time of writing those vows.

Nobody has any idea - at least they are not admitting to it - where the belief that abstinence from alcohol and drugs originated. Its inclusion highlights something sinister in my pre-teen subconscious or perhaps I was just a socially aware child who believed that a husband and wife should be free from addiction…except DVDs and chocolate, of course.

When the topic of ‘promises’ was chosen for this Ovi, my mind went straight to marriage and the words two people declare to one another. Some stick to the tried and tested official wording, while others decide to spice up the ceremony with their own romantic creativity.

My wife and I went for the latter, which was made easier due to the service being a civil wedding and a little more flexible. Nerves held us back from choosing to memorise lengthy monologues, so we let the registrar read them to us in both languages and we merely answered ‘I do’, then ‘tahdon’.

I believe that our vows were a bit sugary, but didn’t trigger any vomiting among the guests. We began by saying that the purpose of marriage is the establishment of a family for the common good of its members and the preservation of society, and that marriage is intended to be permanent to allow the family members to establish a happy home together.

My wife married a poor English lad, so there was no need for a pre-nuptial agreement, although I did happily offer to split my student loan debt in half. Following her polite refusal, I decided to re-read this verbal agreement and noticed one or two rather interesting loopholes in the contract, but when it comes to the ‘unwritten rules’ they don’t need to be, err, written.

There was no sign of obeying the husband, death do us part, sickness and health, bad or troubled times and definitely no mention of alcoholism, which must all be positive signs.
promises

Little Napoleons
By Thanos Kalamidas

While writing an article about politicians and unfulfilled promises, I started thinking about promises that I fell into, unfulfilled promises and oddly the biggest number of them were professional promises. The truth is that for most of us after a certain age, let's say around mid-twenty, what counts more is a promising career, even a promising job that can bring food to the table and let us live a life with dignity.

A friend of mine accepted a very low paid job that came with a lot of promises, many of which he knew would never be fulfilled; he just made sure that his business card read “Marketing Director” in bold lettering. It took him three months to move to a different and far bigger company in a lower position, with the title “Assistant Director of Marketing”, but with a good salary and a promising future - he knew how to play the game.

A few years ago, I accepted a position in a company doing something that would employ something like 15% of my knowledge and 50% of my time. I took the job after becoming bored of being in front of my home computer all the time. I thought it was a good chance to utilize the idea that work can give you some kind of social life, something that is much-needed, especially in a country where you are a foreigner and you don’t speak the language.

The owner of the company was a small self-centred man with a strong Napoleon complex. Money was the only motivation in his life and he naïvely thought that what drove him would work with everybody. However, since he was not willing to share any income with any of the people who worked for him, he used money as motivation in the guise of promises.

“…I see in addition to his ‘I’m not paying policy’, he added two more things. “As a principal I don’t pay because I get people from the unemployment office, I give them a chance and the state pays” and the third, “You look financially comfortable, you don’t need more money.” Perhaps he was confusing dignity with income.

I might sound bitter to some people and I could go on for pages saying stories about this certain man, such as how he uses foreigners as slave labour in the most abusive way. I was aware of what was going on while it was happening and I helped these people whenever I could, but the choice to end our cooperation had to be at the right time.

Many people fell into his trap during the two years I worked for this little Napoleon and sadly he isn’t alone. The system gives them the chance to exist and they are exactly the ones who abuse the system.

So be careful to promises, in Greece we have a phrase: When you hear about too many cherries, hold a very small basket.

Future requirements
By Mark Hayton

As a general rule I never make promises. In my so far short life, I have found myself to be in the past somewhat unreliable. Don’t misunderstand me, I am generally a well-rounded human being, and barring a few minor moral glitches along the way I have generally proven to be a man of dependability and honesty possessing time-keeping skills comparable to most pendulums.

My problem, should you choose to see it as such, is my sincerity. I like to stick to my word as often as possible, and one of the defining characteristics of a promise is its future requirements.

The fact is plans change, people change, lives evolve and sometimes it’s hard enough to adapt on your own… a promise is an extra weight to carry, in short, a promise is a burden.

I mean I do understand the good nature of promises they’re born always of good intentions and I understand the satisfaction received from actually validating faith and trust in something tangible … but its not.

You may believe, truly believe in something enough to carve it in stone and say that it will definitely occur, but that doesn’t necessarily make it so.

You can never actually know what’s going to happen. You can guess or make predictions and even use promises to try to insure you’re future but the tangible, immovable, inflexible promise will not adapt as you do. Nor will it change, for if it did, it wouldn’t be the same promise anymore, it would be an entirely new entry.

The most important concept to me isn’t how 1 or anyone else views a promise it’s the almost universal understanding of a broken promise … a lie. If you promise to do something or be somewhere and you’re not, the consequence is, at the very least, being perceived as unreliable maybe untrustworthy. This, for me, is a high price to pay when I try to think of the last time I had to promise to do something I loved or be somewhere that I actually wanted to be.
Nuclear fusion TEARS the world apart
SAY YES TO PEACE
Political boundaries

By Thanos Kalamidas

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

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately, those include members of parliament and the media. The church should not be surprised, since there are religious references on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted better in the whole situation by keeping a low profile.

The candidate had to face questions like, if a war happens between Greece and Turkey on which side will you be? When the woman answered that she hopes that peace will be the solution and never a war, they translated that as a betrayal. But I would have given exactly the same answer, so does that make me a traitor? It is probably more likely a pacifist, but for her there was only one answer. If the woman wanted to be accepted she should take a machine gun, cross the borders and start shooting some Turks maybe then they would be happy.

Over two thousand years ago when Athens was the superpower, controlling the whole known world and building magnificent temples for the twelve gods, Socrates was trolling the whole known world. Over two thousand years ago when Athens was the superpower, controlling the whole known world and building magnificent temples for the twelve gods, Socrates was trolling the whole known world. Athens was the superpower, controlling the whole known world and building magnificent temples for the twelve gods, Socrates was trolling the whole known world. Athens was the superpower, controlling the whole known world and building magnificent temples for the twelve gods, Socrates was trolling the whole known world.

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

Unfortunately, those include members of parliament and the media. The church should not be surprised, since there are religious references on every side, but the surprise was that the church was the one that reacted better in the whole situation by keeping a low profile.

The candidate had to face questions like, if a war happens between Greece and Turkey on which side will you be? When the woman answered that she hopes that peace will be the solution and never a war, they translated that as a betrayal. But I would have given exactly the same answer, so does that make me a traitor? It is probably more likely a pacifist, but for her there was only one answer. If the woman wanted to be accepted she should take a machine gun, cross the borders and start shooting some Turks maybe then they would be happy.

Over two thousand years ago when Athens was the superpower, controlling the whole known world and building magnificent temples for the twelve gods, Socrates was ready to say loud that the existence of one god was possible. Can’t this become a lesson? What everybody believes is personal and is protected by the constitution, can’t we understand this?

Personally I wish good luck to this woman and I consider a very wise decision of the socialist party to nominate her as a candidate. If we want to move to a more multicultural society that accepts and respects the differences we have to do it with radical changes and this is one of them. No change is easy and I doubt if the woman will be elected, but let’s hope that the reason she will not be elected won’t be her religious beliefs but that the opposition conservative party candidate is quite strong — something that might raise some suspicions, but still it is an example that must be followed and respected.

Don’t think that this is just a Greek phenomenon. In Finland, Asa and I were shocked a year ago when an MP of the Swedish People’s Party, Mrs. Eva Biaudet, told us in an interview that after a speech she made in the parliament about the Swedish minority’s rights in Finland another member of the parliament screamed, “If you don’t like it go to back to Sweden.” Oddly enough, out of all the Finns I met over the last five years she is more Finns than the most Finns I met, if there is a way to measure it.

Building boundaries

By Thanos Kalamidas

It is nearly twenty years since the fall of the Berlin wall and other walls seem to come just to remind us that boundaries are still here. The USA government builds a wall on the border with Mexico and Israel continues its wall to separate the Jewish population from the Palestinians ignoring borders and agreements.

The walls don’t just keep the outsiders out, but keeps the citizens prisoners to their own prejudices and boundaries. Boundaries because everyone was supposed to subscribe what’s happening. Between the USA and Cuba there is a sea with fish and wild waves, but has this ever stopped the illegal immigration the last 40 years? Why will a wall stop the Mexicans from illegally crossing the borders?

Walls only hide their own boundaries and by putting their head in the sand like an ostrich and avoiding the real problem. The solution should be found first before moving to building a wall. Prejudice has become a boundary for both Palestinians and Israelis. For every Israeli a Palestinian is a terrorist ready to kill everybody who is around. For every Palestinian, an Israeli represents the invader and murderer of children who occupies their land.

Palestine and Israel are extreme examples but you have only to check the news to see how many boundaries are around us in every single part of the world. Boundaries that have to do with nearly everything: color, religion, education, sexuality, past, future, cooking, language, accent, the list is endless.

Studying psychology I came across the question if you should cast people in wider teams and groups. Following what most of my professors said, I decided that every individual was exceptional and despite similarities you have to treat every patient individually and take care of his/her individual needs. Somewhere the same applies with the boundaries.

Before we move to social boundaries we have to do something with our personal boundaries. In a conversation we started with a friend in Ovi for about the leader of the left alliance in Finland I found that the word ‘communist’ had become a taboo. It was a boundary for joyful couple of hours and drink a few pints of beer. In the end I felt like a representative of the Greek Foreign Office occasionally saying things I didn’t really agree with.

For a certain Iranian who lives in Helsinki every American, as a principal, is a bad guy, a supporter of George W. Bush and it doesn’t matter how twisted he’s expressing himself his true is the only true. All of us added together combine to make society and we have the liberty to express ourselves and aware whether or not to influence that we all have our boundaries one way or another.

To cross the line is not difficult and the anti-Americanism of the Iranian becomes hate to anything American blinding him as a consequence and leading him to prejudice against innocent people making him no different than the usual skinheads. If that Turkish man would have crossed the line of his boundaries we could have both really had a good time drinking our pints and talking about the Finnish weather and football, instead of a tense half-an-hour and then avoiding one another for the rest of the night.

Having a kid, especially a daughter, has made me more aware of the boundaries I will have to cross in the next few years and the only thing I can think of is how the hell can I forbid my daughter from doing nothing more than the same thing that I did when I was a kid and a teenager. I think by just doing that I will have become a better person and my daughter might live in a society without a need for etiquettes and walls.
boundaries

Where are the ‘wows’?

By Asa Butcher

July 21, 1969: A small family sits in silence around their black and white television set in a town just outside London; it is approaching 0147. The images on the screen are difficult to make out clearly, but the sound is audible. After years of anticipation everybody is in awe of what is unravelling before them, the tension fills the room as the fuel begins to run dangerously low and then Neil Armstrong says, “Houston, Tranquillity Base here. The Eagle has landed.”

Three and a half decades later NASA successfully lands two probes on Mars, but families across the globe are not sat around their plasma television sets watching in amazement. What has happened to us? Mankind sending a probe to another planet is an incredible technological leap, but it seems as though it was not big enough to keep the world’s collective attention longer than a segment on the news.

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

We fail to comprehend the significance of these scientific discoveries; we just absorb them into our daily lives by buying the latest mobile telephone with its built-in ironing board and Geiger counter. We have even been desensitised to the value of money with recent estimates that the cost of the war in Iraq could be well over $1 trillion, an amount that has no perspective, no reality, you can’t even visualise an amount that has no perspective, no reality, you can’t even visualise. If people thought the cost of the war in Iraq could be well over $1 trillion, they would have passed a law immediately. In the wake of the terror attacks on America and London, both countries rapidly invested billions, created new laws designed to combat terrorism and threaten our basic human rights, yet abject poverty and terrorism and threaten our basic human rights have passed a law immediately. In the wake of the terror attacks on America and London, both countries rapidly invested billions, created new laws designed to combat terrorism and threaten our basic human rights, yet abject poverty and terrorism and threaten our basic human rights have passed a law immediately. In the wake of the terror attacks on America and London, both countries rapidly invested billions, created new laws designed to combat terrorism and threaten our basic human rights, yet abject poverty and terrorism and threaten our basic human rights have passed a law immediately.

The magnitude of natural phenomena, such as the Northern Lights and the Grand Canyon, are vastly reduced after appearing in the media countless times that when we actually go we already have an imagined experience; the moment is watered down and a disappointment. The world is hardening against Bush, Blair and the war against Iraq could be well over $1 trillion, an amount that has no perspective, no reality, you can’t even visualise

There is no respect, we have resigned ourselves to be ing helpless, toothless in the face of government and globalisation. McDonalds has spread across the globe, Bill Gates does monopolise the computer industry, what can we do about it and why should we care anyway? The world is hardening against Bush, Blair and the war against Iraq could be well over $1 trillion, an amount that has no perspective, no reality, you can’t even visualise. Elizabeth Taylor is lying in a hospital bed, the space shuttle Challenger explodes, Concorde is retired and hundreds have climbed Mount Everest, what is left to amaze, except death?

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

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

This doesn’t exist during the election period when they are both remembering their theoretical roots and become black and white by not agreeing on any simple issue. However, this doesn’t include their programs and manifests that seem to come out of the masters of copycat.

I used the example of the British prime minister and the American president just to emphasize the example, but that happens everywhere 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 where obvious and simple became blurred and despite the myths behind the reality about the all equal East European 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 and behind the mask there is only one face and that is Margaret Thatcher’s!
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.

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.

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
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.

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.

Born in July and given to us three months later, we were not to learn how effective they are at shedding fur until the following summer when we had tumbleweeds of the stuff blowing across our laminated floors - I almost fed one of the larger balls of fur one day. In a moment of desperation I decided it would be faster to abandon the brush and simply vacuum the excess hair from the bodies...now they are scared of the vacuum cleaner.

Our two black and white fuzz monkeys provided us with the practice needed to take care of a baby, which was born nine months later and, coincidentally, on the same day as the cats’ birthday. They helped me overcome my personal gross factor when it comes to dealing with poo and taught me a smidge of patience when it comes to repairing the damage they accidentally cause to my belongings, although I did get some revenge when I took them to be neutered.

My parents never allowed any pets in the house, plus they are bird lovers and have a slight grudge against the murdering felines...oh yeah, my mum is allergic too...so when my wife got her way and two cats entered my daily life I was forced to overcome many prejudices. I must admit that there is a Zen-like element to watching two kittens playing together, exploring new places and getting into trouble, so it didn’t take long for them to find a place in my heart.

We decided that Del and Dave would be house cats and not be allowed to roam the neighbourhood slaughtering the wildlife and defeating in other people’s gardens, so we invested in an elaborate multi-level cat tree that has now become their sanctuary from our eleven-month-old daughter’s curious fingers. Her arrival has also meant that many of their favourite toys have been packed away because babies seem to view the world as a free-for-all buffet.

There were many foreboding stories about cats and babies told to us while my wife was pregnant, including the one where a cat chooses the cot to sleep, but we are currently more worried about the cats. Curiosity did not kill the cat, it was the fact that a baby suddenly appeared from thin air and made a grab for their tail or decided that their food looks far tastier than the mush Mummy serves.

Cat food has been problematic over the past few months with both animals becoming increasingly fussy over what is in their bowl. Okay, it doesn’t look like a mouse, it doesn’t smell like a mouse and it is curiously still for a mouse, so you can’t blame them for turning their noses up at mealtime, but we do blame them. These creatures sniff poo in the litter tray and lick their arses clean, but they refuse the expensive chicken cat food…I just don’t get it.

I have heard many people say that if they were an animal they would love to be a cat, well I don’t agree. Have you ever tried to wash yourself with your tongue? I would choose a sponge any day, while the whole hairball saga is just too tiresome. I do have to begrudgingly admit that the stroking cats enjoy would not be refused if offered to me one evening, plus it is sweet the way that Del sleeps on my chest at night; I just wish he would point his tail away from my face.

Last night I watched ‘Ishtar’, 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.

Cat food has been problematic, excluding the ones that Hitch did himself, and that was the bizarre version by Gus Van Sant in 1998 that reproduced the 1960 version nearly shot-for-shot. Why this was necessary will remain a mystery for me because to me it is like taking an airbrush and copying the Mona Lisa - the same but just using modern tools. The Van Sant remake did manage to break-even upon its release, but it was a waste of $20m.

The latest casualty has been this year’s ‘Poseidon’ that has currently managed to return just $47m of its $160m budget. When I first saw the trailer my reaction was horror, especially since it followed the trailer for ‘Miami Vice’, because was shocked to see that they would want to remake the 1972 original with Gene Hackman. ‘The Poseidon Adventure’ was the first and best disaster movie I have seen and it happily put the nail in the coffin of my harboring dreams.

To my knowledge, only one Alfred Hitchcock film has been remade, excluding the ones that Hitch did himself, and that was 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.

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On the other hand, $20m is pocket money when compared to the $110m spent on updating the 1957 Best Picture winner ‘Around the World in 80 Days’, $95m on ‘The Alamo’ and $80m on ‘The Manchurian Candidate’. Why, why, why? Steve Coogan is no David Niven, Billy Bob Thornton is definitely not John Wayne and Denzel Washington is not Frank Sinatra. Yes, all three remakes bombed.

What made Michael Caine’s past movies to attractive to Hollywood studios over the past few has baffled me, especially since they keep flopping at the box office, I mean how can you save the 2004 remake of ‘ Alfie’ and Sylvester Stallone was out of his depth in the 2000 remake of ‘Get Carter’, although Mark Wahlberg managed to break the trend by bringing financial success to the 2005 - there’s always one that slips through.

Hollywood will never learn its lesson and will continue its ‘split 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.
It was a rainy evening

and I felt tired. I don’t like the weather and you don’t want to understand.

...a winter evening!!!

I said delete... delete... delete!

Damn, delete.

It is a rainy evening

...a winter evening in the city!!!

I must delete some of these files. Too many mp3 and videos in here....

Posted by Thanos / Asa
It had been over a couple of years since I first heard about blogs before I decided to enter the blogosphere myself. Again I decided to enter this blog-universe for all the wrong reasons. Curiosity was my motivation and what was happening with the blog a friend of mine has.

I created my first blog trying to find out what's really going on with my site since this friend had suggested that in the blog you have better control over who's coming and who's leaving, and since I'm a dinosaur myself he continued explaining that I will get a better understanding in coding, how stats work and how you can attract visitors.

Eight months later he was proved correct in every single remark he made. Lately I even managed to change a whole template to the way I like it and now I'm moving into more complicated tasks, and that somehow gives you the feeling that you are in control, you can choose photos and fonts, you can make little personal jokes, you are the only one who can see them and understand them: just like I always did with my drawings.

Stats have been always something that confused me. Here was me with a monthly magazine and every time I was asked how many visits the magazine has I was feeling worse and worse by saying that it makes from two hundred to four hundred a day. Sometimes I had to deal with smiles of sympathy and things like, "You have a long way to go!" Of course, I would ask back, "And what are you numbers?" To get the answer, "60,000 a month, at least!"

Sixty thousand a month was a number I could not even reach and it was making me more and more worried, since I wasn't even a tenth of that. I had heard the excuses: monthly magazine people cannot visit your magazine every day because it changes once a month, but still...I was getting more and more frustrated.

In the blogs, things are much, much simpler, or at least for a dinosaur like me. There I understood that they were talking about visits, while I was talking about average unique URL visits per day. Wow, suddenly 60,000 visits sounded like a...joke!

The last one was communication, visitors. All my life I have hated stereotypes, especially since I was often a victim of them being a Greek living abroad. I usually ignore all this deep analysis about bloggers in newspapers and magazines; I'm not around thirty and I have a quite an active social life, I'm definitely not a computer geek, although I do think computers are fantastic...typewriters and my ego had a lot of ways to express its opinions in public before the arrival of the blog. Actually, many people didn't understand why I need a blog as well, but that's another story.

The blogging community has impressed me in many ways and, of course, I'm not judging anybody, like everything in life, there are positive and negative parts, so why should blogging become an exception? Sometimes I enjoy reading the news from a blog more than I would do reading it from a news agency. Oddly, it seems that some bloggers are faster at bringing the news than the news agencies, even the world's bigger ones.

Due to blogging I have found myself talking with a young painter in Japan and a photographer in Chile, while thanks to the bloggers I found a couple of long lost friends. I'm not suggesting to everybody to open a blog, on the contrary, I explain that to do so, first of all, you must enjoy it, but, as I said in the beginning, this trip that started eight months ago gave me a lot of answers and far more new friends. Save and publish!
Exit soulless energy, 
exit drown reply. 
Use whatever it takes, 
a reunion of elves, 
an oceansized crash test.

Lead me on my dreams 
winter route prophecy! 
Celebrate, pose well 
and shoot high! 
Guns can't kill what soldiers can't see.

Kiteless, random power 
Clear well my head.

When I start writing a post for my blog, I do not have a pre- 
conceived, conscious idea of what I will write about. Very often I will start on a specific topic, describe a particular setting and somewhere along the way end up in unexpected places. However, there is always a very specific feeling I have on my mind that I would like to convey, a message, my way of interpreting the scene I have described. That is why I choose the titles of my posts very carefully to show exactly that, the essence of what I intended to write about. My post titles are in that sense the best guide to my blog, and putting them together in a small poem, I think they describe quite well why I am blogging.
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