Seventh day
Seventh dwarf
Seventh sin
Seventh sea
Seventh muse
Seventh wonder
Seventh Ovi

iFormat Luck in politics
HoriZones Luck be a story
S#&T Happens Better luck next time
Flash Rabbit doping scandal
fArt Shortest shorts
iKritic Eco my thoughts
Hello and welcome to another issue of our magazine. The seventh issue, the lucky number. It’s that time of the year when all of us are somewhere between our summer holidays and trying to get back to work, and I have to admit that besides my wish to win the lotto or something like that I don’t feel very lucky.

In a time of secrets and cryptography with The Da Vinci Code making a real hit on the book stands, it seemed to us that it was logical that our seventh issue should get a mystical dimension. So even God had a rest on the seventh day and we are just coming back from our rest, the week has seven days named from the seven visual planets, the muses are seven like the seven classic arts and the Seven Wonders, the seven orders of architecture and the seven seas, not to forget the seven dwarfs.

But there is the dark side as well, the seven witches, the seven sisters, the seven deadly sins, the seven levels of hell in Dante’s Inferno. Again, hope comes in the end with the seven colours of the rainbow, the seven basic colours. Finally, number seven is the lucky number in many civilizations from the Ancient Greeks to the Japanese and definitely the lucky number for the fans of dice games.

One thing is for sure, we do need a bit of luck and this is the unpredictable part of life. The part that makes things come together or fall apart. Here I have to mention my ancient ancestors and remind you what they used to say: ‘Don’t expect everything from the gods, move your hand a bit’.

I think that unpredictable hand of luck has made us write about the summer blues for this issue, plus a series of whys, umbrellas, a future shot, the day after, aborting your business and luck versus brains.

Asa continues his alphabet with the letter ‘u’ and writes about the e-Diaspora, while in his iKritic he is reviewing Umberto Eco. John is in a very poetical period, even his summer blues report carries something poetic. John reminded, me once more, how much our inner feelings influence our writing and opinions, which ties in well with Asa’s interest in semantics and Umberto Eco. Asa is obviously in a good mood since he became a father having an opinion about nearly everything and writes a very touching article about address books.

Tony is here as well, adding from England how luck works with the Dow Jones and my usual cynical self may make you worry about a dark future with kings and presidents under the threat of oil and nuclear power. Juliana is on holiday and Mari joins us for the first time in U Do I Don’t, but I hope she will write for Ovi soon. I hope Juliana remembers that to keep spirits high you must always remember that there is a bright side in life.

Oliver takes us once more to South America to remind us that choices have nothing to do with luck but they are one of the primary human rights. There is also a fantastic drawing in black and white and a new Flash creation both by Oliver. I have been drawing for the last…hmm…forty years and he said that he made it in five minutes using a PC drawing pad - I started screaming. Oliver has the talent and we are really looking forward to see more of his work.

Nic and Emma both give us poetry and in one of Nic’s verses, she writes: “The harder we resist change - the more likely it is to happen” - I think that says everything I feel. Finally, we have Kevin, a new friend of Ovi Magazine, an Englishman in Finland who often shares his feelings of living abroad over a pint of beer with Asa and me. He’s talking about defensive football using the Greek football team as an example.

I’m planning to answer Kevin’s article through the Ovi Forum, which reminds me that you should visit our forum, add your thoughts and opinions and start discussions that we are willing to follow. Don’t forget to check out our blog friends in the iBlog directory and the iPromote part of the magazine. You will definitely find something that interests you.

Till next month

Good luck

Thanos
Last night’s ridiculous lotto numbers were 2 – 17 – 39 – 1 – 14 – 25, so much for issue seven of Ovi Magazine being lucky. Should my lucky numbers ever make a millionaire one day I will be telling Thanos exactly what I think of him and his new haircut, but he will have to wait a while longer before he is showered with compliments and receives small percentage of my winnings.

Issue 7 is about luck; the lack of luck, the luck of the lucky and its various applications in life both lucky and, err, unlucky. Luckily, you should have hit the jackpot by now and understood our theme focuses upon fortune, chance, fate, coincidence and destiny, sometimes.

Naturally the magazine has more than that because we have been working extremely hard while others have been rubbing sun cream into their hot torsos, watching the World Championships in Helsinki or enjoying cans of chilled champagne. We have roped in a few more guests this month, they were wandering the streets looking for something to do and they have each submitted work that threatens my reputation of unbridled brilliance.

Thanos and I do not mind sharing the spotlight; in fact, we welcome it, so remember if you think you can do better send us some proof and we’ll probably drown our sorrows in 40% proof. This month has not allowed me much of a chance to indulge in the booze due to little Katie being the best waste of time I have ever had. It has been a great first six weeks, especially the compliments and looks we get while out with her – my ego can just about handle it.

There are over forty pages of new content in this issue, so make sure you bookmark us and begin a world record attempt at reading it all. Don’t forget that we appreciate any feedback you guys and gals may have, so make sure you write in the forum – you don’t have to register but it makes our numbers look cool if you do.

Before I sign off and catch the remainder of the summer sun, I must tell you about a village of 500 people in Finland that is home to a village shop with an annual turnover of £50 million, earning itself the title ‘World’s Largest Village Shop’. The shop sells everything from car parts to perfume, while the piece de resistance is a 15m-high illuminated horseshoe (upside down though). The name of this village is Tuuri, which happens to mean ‘luck’ – how appropriate to end my editorial with that little known fact.

Good luck to you all!

Asa
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 had 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 how many times the word ‘luck’ comes to our mouth. You are lucky to have good health, you are lucky to have a job, you are lucky to have health insurance. Politicians use the word far more times. You are lucky to have Michael Howard as an opposition. Mickey Mouse was more popular.

Think seriously, what do all the politicians and their followers wish each other all the time, especially the night before the elections? Good luck!
It seems that for the Mullahs in Teheran and their lackeys in civilian clothes it came the day after. Even though they promised to continue talks, the nuclear factory of Isfahan is nearly ready to open.

Surprisingly till now, Washington has shown an unbelievable self-possession supporting every effect from the EU. In the new puzzle we have to add Russia and China since the first one is the provider of all the material the Iranians need to build their nuclear factory and the Chinese are the biggest buyers of Iranian oil.

The new president promised the Europeans that he will help to find a solution and, trying to earn time, he promised that he will send soon his pleadings for a solution in all this misunderstanding, as he called it. The final world, at least for the EU and the USA, belongs to the inspectors of the UN and especially to Mr. Mohammed El Baradei, head of the IAEA, who thinks that Iran will have to return to negotiations soon.

This disturbing wait is only upset by Israel who threatens to bomb the factory. The war hawks in Washington are getting ready again. Somehow the American army and the Pentagon say that they found Iranian weapons in Iraq, which sounds like a message: Get ready because we are coming.

Teheran answers that the nuclear factory is part of their rights and their needs, and nobody has any right to forbid it as long it is necessary for their energy and the good of their people. Words like that make the West more suspicious. Things are not easy in the Security Council, where Russia and China have a powerful veto and many interests in Iran. So let’s see what the day after brings for the Mullahs and unfortunately to the innocent people of Iran.

The Persian Gulf has 60% of the confirmed deposits of oil and represents 40% of international exports, so where does all this money go? Most of the time this untraceable money is moving around the world through banks and companies, most of which are based in western capitals.

According to all the international financial institutes, the sultans of the Persian Gulf, and thanks to Allah for the increase in oil prices, they hold the biggest possible liquidity of money. The only thing that has changed lately, especially after 9-11, is that all this money is invested in domestic enterprises or in the wider region, not in the west as it used to be.

During the second Gulf War, the stock market in Jeddah went up 76%, while neighboring United Arab Emirates, with 10% of the international oil deposits, began investing in financial services, tourism enterprises and abroad in the aluminum industry and European enterprises. Compare that to the huge investments in American enterprises during the ’70s, ’80s and ’90s that monopolized all the oil investments.

Abu Dhabi owns 6.5% of the car manufacturer Volkswagen, while the investment giant Dubai International Capital bought the famous Madame Tussauds Museum for £800,000.

Kuwait, with 10% of the international oil deposits, once again made a record income in 2003 increasing their savings to 7.4 billion dollars. The stock market in Qatar rocketed up 70% and all that even though modernization and democratization is not their strong point.

However much these countries mix the 21st century with the Middle Ages, the growth of their markets is faster than the speed of light. The index of Shua Capital Arab that follows more than 254 companies of the region shows a growth of 67% and has been over 60% for the last two years. Equally high are the profits of the investors. According to studies, most of the investments are in stocks and land which excuses, to a certain level, the fear some western companies have in a coming crash.

While the Koran forbids the use of ‘interest’, more Arabic companies are becoming involved with European banks through their labyrinth chain of companies, so since 1996 all the money of the bank Al Jazeera, billions of dollars and Euros are administrated by banks, like Citigroup, HSBC, Deutsche Bank, ABN-Amro, Societe General, INP-Paribas and others… all in the name of Allah.
Predicting the future and its technology is a great game. In 1998, I wrote my brief vision of the future and, for once, it is positive. No aliens or meteorite catastrophes, just an optimistic glimpse of what we hope to be. Based in 2018, a mere 13 years away, some of the predictions have already happened, some are close to happening and others are way off. Imagine in 1992 describing what 2005 would be like...

The eyes of nearly 11 billion people are fixed firmly to their huge plasma television screens; they wait for the first pictures of human beings walking on the red surface of Mars.

Science fiction? No, it is science fact and this historical event has taken until 2018 to realise. Despite many setbacks, the rocket was launched on schedule and was witnessed by the largest television audience since the Queen Mother’s funeral.

The huge coverage was only possible due to Global Net International and the blanket of satellites that they own orbiting the Earth, although since they are the only broadcasting company and financed part of the Mars mission it was not surprising.

After the media implosion in the early 21st Century only a few companies survived, they belonged to the ‘billionaire boys club’. Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch and Disney Global became the strongest of the remaining few; the enormity of their empires enabled them to slowly purchase and amalgamate television networks, radio stations, newspapers and exercised control over the Internet.

The media implosion occurred over a few years (2001-2003) and became inevitable when the ‘big three’ started expanding into all areas and could provide quick access to large amounts of information, programmes and the web at very cheap prices. During these two years businesses across the world switched to one of the three new operating systems.

Eventually every computer was running with one of the three systems, independent companies’ profits quickly turned into deficits leaving them open for purchase or bankruptcy. Within eighteen months, the big three had virtual control and began to concentrate on research in all areas of media technology. Technological research became the key to success, every company was looking for ways to improve their personal systems and enhance the lives of their customers.

The employees of firms that had been purchased became part of the research programme and departments would concentrate on certain areas. Huge bonuses and lucrative incentives were offered to those who made significant breakthroughs or offered viable ideas.

Discoveries began to emerge and once perfection was achieved, they went straight on sale or simply upgraded into their operating system, thus enticing customers away from the other two giants, ensuring some small level of competition.

The first major breakthrough was made by one of the minor companies, Intel. The introduction of the 350 million-transistor microprocessor in 2005, saw research programmes pushed further forward and strengthened Intel’s position in computer technology.

Intel rapidly became one of the worldwide major companies and placed them among Coca Cola, Sony Philips and Mercedes Ford who had almost sold their one-billion water-powered automobile. Business across the world was booming, the perfection of videophones allowed real time global conferences at virtually zero cost with crystal pictures. The introduction of high-bandwidth satellite connection prompted more home based business and the access to immense educational material improves daily.

The completion of the Gutenberg project in 2001 enabled every household access to over 100,000 books.

The escalating violence in schools, especially against teachers, prompted many education authorities in America and Britain to set up lessons based at home, this was achieved using the internet and special programs designed by Microsoft. Pupils log on to class sites and are taught by teachers miles away, completed work can be e-mailed and students awaiting exam results can ease the tension and access them immediately. The potential abuse of the system by pupils is monitored by a credit system, credits are used to earn time watching television, surfing the web and participating in other activities.

The improvement of education and employment in America has left presidential candidates concentrating on other issues such as crime, health and international relations. The introduction of e-voting saw the largest ever vote in a presidential election and the result gave America its first female leader, Mrs Hillary Clinton.

The high profile relationship with China has left the United States looking over its shoulder often and despite many attempts at different treaties offered over the past few years they do not seem interested.

Their development in computers and weapons have been a considerable concern to America and the rest of the world and the recent turbulence in their government put everybody on high alert.

Despite the lack of cooperation by China, it has provided the world with scientific breakthroughs in agriculture, the countries intense research program discovered many new and improved farming methods that would simply feed the nation’s huge population and not plunge it into a devastating famine.

Another global concern about China was the potential of each Chinese citizen wanting a car; shockwaves of horror flew around the world as the environmental effect would be devastating. After months of negotiations, Mercedes Ford promised to build factories in China and supply them with their new car that runs exclusively on water and emits no dangerous fumes.

The deal with Ford prompted China to consider a treaty with America and create a global community in which importing and exporting goods would accompany the existing deals around the globe. The unification of the world allowed the new President of the United States to initiate the Mars Mission. Every country gave its backing, offered to develop the technology and fund the project. To assist with the funding and research of the mission all of the super-companies donated billions towards it and promised to support it all the way.

The mission required all of the new technology that had been discovered and incorporated the near complete Intel development project, a billion-transistor 10GHz microprocessor which would enable all the spacecrafts systems to operate smoothly and independently.

The growth of the ‘big three’ over the past decade has become a phenomenal success and has left them deciding what to attempt now and still appeal to its customers. The result of a worldwide survey gave them the answer and it was decided to link the satellites and form Global Net International which would provide infinite access to all three operating systems on every terminal on and off the planet.
Abort your business

That’s not the worst problem because here in Mexico I have known many kids that live badly with the money their parents get through cleaning or other jobs. In fact, I lived with one girl named Mary in my department in Vallarta because I couldn’t let her live the horrible life she was living.

She had three sisters; the first over 25-years-old left the family almost eight years ago so she could have a new life. The second is over 20 and is living with a girlfriend because of the same reasons. The third is 20-year-old Mary, who didn’t hesitate to move in with me after I asked her. I started helping her after I saw the house with no floor, just mud and the walls were just some simple stones.

Anyway, the real problem wasn’t money; it was the father beating his wife in front of the kids, the kids when they tried to intervene or just when he was drunk, which was often. I don’t want to mention more details here, but the fact was those parents shouldn’t have had kids. But they had, so they treated them badly because they didn’t know better. The fourth one, the little sister, is almost 17 and she is still living there.

Ok, now back to the subject of abortion. I have met Mary’s friends and have to say that - I don’t know how - they just don’t live in the real world. One is an obese 17-year-old drug addict, with a child, and the saddest part is that they are PROUD of having them. The other is a beautiful girl that had her kid at 16 and they all live in poverty, but she feels the same thing - she is “proud”.

Who knows if they all will follow their promises to “maintain” them? If they were more educated here in Mexico many of these kids wouldn’t have to bring more kids into a horrible suffering life though. My former teacher and Philosopher that went to jail with me earlier this year for protecting the trees and parks of Vallarta told me he had a problem a few days ago.

His daughter, aged 20, had a child one year ago and he told me that he asked his daughter if she wanted an abortion he would help her (don’t forget here you go to jail). She said no, she wanted her baby and he able to be so “proud” like all the other girls with babies. Now her boyfriend or the father of her baby has tricked her by pretending to be her ex-boyfriend during a chat online. She started to fall back in love with her “ex” (how stupid) and now the boyfriend went to talk with her mom about this situation.

Women have the kids and we men have no idea of having kids, so the first ones to shut up should be us! Women have had a hard time over the last years, especially when they had NO rights. Today it’s different, but how much? Going to jail for aborting a child from a rape, is that a Human Right? Is it OUR right to decide the good and the bad in this life? We aren’t God. If God exists, He certainly didn’t write the Bible like many of you poor religious fellas think. Please let’s hope God will lead you to the light because if you remember Jesus said something interesting, “Don’t judge others”.

Well, they didn’t tell his girlfriend, but they hoped she wouldn’t do something stupid like go back to him to Vallarta by having a kid with another man. Her dad (my former teacher) told her about it because he wanted her to know the truth and now everybody is mad at him. Now, in this case, I think abortion would have helped because many are just too young to have kids. Life is more than becoming 20 and then having the responsibility of raising children and giving them a mom and dad.

It’s not fair to have children if you’re going to be out with other men and doing the opposite of giving your kids an established life with a father and a mother. I hear from all places this “Be against abortion!” Do they realize there are real people with real life behind that word? Do they realize that many people can’t afford to have more babies and it is their life, it doesn’t concern you one bit what they do with it. Or are you there to feed them?

This subject is too big for the discussions to end, but here’s a reminder of REAL problems that haven’t been fixed in the world before you think about sticking your nose in other people’s business.

Africa - No condoms
Canada- Killing of seals
Muslims in Turkey - Women are worth less than garbage
Trees and forests - Over 270,000 trees disappear every day for our paper, furniture, Kleenex, etc.
Humans - Don’t know how to handle their intelligence, which is less than 10% of their brain capacity

Amen!
August 1945, the President of the United States Harry Truman, ignoring the leaders of his army, Generals Marshall, MacArthur and Eisenhower - the very same ones who had already won the war in Europe - decided to bomb Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945) using one bomb with uranium and one with plutonium, for the first time in human history.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of those two days. It’s a very sad 60th anniversary that oddly is degraded even by the Japanese because they don’t want to ‘upset’ their American friends. It seems that Japan is the only friend the US manages to keep in the continent.

It is the worst tragedy in human history and was a result of a fake question President Truman asked in 1945. According to studies made by his military advisers and Secretary of State Mr. James Burns, an invasion of Japan was going to cost over 500,000 lives for the allies and an equally high number for the Japanese, while dropping a bomb that had been tested through the Manhattan Project would leave an estimated 150,000 Japanese dead.

Harry Truman’s decision was excused as ethical since it saved the lives of thousands of Americans when everybody was tired of five years of war and thousands of dead around the world. What he really ignored were the consequence of his decision. Harry Truman offered two solutions for the end of the world: the bomb or more dead. He believed that this would scare the Japanese in continuing the war. Harry Truman, his administration and the rest of the American government never explained why they needed a second atom bomb three days later. Wasn’t one example of a biblical catastrophe enough?

Perhaps the truth lays elsewhere. In 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt replaced his former Vice President Henry Wallace, a man who was working hard for the New Deal and often visited Russia with Harry Truman. Harry Truman, from the other side and a group of advisers that surrounded him, were anti-communist with only one target, to stop Russian plans for expanding in Asia, who were asking for their share after the meeting in Yalta where Stalin agreed to help the allies in the war against Japan.

The truth was that Harry Truman didn’t even need the atom bomb to force the Japanese to surrender. By the end of June 1945, Tokyo was a flattened city after the constant bombardment and it was the same in all the industrial cities of Japan. The embargo the US navy had put on Japan was taking Japan into starvation with a total lack of oil and food; they were lacking even basic food supplies.

There was only one important issue for the Japanese and they wouldn’t surrender before they could sort it out. It was the destiny of Emperor Hirohito. Harry Truman’s administration stopped the negotiations with the Japanese in May 1945 using the excuse that they would accept surrender on only one term: the survival of the Emperor-God. Their answer included the Japanese word “mokusatsu” which the Americans incorrectly translated as ‘refuse’ instead of ‘retain’.

The second bomb was just to make sure that the message was delivered to the Russians. 200,000 people died in the first week with thousands more to follow in the following decades. Leukemia became part of the life and birth defects are part of the Japanese reality. A reality they still live with in Japan.

By Thanos Kalamidas

An atomic why?
Indigenous fights

By Asa Bucher

At the pinnacle of the Earth are an indigenous people who have managed to survive the brutality of the Vikings, colonization by the Swedes and today are still fighting cultural genocide. This First Nation is called Sami and inhabits Lapland, which consists of the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula of the extreme northwest of Russia.

Within the arbitrary line known as the Arctic Circle, there are approximately 85,000 Sami living in tribes that share a common history, language, culture, livelihood, way of life and identity, but are not one homogeneous group. These groups have their own identities, promote various agendas and some have access to contemporary media. However, many are victims of tyranny, receive no Human Rights, fear for the safety of their community and struggle against the onslaught of globalisation.

Determining whether somebody is eligible to be classed a Sami one of the following criteria needs to be met. He/she considers themselves a Sami; has Sami as his/her first language, or whose father, mother or one of whose grandparents has Sami as their first language (mother tongue); has a father or mother who satisfies the above-mentioned conditions for being a Sami.

Each tribe has its own variety of traditional clothing and cultural expressions, like singing and handicrafts, however the greatest difference is the Sami dialect that becomes mutually incomprehensible from one end of the Sami nation to the other. Language is an essential part of the Sami identity and it has been under threat for many centuries. In 1920’s Sweden, a race-segregation policy was introduced and the teaching of the Sami language was forbidden in schools.

In all the countries the Sami are spread across, they have full citizenship, but they are not recognised as an indigenous group by all governments who prefer to treat them as a minority, thereby avoiding international legislation for indigenous people or agreements such as the International Labour Organization declaration:

“To the indigenous peoples in independent countries, considered indigenous because they descend from populations which inhabited the country or a geographical region belonging to the country during an era of conquest or colonization and the establishment of the actual borders of the present states and which, no matter their legal situation, still preserve all their appropriate social, economic, cultural institutions or remnants of them.”

Both the United Nations and European Union recognise the Sami as an indigenous people and representatives from the Sami nation are able to join UN global indigenous projects and people’s conferences. Both Finland and Sweden are also members of these same organizations yet they refer to the Sami as a minority. On the surface this may be a minor difference, but this has far-reaching consequences regarding issues of land rights and the preservation of culture.

Currently the situation is far worse within Sweden as the government continues to break the UN Declaration of Human Rights guaranteeing freedom to both land and water. Across most of Scandinavia, the Swedes have been the predominant antagonist throughout Sami history with their early encouragement of colonialism, which strongly mirrored the problems that faced the Native Americans and their land.

In the mid-16th Century, the Swedish King Gustav Vasa declared that “all unused lands belong to God, us and the Swedish Crown”, which initiated an emigration northward to Lapland. As the frontiers of the country were being encouraged to move to the northern regions with generous offers of land, water rights and tax allowances, the effects upon the Sami were devastating. Farming and cattle ranches became the key source of income for the settlers and this conflicted strongly with the traditional Sami lifestyle of hunting, fishing and farming for the food to feed their family.

Intensive methods used by the settlers brought several species to the brink of extinction thereby destroying the economic foundation of the Sami hunting culture bringing widespread starvation to many tribes. Across the Atlantic, the problems were echoed as the Native Americans watched helplessly as their colonizers slaughtered millions of buffalo depriving them of a major food source.

These atrocities continued for many centuries and even in Sweden and Finland today the Sami are still fighting for their rights to land and water. Methods for eviction may have changed from brute force to court cases but the voice of the Sami nation is getting louder due to the increase of media at their disposal and the growing area it can reach. Mediums ranging from the Internet to radio, newspapers to television are dedicated to high-lighting and fighting for the agendas of the Sami nation across all the countries.
Access to any media can be a very powerful tool for an indigenous group when fighting governments or economically strong companies and can be viewed from several perspectives. It substantially aids in the acquisition of knowledge concerning the processes that are taking place outside the community and it is a device for maintaining and evolving the Sami’s own culture.

Equality and freedom of speech have been distinctly absent from issues involving the Sami and now with the availability of different mediums this has been changed to provide a clear democratic function. Presenting their views and promoting their agendas has given them an essential platform now the majority of their struggles are carried out within the courtroom and in the national press.

Every demonstration and act of civil disobedience dominated the headlines of Norway’s press, news programmes and radio shows. Sami activists staged hunger strikes, sit down strikes at the Prime Minister’s Office and extremist sabotage at the construction site ensured issues continued to dominate the public arena debate concerning Sami politics and issues. Eventually all the campaigning resulted in the state administration resolving to distribute financial allocations to the Sami Council. Norway has now come to recognise the Sami as an indigenous group, in regard to the UN Declaration of Indigenous People and Human Rights, but it is the only country to have done so.

Although Russia and Finland have so far rejected to recognise their indigenous population, Sweden has stubbornly maintained their refusal to give the Swedish Sami any rights to land and continues to support legal cases challenging them. Strong elements of colonization and cultural genocide continues with guns being replaced with summons, placing the Sami in a no win situation since the total of trial costs could bankrupt them if they win and an eviction notice if they lose. Despite the regional power of Sami radio and newspapers, their fight rarely gets national coverage - let alone international coverage - this has led to them to place their agendas online.

Over the last few years, the Sami have utilised this medium to its full advantage moving the majority of their problems, arguments and community into the domain of the World Wide Web. Their main task is to stop the racist propaganda, lies and disinformation being disseminated by those they are fighting, spread their message and situation across the globe and to re-unite members of the Sami community living all over the world.

Located within the websites created by members of the Sami community are many pages dedicated to combating the racism and lies that are still widespread in Sweden and Finland. Both governments are shown to regard the Sami nation as savages and racially inferior; notions that have not altered since the 16th Century. The representation of their race has had disturbing similarities to the British colonization of Africa.

Since the official start of colonizing the Sami centuries ago the mood has not altered, the Swedes believed themselves to be a civilized and rational race living the way God intended, while the Sami were a barbaric, savage and uncivilized people surviving in an uncharted, Godless, wilderness. Images of the Sami began to be sent back to Stockholm and other large Swedish cities depicting their physical and mental characteristics as abnormal.

The Swedes followed the British idea of classification and used the pretence of science to prove that the Sami were an inferior race. Hjalmar Lundborg, a Swedish race biologist, and Professor Gustav von Dübén, a man who collected Sami skulls to exhibit the difference in character and psychology, formed the idea that the Sami were unfit to decide over their own lives and destiny, which is still a notion applied to any government policy regarding native matters today.

Opposing a racist government that believes its indigenous nation is inferior requires a powerful and equal platform from which to argue their case. Since the Sami are dealing with a major ideological state apparatus, they must use another ideology producer, the media, increasingly more. A great deal of the contemporary media reaches far beyond the reach of any single government and is able to cross borders with ease bringing the message to supporters and sympathisers.

Issues of land arguments have been continued online with explanations of the Sami’s plights against many different antagonists over many hundreds of years. Every page is backed up with evidence and links to enable the reader to discover for himself the extent of exploitation the Sami has dealt with. Timelines, images, first-hand accounts and news articles all strengthen the case in favour of the Sami, which would not be found among the defence evidence during another land trial.

Many of the Sami victims of economic ruin, eviction or just grew tired of being the target of ridicule emigrated back to Stockholm and other large Swedish cities like Stockholm and Oslo, which is ironic to think that the colonizers have now been colonised.
The religious fanaticism, the tyranny, the extreme wealth and luxury and their alliance with the USA are a principism for the kingdom with the richest oil deposits in the world.

In 1932, under his name, King Abdelaziz united all the Arabs of the peninsula and called his new country Saudi Arabia. In the beginning this country was totally poor until they discovered oil. 1938 exports started and since then everything changed. In only a few years the poor camel riders found themselves in the best lounges with unbelievable money and powerful friends.

In 1943, President Roosevelt signed a Bill according to which the protection of Saudi Arabia became of vital interest to the United States. The Saudis, in exchange, offered the rights of the oil excavation and production to American companies and since then nothing has been able to move or shake this ‘friendship’.

Not even the role of the United States in the foundation of the nation of Israel, the Arab Israeli war, not even the activities of Bin Laden and the exposure that the USA and the increasing unemployment and financial insecurity, between the normal people has left Al Qaida as the unofficial but most real opposition to the United States.

Occasionally the United States lectures their Arab friends about democracy or human rights, but in a way that doesn’t impress anybody, especially the Arabs because the Middle Ages is still there.

In the area is the most extreme and dogmatic practice of Islam where the purse looks to the west but their heart and brain belong to Islam. The women have absolutely no rights; they cannot leave the house alone or drive a car.

The 15,000 members of the Saud family who rule the country are rich and, depending upon their position, everybody has a say governing the country that is the family business. Censorship of the press is total, there are no political parties and the only opposition is very small and scattered is based in London.

For the first time this year Saudi Arabia saw a form of elections with the municipality elections and that was not a step towards democracy, but a favor to satisfy their American friends after 9-11. The only thing we can hope is that even this skinny touch of democracy will change something in the people’s mind.

What the Americans miss is that the next step for the Saud’s tyranny is not a democratic system of many parties like the western model but an extreme Islamic regime like Iran, the same one that Bin Laden has been dreaming of and that’s perhaps one of the reasons Bin Laden’s theories win over more people in Saudi Arabia all the time.

The religious fanaticism of the Saudis, their anger for the slavish attitude of their country towards the United States and the increasing unemployment and financial insecurity between the normal people has left Al Qaida as the unofficial but most real opposition to the Saudi royal family.

New King Abdullah, even though he tries to be less pro-American as his late brother, knows very well that the future of his dynasty depends upon his allies and mainly his American friends. The Americans know that as well. So nothing new will come from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
How many frogs have you kissed today?
Luck is not something this Yank has had too much of lately. I’ve spent the month since graduation plastering my walls with rejection letters; my girlfriend of four years and I recently split up, and—to top it off—I’m car was towed last week—to the tune of $100. But I’m not writing to rant about my streak of bad luck.

I’ve realized that bad luck can actually be good for something: stories. Who really wants to hear about someone else’s big break? Remember, misery loves company, so for this issue I thought I’d pull a recent journal excerpt from a, slightly worse than normal day, in the recent life of Johnny P.

August 8, 2005: Summertime Blues

I spent the weekend in Chicago visiting Abby [my ex-girlfriend]. It was the first time I’ve heard her refer to me as her “ex” boyfriend…I wonder why we fight so much when we’re not even dating…still in love, or realizing the opposite? Got lost on the way out of Chicago and found—what has to be—the street with the highest density of stop lights on this side of the Atlantic.

An hour later I found my way to the Interstate back to Madison. No traffic lights on the toll way, but rush hour traffic keeps this at a standstill. To pass the time I decided to call my blog. That’s right, my blog! I’m only slightly embarrassed to admit that I recently entered the blogosphere. It never seemed appealing to me until I discovered that you can actually call your blog and leave a message as an audio file.

While I was driving, I left a few messages for myself until I finally lost interest and became much more focused on the mounting pressure in my bladder. But, as I pulled into the last toll booth en route to Madison, I thought it might be fun to record my interaction with the toll worker. It turned out to be quite a chat.

He told me that he, along with 50 fellow employees, are going to be laid off at the end of the month. As his socks honked and folks hollered behind us, I realized I was capturing a rare interaction: a real conversation and connection at an interstate toll booth. I was so excited by this nerdy catch that I managed to erase the entry instead of posting it.

Infuriated and convinced that it was my duty to share the plight of the Illinois toll workers with the world, I decided to ignore my urinary urges and turn around for a second take. This time around was no good, the guy had little patience for a nerd trying to record a conversation with a cell phone.

After a third time through, and $3 later, I finally got a decent take for the thousands of folks who read my blog daily—hey the theme this week is ‘luck’, not ‘honesty’. Suddenly the urge to find a restroom was gone. I kept it in for too long, a very dangerous and unnerving condition to which any long-distance driver can relate.

I didn’t think about it again until I pulled over for gas. As soon as I started pumping, feeling the vile liquid squeeze through the hose, I knew I had better find a restroom and quick. But in my haste to do so I pulled the gas pump out while it was still in full pump. The nozzle flailed in the air like an out of control watering hose, drenching me in gasoline!

I spent the next two hours inhaling the gaseous fumes radiating from my body. I wondered if God was trying to tell me something along the lines of self-immolation, but I decided not to think about it and stop for a cheese burger instead. I’m just lucky I used up my money at the toll and didn’t have enough money for a pack of smokes.
Sixty years ago a nightmare began that doesn’t want to finish. The nightmare started for the people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, making leukemia, deformed births and desperation a lethal reality.

For the last sixty years, governments, organizations and people, millions of people, have demonstrated against the international use of nuclear weapons. The most brilliant scientists, including the ones who discovered nuclear weaponry, are and have always been against nuclear weapons. The fear of a nuclear ‘accident’ made even the cowboy president of the United States, Mr. ’A good Commie is a dead Commie’ Ronald Reagan decided to make a deal with the Russians to stop any further building of nuclear weapons. At least that’s what we thought.

They started using nuclear power for energy trying to replace oil, which one way or another finishes in the next fifty years. But did you notice something? They first found its military and lethal use and then they found its peaceful use.

Russia followed and then the UK and France destroying some islands in the Pacific Ocean. Poisoning the water and creating circumstances we are not yet aware. Australia, Israel, India and Pakistan followed, all of them discovered its lethal use first and then they built energy plans, but they all had a very good excuse: Oil is finishing soon, so we must find new energy resources.

For my generation, the fear of a nuclear war was something high, inspiring everything from theatrical plays to films and literature about the day before or the day after the nuclear war. Back in the ’60s, they even told us at school what to do in a case of a nuclear war like there is any way to protect yourself.

Nearly every country in the ‘civilized’ western world has a nuclear plan today, or better nuclear plans. And now somebody tries to tell me that there are no scientists in these countries who cannot make a nuclear bomb? It sounds like a conspiracy theory but I do believe that most of the countries that have nuclear plans have the knowledge and the equipment to create nuclear weapons any time they want. Israel is the best example.

Then in the last wars, Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq we found out that all these ‘clever’ weapons were a bit, not much, nuclear. Actually 60 years after the leukemia victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are thousands of people including soldiers in the US and UK that complain about their medical problems as a result of the nuclear use in those wars.

Iran and North Korea have said so many times that the reason they want to build nuclear plans is only as an energy resource and nothing else. Why does nobody in the ‘civilized’ world believe them? Is it because they are guilty for the same thing themselves? Don’t cheat the cheater?
Turning their back on the 140 countries that have already agreed the basics in the Kyoto agreement, the United States formed a new international alliance with six countries at the end of July 2005. These countries have already proclaimed their aim to isolate their financial growth with any environmental crises.

The new agreement that has the signature of USA, Australia, India, Japan, South Korea and China was announced as the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate (APPCDC), it has already attracted the reproach and suspicion of all the international environmental NGOs, while the governments that are involved with the Kyoto agreement feel numb in front this American initiative.

The unimpassioned ones suggest that we must wait till APPCDC announces their programme and their principles before any kind of action, but most remind that with all this secrecy behind the creation of this new partnership and knowing the disagreement of USA, Australia and Japan to accept any of this new partnership and knowing the disagreement of USA, Australia, India, Japan, South Korea and China, it is easy to guess that their only aim is to break the alliance of the 140 countries.

American Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellic and the Australian Minister of the Environment Ian Campbell hurried to announce that the new agreement is not to interfere with the Kyoto one, but, as the BBC asked, what else would the architects of APPCDC say? If there is no difference why make it? We are left with one question: what is inside the shiny package: a present or a bomb?

The differences have already started to show. APPCDC is asking for voluntary obedience of its members to the conditions of the partnership, while it refuses to comply with the Kyoto measures for the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. Finally, the partnership suggests investing in ‘green’ technologies that will reduce the transition within three decades, if there is still air to breathe. However, for this research they are not planning any financial aid, since it depends on the member and its financial growth.

So after this, it is not difficult to guess that the real aim of the APPCDC is to become the Anti-Kyoto line. Even the timing of the formation supports this opinion, just after the meeting of the G8 in Scotland and just before the Montreal summit next November for the future of the Kyoto agreement.

In the office where I work, luck or superstition are parts of the daily routine. I know a guy who sits on the same seat on the train every morning, walks into the office through the same turnstile (choice of four) and even uses the same toilet every morning (again a choice of four). It’s me.

By keeping the same routine and having superstitions, we look to keep luck on an even footing. In the same way, these routines are used to keep bad luck at bay. Footballers are among the worst for superstitions and are often found putting their left boot on first every game or not putting their shirt on until out on the pitch. I have even seen players cut the collar off their shirt in an attempt to change a run of bad luck.

I try not to be obsessive but, as with most things in life, if you pay attention to the small details the rest looks after itself. I guess I could be described as lucky. When I was a child, I won more than I lost at cards when we played for small change with the family at Christmas. I even have happy memories of winning six races out of seven at a horse racing track.

I have had to endure a run of bad luck from time to time. Usually this is when I play online poker and the right cards don’t fall to me. I am only new to the game compared to some of the ladies and gentlemen who enjoy taking my money. The experience I gain while playing and learning, eventually, I am confident of this, will enable me to win some hands at the tables. If it happens though, will it be because I am a better player or simply because my luck has changed?

When you’re playing poker or at the casino then most gamblers would prefer Lady Luck to be sitting on their shoulder. With the recent boom in online poker, players across the world have the chance to pit their skills against people they would never normally meet. Even in poker, the most important element is not luck because the best hand doesn’t always win the pot. At a casino, luck is all a gambler has. There is no game where the house does not enjoy odds in its favour. Most of these games follow random outcomes and therefore cannot be accurately predicted.

Financial markets are different to casinos. Market trends and directions can be predicted and specific levels can be determined to which the markets will turn. Some of these are fundamental and relate to the underlying economics, while others are technical and infer a degree of psychological pressure, for example the 10,000 level in the Dow Jones Index. This dramatically reduces the influence of luck. At the end of a very profitable day, not many traders will put it down to luck.

Tony Butcher lives, works and breathes in London, England. Following the completion of an Economics Degree, he found his dream job as a STIR Trader in the City of London, the heart of the world’s financial system. He studies the world stock and bond markets on a daily basis, while monitoring world economic and political events which affect his markets.
The world could once again breathe following the safe return of the U.S. space shuttle Discovery on August 9th, but what did this modern day 'Apollo 13' mission achieve or has it done even more damage to NASA's credibility following the loss of Columbia in 2003.

Space travel has lost the awe it used to inspire, when the world would stop and watch the launch of another Apollo mission, marvelling at the technological wonders that mankind has achieved and the wonderment of bouncing across the lunar surface. Discovery’s mission was to restock the fridge of the international space station and perform a few tests in the wake of the earlier disaster.

Accidentally - or was it a conspiracy? – something went wrong and NASA was on the front pages, as the seven astronauts carried out daring repairs and kept the upper lip stiff in the face of adversity. This is why missions into space should continue. Science is great, technological breakthroughs are lovely, but it is the heroes that the world needs.

Discovery’s commander Eileen Collins, the first woman to command a shuttle mission, became a hero. She became one of those rare breeds known as ‘a role model’ over the past fortnight. She showed both sexes what is possible in life, not by kicking a football, writing a song or showing your body, but through education, determination and, yes, motivation.

Human endurance and the human spirit were both on display as the Discovery crew showed their courage the moment they manned the first shuttle to be launched after a tragedy such as Columbia. The next moment of inspiration was when astronaut Steve Robinson, the first person to ever see the underbelly of the shuttle while in orbit, conducted an audacious six-hour spacewalk, 250 miles above the Earth and moving at 18,000mph – that should make each of stop and think for a minute.

Commander Eileen Collins, Pilot James Kelly, Mission Specialist Andy Thomas, MS Charles Camarda, MS Wendy Lawrence, MS Soichi Noguchi and MS Steve Robinson were inspiring. The next time somebody asks how the inordinate amount of money spent on space missions is justified, while there is suffering in this world and no return for us, it is worth reminding them that space travel is not just about exploring space. It is about exploring the human spirit, not just in the astronauts, but also in the millions watching back on Earth.

Who is to say that the attention of one pupil somewhere on this planet was not captured the moment the space shuttle Discovery mission began? They then followed the events unfold with trepidation, holding their breath and absorbing every available iota of information. Finally, the shuttle safely returns to earth and the kid is inspired to work harder in school and one day they create a vaccine for a disease one of the NASA cynics is suffering from. Pie in the sky dreams or a possibility?
Pre-season is a time of excitement, of hope, of promise. Your club is back in all the domestic cups and, if you are lucky, in a European cup. The media is full of speculation over the transfers and on a slow news day your club could be linked with Pele, Maradona and Billy the Fish.

As a Newcastle United supporter, I did not enjoy this pre-season. This probably stems from such a disappointing run of results at the end of last season, when we screwed up in the semi-final of the FA Cup and quarter-final of the UEFA Cup, then an even more miserable time in the league with two of our own players fighting in front of home fans. Makes buying the replica shirt worth every penny.

The 2005/06 fixture list was published and Newcastle had been sentenced to Arsenal away on the opening day of the season. I felt more trepidation, expectations of a thrashing and even less excitement at the new football season. Since most football supporters are sadists, I listened to the game live online and was stunned by what I was hearing.

Our five-man midfield, consisting of a couple of new signings, was making Arsenal, the team tipped to be champions, look ordinary. The team were playing, running and jumping for their country or the people; nowadays they do all the same things for the money. I know, I know, I’m not the first to write this and I have definitely written about it before in former issues of Ovi but... but something has changed and unfortunately it changes for the worst every year. One part of the problem is these sports companies.

Adidas, Reebok and Nike have invested billions and billions of dollars into their marketing. Some of the biggest stars of the international sports world, including all kinds of sports, are part of their marketing.

In the years of cynicism, where participation is not enough, but how fast, how high and how long are important, it is very naïve to believe that these people are into sports only for the people and the country. They are professionals. Some do race for their country and the people, but that is something like... hmm 20%; the rest is just money.

Why to win an Olympic medal? Just to see the flag of your country wave? Sacrifice ten to twelve years of your life minimum, without a personal life and training every day, being careful with your diet and health all the time, and for what? This is when Adidas, Reebok and Nike come in.

Big advertising contracts that hopefully will make kids want to wear the same products their idol wears to make money. Why is David Beckham such a cool player? Because he wears a certain type of football boots, shaves his beard with a certain razor and wears a certain aftershave!!!

Quieter than football and basketball, other sports have joined this marketing game. Carl Lewis, one of the biggest Olympic stars is still counting millions of dollars of income ten years after his final race and it is all coming from sportswear and equipment companies. This is exactly the beginning of the dark era. Drugs. The latest shock was the involvement of Marion Jones, the superwoman of sports, in a drugs scandal which is still under investigation.

Imagine now that Adidas’ takeover of Reebok means more money and bigger competition with the other sports giant, Nike. This is just one year before the FIFA World Cup in Germany and three years away from the controversial Olympic Games in Peking.

This would be better in the financial section of Ovi Magazine and not in the sports section because it has to do with a company called Adidas and the takeover of another company called Reebok. It was very interesting what I read the other day in a sports’ paper: “For the first time Nike will feel the breath of somebody behind their back!”

Once upon a time there were sports. People were playing, running and jumping for their country or the people; nowadays they do all the same things for the money. I know, I know, I’m not the first to write this and I have definitely written about it before in former issues of Ovi but... but something has changed and unfortunately it changes for the worst every year. One part of the problem is these sports companies.

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In the year that gave us the end of the Star Wars saga and the beginning of Batman, while we wait for the next Harry Potter and Indiana Jones, we forgot that it is the 60th birthday of the film that started the new European cinema.

Roberto Rossellini is the man we owe gratitude to this birth and it came from the ruins of a Europe coming out of the Second World War. The film was made in 1945 and is about Italy's liberation, which is why in the beginning everybody thought of it as a political film. The following year’s critics from all around the world found not only the beginning of the new European cinema in this film, but the beginning of the neo-realism movement.

This film started everything, the French Nouvelle Vague and the English Free Cinema; the film was Roma, città aperta (Rome, the unfortified city). The real hero behind this film was Aldo Venturini, the producer, and as usual we do forget the producers of these classics.

Aldo Venturini was a civil servant who gradually became the owner of a small textile company. Not the normal businessman, he spent most of his time and money in books, music, theater and cinema. Anti-fascist in a country that was suffering from fascism and actively against Mussolini, he put every effort into the rebuilding of his country after WWII.

According to his notes, when he first met Roberto Rossellini he wasn’t exactly impressed by the man but he was thrilled with the idea. He could actually see a political manifest in this film so he decided to invest into it.

Even though the film became a great success and is still one of the films worth watching, Aldo Venturini sold the rights under pressure from his family’s needs to a bigger company Excelsa hoping to make his money back.

According to its creator and the critics, neo-realism was born on the Italian roads and that’s partly true since Rossellini found all his actors and actresses on the streets of Rome. Some of them later became big international stars, such as Aldo Fabrizi and Anna Magnani. The film won its place in immortality and Rossellini is part of this immortality. It is just time to honour the man behind the dream, Aldo Venturini.

Address books are a reflection of our lives. They carry the social and business contacts that are important to us, plus they can show our personality. For example, if it is neat, up-to-date, phone and fax numbers are included then you are probably an organised individual, while those who don’t even own one are either lazy or just have a photographic memory.

The power of the address book hit me recently as I decided to update its pages. As I flipped through the pages from A to Z, I saw the names of friends that have not been in my life for many years. It is a hard decision to completely erase them from your life and open up a new space to be filled eventually. Over time, your address book is filled with the true friends, the ones that will drive you to the airport for your 5am flight and will help you move house.

Choosing to erase somebody is emotionally easier than removing a friend or relative because of death. In recent years, I lost both a friend and a grandma, both were within a matter of weeks, and it took a long time to commit the final act of erasing them from my life forever. In fact, it was not only the address book, but also email and my mobile phone from which they eventually vanished.

Today, when I write to my Grandad, it is still a hollow feeling seeing the faint indent of ‘& Grandma’ in the book. I guess this could symbolise that even though they are no longer completely visible there is still a ghost of their presence in your life. On a brighter note, friends get married and relatives have children, so new names are also added, although you have to check if the wife has taken your friend’s surname.

The next time you pick up your address book, take a moment to remember all those people who appeared within its pages at one point in your life. Give them a thought, maybe imagine what they are doing now, then forget them again and get on with your life because they didn’t contact you either.
CHS cross-country wears the shortest of shorts,  
To run fast and look sexy while out on the course.

Shards of blue and gold but mostly naked skin,  
for we know what really matters lies deep within.

The strength of the pack in the wolf, so the saying goes.  
But the wolf hunts in packs, smells fear with one nose.

I have been in your spiked shoes, I’ve sat nervous on the bus  
Wear your uniform proud, for your now one of us!

In Edinburgh, the G8 agreed to more aid to Africa,  
George W. Bush saw himself as the saviour of Afrika  
and all the eight leaders posed for a series of photos with and without the General Secretary of the UN.

And what happened with Live8? I was thrilled to see the original Pink Floyd on stage with Roger Waters and David Gilmour back together. But I’m sure they were more thrilled themselves to find out that the sales of their albums and royalties increased dramatically. Even the experimental Ummagumma started selling again.

UB40, after disappearing for over two decades, started thinking about a new album and the last of the rock dinosaurs The Who are thinking about a world tour. Names like Mat Coopora, Juli and Shasha suddenly found out that they can still make a career in singing.

Bob Geldof, I’m not sure but he’s back with a new BBC series about Ethiopia, is a man that has always been a mystery to me. In his entire music career, he produced seven to eight records and had only one hit back in the early-80s. 25 years after he still lives the life and the money of a rock star with luxurious castles and a collection of cars including a Rolls Royce.

All the media around the world connected with the eight concerts and I watched part of it on MTV. I was fascinated with the number of adverts through the concert in London, especially before and after the Pink Floyd appearance. Does that mean royalties? And who took them?

To be a bit more cynical, why did all this happen? To persuade the people to press the eight governments that controls the world’s wealth to help Africa. What we failed to see is that this world’s wealth is not President George W. Bush’s personal money or Tony Blair’s heritage, but taxpayer’s money. Somehow my money.

All these people partied with my money and decided to help Africa with my money without even asking me. If they had asked me, I would definitely had told them that I would much rather help Africa than buy new weapons or research for new biological weapons. However, nobody did bother to ask me.

Bob Geldof and the rest of the gang, including George and Tony, were cuddling in their ranges and castles enjoying their philanthropist actions while drinking their cold champagne, which was probably paid for by me.
Over one hundred staring, grinning, squinting, scowling, blank, wretched, docile, shy, tired and worn faces look down upon you from the walls of the gallery. They are wrapped in blankets, dressed in clothes torn, sewn, stained, sunbleached, dusty and worn. Stylistically diverse and, in the words of one critic, “This dynamic young artist’s work effortlessly moves between spray can cartoons and inkwash realism with a striking and disarming effect.”

British artist, Duncan Butt Juvonen, 33, is back in Helsinki after two years in Ethiopia producing the work that appears in this show. “My work is figurative and, in Ethiopia, this naturally led to painting Ethiopians. The work in this show is largely from the second of the two years I spent living there and it was produced with the foreknowledge of my upcoming show, so I knew it would be exposed to one of the most homogeneous populations in Europe.”

“As a white European, I was the subject of constant curious attention as tourists are still a relative novelty there. After seven years of anonymity in London it was very odd to be openly stared at like this by men, women and children,” admits Duncan. “Staying somewhere like Ethiopia, the attention you get gives a valuable insight into what it may be like for minority groups with different skin colours in your home country.”

The difference in quality of life between Ethiopians and Finns could hardly be more diverse, “With these pictures I want to transplant a small crowd of Ethiopian faces into Helsinki. To bring something of the glare and harsh contrast of a tropical sun; the dust and dirt that settles upon everything.”

“I hope the show presents something fresh which will be of interest technically and culturally. My work involves a combination of expressive spray paint drawing and careful ink wash realism. The reason for this is to emphasise that there is not just one ‘correct’ way to paint something.”

Duncan believes that expressive work is considered emotional and subjective while realism is considered intellectual and objective. He hopes that the paintings on display avoid such easy bracketing, so why don’t you go and see for yourself.

Inkwashed Ethiopians

By Asa Butcher

Summer Sun

the sun
an infrequent friend
popping in
now and again
while welcome
stays on often far too long
yet we miss him dearly
the instant he is gone
the moon
more elusive in nature
a frequent guest all the same
makes less overture
a lady
whom lights up the night
a smile from whom
knights fight for luck and affection
dawn and dusk
the changing of the guard
the transformation twins
the love making balladeers
Foucault’s Pendulum (Il pendolo di Foucault, 1988)
By Umberto Eco

Nothing would have ever made me read this book if Thanos had not presented it to me with a knowing smile and a slight nod of his head. The title alone was startling and the quotes on the back cover troubled me even more, ‘a Shakespearean alternation of paroxysm and intimacy’ and ‘intricate’. My approach to the book was one of trepidation, but I persevered and part of me was glad.

I understood less than ten percent of the plot content, but thoroughly enjoyed 100% of the book. You find that every page is packed full of genuine historical events, people and places, which brings a sinister truth to the novel’s conspiracy theories. I have learnt that the author is a professor of semiotics, which is the study of communication through signs and symbols; this skill allows him to turn books such as the Bible on its head and create controversial meanings from innocent Psalms.

The book utilises the idea of analogies to great effect and the characters use this to formulate their own Plan, in which they weave together all the conspiracy theories concerning a religious order called the Templars. The narrator of the story, Casaubon details the rules they follow and if you replace the objects with religious and historical theories, then you can understand how Eco put together the intricate Plan:

“There is no way to decide whether an analogy is good or bad, because to some degree everything is connected to everything else. For example, potato crosses with apple, because both are vegetable and round in shape. From apple to snake, by Biblical association. From snake to doughnut, by formal likeness. From doughnut to life preserver, and from life preserver to bathing suit, then bathing to sea, sea to ship, ship to shit, shit to toilet paper, toilet to cologne, cologne to alcohol, alcohol to drugs, drugs to syringe, syringe to hole, hole to ground, ground to potato.”

Casaubon, along with his two work colleagues Belbo and Diotallevi, play an intellectual game with the analogies. Together they piece together a plan that connects the Knight Templars, the crusades, the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Grail, plate tectonics, William Shakespeare, the Second World War, Francis Bacon and Foucault’s pendulum. Novelist, Anthony Burgess once commented that the novel is an encyclopaedic work that needed an index.

A friend compared Foucault’s Pendulum to Dan Brown’s The Da Vinci Code and said that Umberto Eco has written literature, while Dan Brown has produced a blueprint for a movie script. For all of you who are ‘blown away’ by the secrets of Dan Brown’s imagination, you have seen nothing until you complete this Eco literary masterpiece.

Heart in it

This American Life radio program:
Title: “Put Your Heart Into It”
Aired: 24 Sept, 2004

The idea of a farming makeover for the “Put Your Heart In It” show immediately drew me in. I loved the idea of combining a Green Acres plot with a make-over program and thought the spin-off Queer Eye for the Straight Guy was a clever angle.

I’ve always thought that Carson is everyone’s favorite “Queer Eye” character because he personifies the distance between the savvy gay cast and the über-straight-square-dude getting the makeover.

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I thought this episode of This American Life might have been improved with a more dramatic setup introducing—and separating—George, the farming guru, from Hilary, his clueless subject.

There’s a brief introduction citing George’s credentials as an expert farmer, but this could have been played up a bit more to make interactions between the two characters more vivid and more ridiculous as the listener envisioned the two worlds colliding. For example, I would include a brief walk through George’s tidy farming operation to show what “putting your heart in it” really looks like.
Ronin, 1998  
Directed by John Frankenheimer

Robert De Niro is one of these actors you don’t know if you like him or not. I mean his acting style somehow seems the same all the time. It’s like the man has a library of faces and cliché phrases, and uses them when given any chance. Being Robert De Niro doesn’t make him the easiest object for any director, however big a Hollywood name he is.

You can see what I mean in various films, from Taxi Driver to Heat, or the epic Frankenstein and Godfather: Part 2, but I suppose that’s me. While watching Heat, the only thing I could think of was how magnificent Al Pacino was and nothing about Robert De Niro even though that was a great film. But back to Mr. De Niro, last week I watched Ronin on DVD and I was not sure I really wanted to. I had seen the film in the cinema a few years before and there was somebody else playing as well, Jean Reno. I liked him from another favorite film of mine, Léon, but I didn’t remember much else of Ronin – I’m not sure if it had to do with the script, the director or my memory.

In the beginning we learn that in Japan ‘Ronin’ means the Samurai without master. The scene where the old man describes the word ‘Ronin’ in front of a table with miniature samurai on a battle-field is unique. Jean Reno is the sensitive but hard Frenchman and the other unique element of the film is Robert De Niro himself. It seems to me that for once he left his library of faces and he decided to dress in the skin of the ‘Ronin’ hero.

Perhaps De Niro has been a ‘Ronin’ himself on the big screen. Without a master and always looking for the right role; he obviously found it in this film. Perhaps Francis Coppola, while creating the young Vito Corleone, or De Niro himself feeling insecure destroyed the young Robert De Niro and since then every director has expected to see exactly the same way of acting.

De Niro is brilliant in this film, even for me who has never been sure if I liked him or not. Jean Reno is also brilliant in his supporting role, while the directing really makes Ronin a thriller – the car chase in the middle of Paris and the dark scenes in the café were my favourites.

Well, all good things end somewhere and this is where the good things finish in this film because the script is naive. The Cold War is over, so we need bad guys. A combination of IRA terrorists and Russian mafia will do. Remember the film is worth watching and having in your DVD collection just because of De Niro’s fantastic acting. The rest of the story....sorry I don’t remember!!!