



the e-magazine

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# The Graduation



Here we are again, with another Ovi-style thematic issue! It all started with John asking, 'I'm graduating and now what?' This is when my mind turned back to something more than twenty years trying to find memories of fear, hope, determination and graduation.

Well, I didn't manage well, the only thing I remembered was that the year I graduated my favourite group, Led Zeppelin broke up and that I graduated in a religious gothic ceremony in south England.

What I remember most from that day is that I don't remember much due to a huge party we had organized. Actually, I don't remember much from my whole college life, but for a strange reason every time somebody asks me about my college years I have a smile on my face without a good excuse and a lot of mystery. Somebody told me a long time ago that if you often recall and miss your college years then that means that you didn't do well after that. Well, now I know that I did well after college.

John, being in his graduation month, was expressing all the worries and hopes all graduates have and somehow I do understand and don't remember. So we decided to go with an issue about graduation. It made sense to me since John had just graduated, plus Asa and Juliana were not so far from that date. What's the result of that? Juliana is stressed and tired with the life of the immigrant and Finnish bureaucracy, John is deep inside the bee's problem and American football and Asa counts the days to becoming a father, which left me writing about graduation! Ok, Asa did as well in his sarcastic way!

If that wasn't enough, the French and the Dutch had the brilliant idea to come with a 'No' to the European Constitution which made Asa start screaming at me that we said one article not a whole magazine and a 450-word paragraph doesn't make an article!!! Still, Europe has had a nervous breakdown and I could write far more, but, as he said, "We are going to have a July issue!"

More things are added and I have to admit that I found the iKritik about a board game very unique!!! It certainly made a change from records, books and movies.

We have two guests with us and we are hoping for more in the near future. Well, Tony becomes a regular and we are really happy with that since he strikes again with a euro analysis, I have some ideas Tony, but I think I will put them in the forum so we can all talk about it. I hope you haven't forgotten the forum and the whole idea about our chats there.

Another guest for this issue is Nicky, a Dutch lady with very special opinions and experiences that she's sharing with us. Amazingly, she has not only studied the mentally handicap but she has devoted her life to the cause...for a good reason, but you'll have to read her articles to understand more.

More friends from all around the world are added and hopefully you will see more of their work in the next issues, including the work of a brilliant young man from Mexico with German origins and coincidentally the name Ovi.

We are awaiting your reaction to the magazine and we wish to have articles from all around the world, we know that there are people who read

Ovi Magazine from South America to Japan, and from South Africa to Finland, so do send us your opinions and articles. After living in Japan for three years, I would definitely like to hear some news from that beautiful country.

Check our blog friends' links in iBlog, check our iPromote section and tell us your opinion by either mailing it or posting in the forum pages <http://www.ovimagazine.com/phpBB/>

So, do enjoy our graduation issue, wish Asa's wife an easy labour and keep sending us your feedback.

Thanos Kalamidas

## The Graduation



# The Graduation



## Editorial



Preparations for issue five have been dramatic to say the least. The self-imposed deadline was coughing politely for attention, yet I had written only a handful of completed articles. My brain was refusing to cooperate with my fingers, which left me staring at that little blinking cursor with unbridled hatred.

Personal circumstances, imminent life-changing events, financial issues and the end of another disappointing football season had all chipped away my bubbling enthusiasm for life's whimsical delights and, yeah whatever. It all changed the night my wife went into hospital and copious amounts of beer was being used to pacify my growing despair, the passion to write filled me like an enema and the words began gushing out.

Between the Ovi team and a couple of guests, we have written over forty articles on all matters of subjects, which is an overwhelming amount of material for any magazine, whether it is printed or online. Naturally, like any respectable publication, we have covered the recent events of the E.U. from many angles and have tackled Bob Geldof's latest plans to end world debt with music concerts.

No need for the surprised look! We are respectable, growing in stature daily and have gained a strong reputation, which for once does not revolve around alcoholic tales of humiliation. The prospect of fatherhood encouraged me to look to my own father's sense of responsibility, his worldly wisdom and his proficiency in daily life, but I found no answers... Mum filled in the blanks though.

As I was saying, fatherhood has opened an emotional door within me and many of my articles in this issue mention my family, its influences and many other facets that have led me to where I am today – penniless, unemployed and thousands of miles from home. I have been emboldened to examine the world and write thought-provoking views on the issues of the day, such as stubbing your fingers when shaking hands and which football shirt is lucky on matchday.

Generally, I do not like to generalise, but I believe that issue five is our best so far and that is not supposed to be a reflection upon last-minute John and elusive Juliana, who seem to think you can have a life outside of Ovi Magazine. We are a cult, a religion, a community, that will never release you... a bit like a spam mailing list.

Graduation was the theme and it is mentioned throughout the pages in the form of nostalgic, reflective and thank-fuck-that-is-over stylings. Mr M. Jackson, formerly of the Jackson Five, faces the critical muscle of Mr T. Kalamidas, formerly of the band No Sense, and our two guest writers have earned our approval with their musings.

Once again, the hard work ends and the partying postponed. Keep spreading the word about the Ovi Crew, the iBlog directory and the iPromote ad section because we certainly will.

We're off to take five!

Asa B.



## Graduate with finesse

By Asa Butcher

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 camcorder, 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 scarred me, the prospect of walking across a stage in a dress, balancing a square hat on my head scarred me, the idea that my education was over scarred me; it was scary day.

The graduation photograph that would adorn my parents' wall was taken before the ceremony and this took me by surprise. I sat bolt upright attempting the smile worthy of the lounge wall when I was handed the 'diploma', which was a white plastic tube with a red ribbon tied around it. The photographer moulded me into a confident position, then advised me that the tube was not a weapon, since my white-knuckle grip was worthy of the worst rollercoaster.

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 sweaty hand extended, but I was the only one to give a wave to my fans. They cheered and began chanting my name until...

Anyway, there were no casualties 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 refuse-free locale and a mini photogenic nightmare was avoided. The next photo opportunity is one that will stay with me forever, 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 ninja 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 to my parents and fiancée.



## Failing education

By Thanos Kalamidas

Graduation and the difficulties young people are facing was original theme, but a news story caught my attention and convinced me to totally change what I was going to write.

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 her 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 scarily true because this case can become a legal precedent for a huge number of similar cases. If the idea was hers 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, never 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 school-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 buy, very expensively indeed, their education which makes it natural to ask a return 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 depended 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-old 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.



# Bullshit to the top

By Thanos Kalamidas

While writing about graduation and my non-memories from the late-70s, early-80s, I received a mail from a friend containing a joke:

A college class was told to write a short story in as few words as possible, containing:

1. Religion
2. Sexuality
3. Mystery

There was only one A+ paper in the entire class. It read:  
Good God, I'm pregnant. I wonder who did it.

A few hours later and even when copying it here, I was still laughing because that old joke reminded me how clever we were back then being part of the 'education system.' We had pure and clever humour, ignoring every kind of authority, but I think that is the key point. The authority in the studying years has humour as well, at least most of the time. Somehow, they expect you to be clever, they help you to improve your humour and even ignore rebellion against the authority, which at least happened in my school and the college I went later.

After twenty years in the mince machine that is called professional life, the pure and clever humour has become sardonic and cynic sarcasm. There are jokes in my environment that make me laugh, there is even a television series called The Office that I have seen a couple of times and found parts of it hilarious, although I never laugh the same way. It's more of a bitter laugh, most of the time I have seen the characters of the jokes, I have dealt and cooperated with them.

Since we are talking about college jokes here is another one:

After the college boy delivered the pizza to Bud's trailer house, Bud asked, "What is the usual tip?" "Well," replied the youth, "this is my first trip here, but the other guys say if I get a quarter out of you, I'll be doing great." "Is that so?" snorted Bud. "Well, just to show them how wrong they are, here's five dollars." "Thanks," replied the youth, "I'll put this in my school fund." "What are you studying?" asked Bud.

The lad smiled and said, "Applied psychology."

Think now how many of us did different jobs during the college years; I worked in a pub for nearly six months, followed by the college's hospital and in a beverage factory and then back to a bar. After I finished college, even in my worst moments, I never thought to work in a pub, a hospital or a beverage factory again. I wanted to practice what I studied. What happened? I'm not sure, I think money then wasn't so important or the social status of the job, since our identity was a college student and we definitely didn't have a series of social obligations that put barriers like nowadays.

Trying to find out what I really wanted to do during my last year in college, I worked in a shipyard for one week. When Friday came, I explained to the owner that I didn't like the job and I didn't think I had a future with shipyards, something that found him in total agreement and I left, never to come back. Now, after twenty years, I'm doing something that has nothing to do with what I studied for four years of my life, but this is the reality. Remembering the people who finished high school with me, they are the only ones that study medicine or professions around medicine and actually practice what they studied.

In my opinion, the college and graduation years are shared into three periods. First is the period 'I made it' I know what I want to be, I know how to do it and I know where I'm going. Good parties, a lot of buzz and sometimes reading. These are somehow the happy years, which is like high school with legal alcohol, porno films and occasionally some action as well.

Next is the graduation year, the 'to be or not to be year', the philosophical year. This is when you discover 2,000 professions of interest and, unfortunately, you have wasted four years on something that you don't like. This is when you learn that student loans are not to buy beer and party, then having already taken two you need a third one. This year you regret every second you spent in a pub over the last three years and you start thinking that soon you need to look for a job.

Fortunately, in the philosophical period, except some very rare exceptions, the professors work on assuring your mind that the degree alone will find you a job and since you have graduated from the certain university the MD of the central bank will resign so you can take his place.

Finally, after the graduation period (a.k.a. 'welcome to the machine' period) the question you asked a year before gets an answer: you have studied the wrong thing. Actually, if you were a plumber life would be easier. It's the period it doesn't matter what you are and what you studied, but who you know or who your family knows. Family is an important issue during this period.

Your choices are very few. Either you find a job or you continue with a Masters' Degree. A Masters means another two years of student life, you have your thesis, you just need to improve upon it and you can get another student loan. A job means you are building your reputation for the first ten years and your 'who I know with ridiculous salaries' list is growing.

Over the next ten years, you start climbing the management pyramid only to find out that the person who took the job you wanted most has no degree or Masters but is the owner's son. If you are a bit lucky - luck has its moments - you reach senior management. This is where the big money is, the high stature and the recognition, which then means you don't apply for a job because companies are queuing in front of your office. Please don't forget that with the above comes divorce, heart attacks and, as the Ancient Greeks used to say, it is easy to reach the top - the difficulty is to stay there.

Since we began with a joke, it is better if we finish with one too.

A turkey was chatting with a bull. "I would love to be able to get to the top of that tree," the turkey sighed, "but I haven't got the energy."

"Well, why don't you nibble on some of my droppings?" replied the bull. "They're packed with nutrients."

The turkey pecked at a lump of dung and found that it actually gave him enough strength to reach the first branch of the tree. The next day, after eating some more dung, he reached the second branch. Finally, after a fortnight, there he was proudly perched at the top of the tree. He was promptly spotted by a farmer, who shot the turkey out of the tree.

Moral of the story:

Bullshit might get you to the top, but it won't keep you there.



## Doing it for charity

By Asa Butcher

Twenty years ago on July 13th, Live Aid kicked off on both sides of the Atlantic and an estimated 1.5 billion viewers in 100 countries watched the live broadcast. The event aimed to raise £1 million (\$1.64 million), upon its completion more than £150 million (approx. \$245.4 million) had been raised for famine relief. This year it starts all over again.

Bob Geldof and Midge Ure, organisers of Live Aid and Band Aid, have announced a series of free concerts to precede July's G8 Conference and Summit held in Scotland. Known as Live 8, its aims are simple: pressure world leaders to drop the debt of the world's poorest nations, increase and improve aid, and negotiate fairer trade rules.

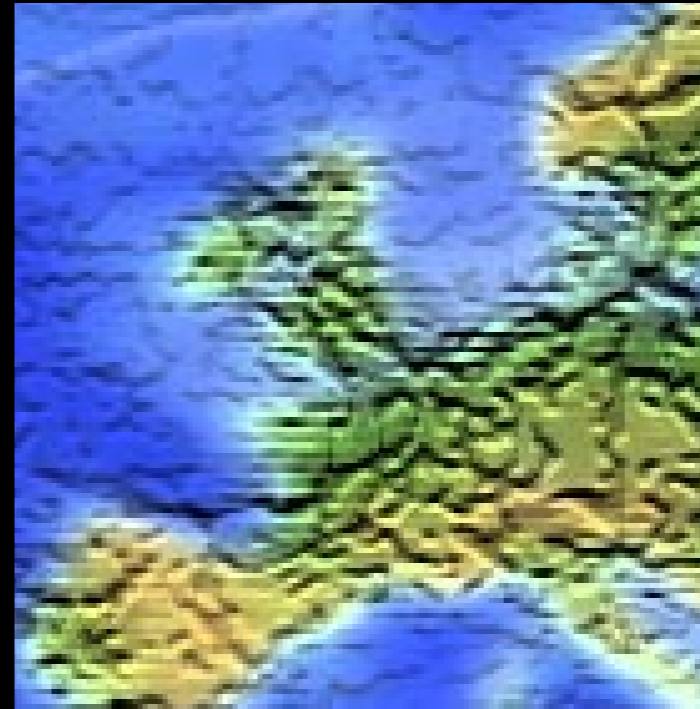
Does anybody care though when it means you can get to see groups, such as U2, R.E.M., The Cure and a reunited Pink Floyd, including Roger Waters, perform, or witness artists, such as Paul McCartney, Madonna, Sting, Robbie Williams, Elton John and Annie Lennox in one venue and for the price of a £1.50 text message?

Even though the concerts are free, there are only 66,500 pairs of tickets for the London concert, so the winners of a text message competition will receive tickets; over 1.5 million texts had been received within the first day. Geldof has explicitly said that this is not about raising money, "These concerts are the start point for The Long Walk To Justice, the one way we can all make our voices heard in unison." So why is the ticket raffle so expensive and why does it have a price at all?

Usually the Prince's Trust hosts its Party in the Park concert on the day in question, so £1.6 million will be donated to them and the remainder of the money will pay for the Live 8 costs. Hold on...the artists are performing free, Geldof says it is not about money and the public raised over £3 million in the first day...isn't this a bit strange? Why couldn't the 22 confirmed artists cover the costs themselves and donate a lot more to the Prince's Trust?

Criticism of the political idea of the concerts have also come under fire, as many believe that the irony of wealthy, white rock stars promoting this issue and helping corrupt African governments is a long way from pressuring world leaders to cancel debts. There have even been complaints from Africa about this 'Neocolonialist attitude', in which the West ties a cape around its neck and swoops in to save the helpless Third World.

Following the Indian Ocean Earthquake last year, everybody was determined to prove how generous they are by publicly donating huge sums, and now the celebrities are at it again. If rock stars want to alleviate their guilt of millions by donating to charity, then do it in private, but organising a concert to 'raise awareness' is irony wrapped in absurdity. Perhaps following the G8 summit, Tony Blair will announce he has penned a song and has decided he'll start making records.



## No means enough

By Thanos Kalamidas

Albert Camus has said that the real revolutionary is not the man who says 'no' meaning no to everything but the man who says 'no, that's enough' and that's exactly what happened in France and Holland during the referendum for the European constitution.

Even though democracy works perfectly all right in the European member countries, with the more extreme examples of a Socialist president cohabiting with a Conservative prime minister or a coalition government including an equally Social-Democratic party with a Conservative party, there is a democracy problem with the EU as an institution.

Unfortunately, the European constitution didn't add or improve anything to that. First, even though the governments represent the people when it comes to major decisions that will change the lives of millions it should be decided with referendums and not through the parliaments. Well done to France and Holland; very bad idea to the others. There should be referendums in all the European countries on the same day, just as it happens with the euro elections. We should have referendums when new countries enter the EU, but none of these will ever happen and that's why people said, 'No, that's enough!'

From the first draft to the final text, the European constitution was a game with the words mainly for communication and PR reasons. Politicians defending their personal or party policies added or changed words ignoring the real meaning of the act. What we got in the end was not a constitution but a convergence. This is obviously not enough, especially after the expansion of ten new countries and the unification of the euro.

One more thing the people didn't really understand was why we need two constitutions: one national and one European. Over

the last ten years, many of the European countries had to change their constitutions to be harmonized and it became worse for the new members who sometimes had to change the majority of their constitution before even becoming members.

If they want to create a united Europe with countries states, they have to do it step-by-step and not try to force it within a five-year plan. Not because the citizens are not ready for a united Europe, but mainly because Europe is not ready for the 25 member states.

It's only a few years ago that the European leaders fired the EU administration because it was guilty of a series of scandals and miscalculations; now they think that they are ready to give all the power to the same people? And already the European Parliament has started questioning the decisions of the new president of the European commission Jose Manuel Barroso.

Another message the European leaders should understand is the high participation of the European citizens in the referendum. That shows again that the people want more democracy in the decisions that involve their European future.

It would be a mistake if the European leaders continue to blame the Eurosceptics for the result or the internal problems the countries face. The people are well aware of what's going on and if the European leaderships think that they don't then it is their mistake because either they haven't informed people of the truth or they have misinformed them.

The national governments that jointly govern Europe have to stop using the bureaucratic monster they have created as a cover for their mistakes and lack of understanding. They have to let democracy work for Europe's benefit and future. After all, the people make up the European Union and not the politicians or their constitution.



## No to Cohiba

By Thanos Kalamidas

Too many things have been written lately because of the French 'NON' and the Dutch 'NEE', and the majority are trying to analyze the phenomenon using political terms and ideas. Unfortunately, very few saw the social message behind these two 'no' votes for the European constitution.

However, every research or analysis by all the European capitals from Helsinki to Rome shows that there is a similarity in this reaction. The centre of the European society is the youth, the retired, the workers and the small business owners, but these people have lived for more than a decade in an environment of total insecurity.

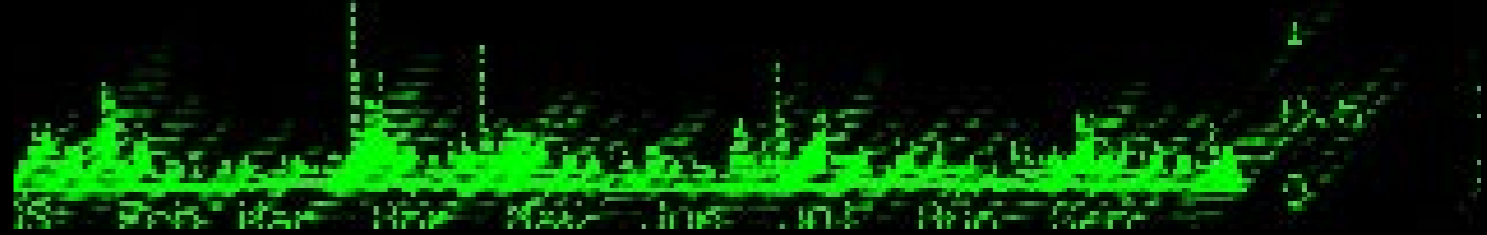
The pensions are continuously getting smaller, plus the danger that there may not be the money to cover them, more jobs are vanishing as companies close one after the other or, in the name of profit, they reduce the workforce. The cost of life, especially after the euro, has become dangerously high and all the rights that workers have earned over the last fifty years are disappearing one after the other.

The youth faces one of the biggest challenges. Young boys and girls, well skilled with Master Degrees, dreams and talents, join the job market but are facing closed doors, wasting their time, effort and energy searching for a job that will probably utilise few or none of their abilities, will be badly paid and have endless working hours. It is not a surprise that many young people are still living with their parents at the age of 30 and are not able to support themselves in an independent life.

At the same time, the extensive financial reforms combined with the cost of life and the expensive euro has created a new social reality, forty- and fifty-year-old small business owners are on the path to bankruptcy with no hope of recovery. This has led to the middle-classes turning their nationalistic feelings back towards the good old days.

There is another cast growing from the middle-class: the Brussels bureaucrats. These people have spread across all the members' capitals with their Armani suits and their Cohiba cigars. These people are leading Europe to a free market dictatorship far-west style with no wealth care system, which, in the name of competition and productivity, demands more working hours, fewer rights and even less payment.

It's natural that all the above will lead to a negative reaction and the latest 'NO' was nothing else than a warning. The Europe of the 21st century cannot return to the 19th and the people who will be deciding the future of this Union over the next few months had better remember that.



## Markets take stock of EU

By Tony Butcher

The French were the first to say 'Non' that has led to the Dutch saying 'Nee', with two founding member countries of the European Community rejecting the proposed Constitution the EU is struggling for a post-referendum direction. At present, none of the major leaders are willing to be the first to kill the treaty off, something that may have to wait for the European summit on June 16th.

Some ministers are certainly taking the opportunity to make their voices heard, with the Italian euro-sceptic welfare minister Roberto Maroni calling for Italy to reinstate the lira. Although President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder are keen for the ratification process to continue, it is most likely that planned referendums in other EU countries will be delayed. Britain has already taken those steps by stopping the parliamentary process for the referendum. The overall effect of the No votes from France and the Netherlands is hard to interpret right now.

At present, there seems to be three clear options. Firstly, the EU could decide to shelve the whole idea. This would make further political and economic integration unworkable given the current inflexible and differing natures of the 25 economies of the Union. Secondly, the ratification process could continue, since there is a clause in place which allows for 20 of the 25 countries to ratify the constitution and have it potentially approved, although this would be very controversial in its current format. Thirdly, the constitution could be 'watered-down' to give a new constitution that, when agreed, would form a basis from which to build.

I would be more inclined to suggest that the EU will settle somewhere between the second and third option. Continue the ratification process for as much of the Union as possible, then attempt to re-negotiate, with the remaining countries, some form of 'watered-down' constitution which could be approved. This is because the French no vote could be read as an anti-Turkey vote or rebellion against the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who has since been shown the door, and the Dutch were seen to protest about the poor economic situation in the Netherlands.

The economic effect of the no vote has been mixed during the month of May. With the polls already predicting a rejection, much

of the bad news was priced into the markets before the result came through. In fact, the French stock exchange finished higher on the day after the vote. However, a public holiday in the UK and US delayed most of the reaction by 24-hours. The Euro suffered a large fall during overnight trade and continued for most of the week, slipping to an eight-month low against the Dollar.

I would expect the euro to recover over the short-term as people take profits and re-position themselves in the market. However, my long-term view is that the euro will continue to weaken as the "one rate fits all" policy from the European Central Bank has an impact on growth in the major economies of Europe. The Stock Markets have been particularly strong during May, the Dow Jones posted a 2.6% gain in the month and the FTSE 100 share market rose 3.4%. I know many people will be looking to quote me "Sell in May and Go Away", but the other half of this saying is "Don't come back 'til St. Ledger Day", which is a famous horse race in England that falls on September 10th, so the prediction is not doomed yet.

In fact, June and July could well be tough months for Stock Markets across the world as the United States' employment data has shown poor signs of growth. However, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said: "Most recent data support the view that the soft readings on the economy observed in the early spring were not presaging a more serious slowdown in the pace of activity."

This suggests Mr. Greenspan is still confident about the prospects for growth in the US. Europe has had downward revisions to growth forecasts almost every quarter and there are continuing calls for Jean-Claude Trichet to cut the European interest rates from their current 2% level. At present, the ECB chairman is adamant he is not planning to signal a rate cut to the markets. Even the UK is struggling with the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] figures for the Second Quarter looking to be worse than expected. The Monetary Policy Committee voted to keep interest rates unchanged at 4.75% with markets widely expecting a rate cut of 0.25% before the end of the year.

So what else is there to look forward to in June? The Wimbledon Tennis tournament starts towards the end of the month and look for Federer to lift the Men's title again, while temperatures are set to rise across Europe as the summer gets into full swing, plus keep an eye open for the European summit on the 16th. We also have the build-up of "Live 8" to look forward to as Bob Geldof attempts to solve Africa's debt problems with a little help from Mr. T. Blair and Mr. G. Bush. I look forward to seeing you in July.

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.



# 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 is on 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 campus bee lab. Today Celley is a fulltime 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 program for the State Department of Agriculture, the state honey

industry is composed of thousands of hobby beekeepers, in addition to 50 or so commercial operations. However, the growing problem of mites and the increasing use of pesticides threaten this waning industry. Celley estimates she lost almost 90 percent of her colony to predators such as the verroa mite last winter.

According to Phibbs, the verroa mite is now resistant to what had been beekeeper’s most reliable defenses, Apistan and Check-mite. New treatments cost considerably more than these traditional pesticides, forcing many keepers to hang up their head nets, says Phibbs.

These threats also increase local keepers’ reliance on out-of-state bee suppliers to keep the industry and art of beekeeping alive in Wisconsin.

Wayne Harrison is one of the state’s main providers. He usually does not sleep during the 36-hour trip to Wisconsin from his farm in Los Banos, Cal. For some reason he just can’t relax with 112 million bees following his truck. It is not until his \$500,000 shipment of buzzing cargo is safely unloaded at Darant and Sons Inc., a bee supply store in Watertown, WI, that Harrison breathes easy. With a look of exhausted satisfaction, he unwraps a Swisher Sweet cigar knowing he did his part to sustain Wisconsin’s honey industry for one more year.

When Celley arrives at Darant and Sons Inc. at 8 a.m., Harrison is already enjoying the last drag of his Swisher Sweet while his crew unloads the last of the bee boxes, each containing roughly 7,000 female worker bees. Queens come packaged separately in

private matchbox-sized containers. “The queen is the hive,” Celley explains holding the box in her palm. “The colony grooms her and feeds her the royal jelly.” It is this “royal jelly” that maintains her growth and reproductive capabilities, plus distinguishes her from the other females in the hive. After double-checking her order, Celley joins the other keepers inspecting this year’s shipment and sharing stories of ruthless mites and empty hives.

The annual pickup has become a ritual among most Wisconsin beekeepers needing to replenish their colonies from the ravages of winter and the verroa mites, but Wisconsin beekeepers have not always depended on outside help. According to *The History of Wisconsin’s Bee Keeping and Honey Production Industry*, a pamphlet published by the UW-Madison Historical Society, Wisconsin’s first settlers found abundant supplies of honey in the wild.

The pamphlet states that, “Hunting ‘bee trees’ and removing honey was a well established practice.” Settlers began documenting the locations of these trees, and by 1967, the *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters* published a collection of known “bee trees” across the state. Today, honey hunting requires less work and more money. Keepers find over 112 million bees for hire under one roof at Darant and Sons Inc., at the cost of \$82 per box.

Celley cuts a check for \$4,700 and loads 57 boxes of Californian bees in the back of a covered truck, especially arranged for this unseasonably cold April morning. Less experienced keepers risk exposing their cargo to freezing winds on flatbed trucks.

But Celley takes no chances. Much of her income, as well as personal relationships depend on these shipments.

You can find her at the Dane County Farmers Market every week selling her honey for \$3-\$7 a bottle. Many of her customers enjoy the light clove variety, but Celley prefers the rich taste of her black locus honey, which she refers to as the “champagne of honey.” The farmers market also provides the chance to check in with fellow farmers, longtime customers and friends. It’s easy to see why the annual delivery is a significant, almost sacred, affair.

On her way back from Darant and Sons Inc., Celley receives a call on her cell phone.

“Is this the bee charmer?” says the voice on other line. “Sure is,” she replies. Celley is on call 24-hours-a-day for her “Bee Control” business, managing unwanted bees, hornets, and other stinging insects, for area residents. She chose the name because most people think anything that stings is a

bee. She doesn’t particularly enjoy exterminating unwanted bees, hornets and wasps, but it provides a second income and gives her a chance to educate people about the differences between stinging insects. “Honey bees get a bad wrap from more aggressive hornets,” Celley explains.

A few minutes after receiving the call, she arrives back at the farm with \$4,700 worth of bees in tow. From her porch you can see small white boxes scattered against the backdrop of an overgrown apple orchard. The hives look somewhat out of place nestled in the tall grass, like ancient monuments waiting to be discovered. A huge bur oak towers over the empty boxes, a lonely old landlord silently looking forward to some company. A fortune teller once told Celly that this particular oak possesses supernatural energy. The teller believed that the tree is home to the Greek god of Nature, Pan.

Celley was so impressed by the mystic’s perfect physical description of a tree she had never seen before that she looked up Pan in the dictionary upon returning home. She discovered that Pan is the protector of honey and moved her hives underneath the old bur oak’s sprawling branches to take advantage of the deity’s watchful presence, which she often feels while harvesting honey and checking her hives.

Celley is in her element under the bur oak’s protective branches. She spends the remaining eight hours of daylight in the tall grass, resettling bees into their new homes. “These bees will literally work themselves to death in a few weeks,” she says while pouring 7,000 buzzing honey bees into a hive. She might do the same if she had more bees of which to take care. She says the work is therapeutic and it’s easy to see why. The Californian honey bees flow out of the box like an oozing stream of honey, their buzz sounding more like a purr on this cool morning.

“This is my sanctuary,” she explains through her beekeeper’s veil. This form of relaxation includes an acupuncture treatment of sorts. Celley receives ten stings throughout the day, which she announces in a calm and affirming tone, “There’s one!” she says, never wincing or breaking stride. On a warmer day she would spray the cages with sugar water to subdue the rambunctious bees after their long journey. Today however, the shock of a 40 degree April morning is enough to tame this Californian crowd.

Although spiritually fulfilling, the work still takes a toll on the 50-year-old “Bee Charmer.” By the time she goes to bed, she can barely move, but you won’t hear her complain. With a weary smile she gently pours the last box of bees into their new home and whispers, “I told you it would be a good day.”

# Le Métèque



Check our inside magazine



How many frogs have you kissed TODAY?





# Suck my man nipple

By Asa Butcher

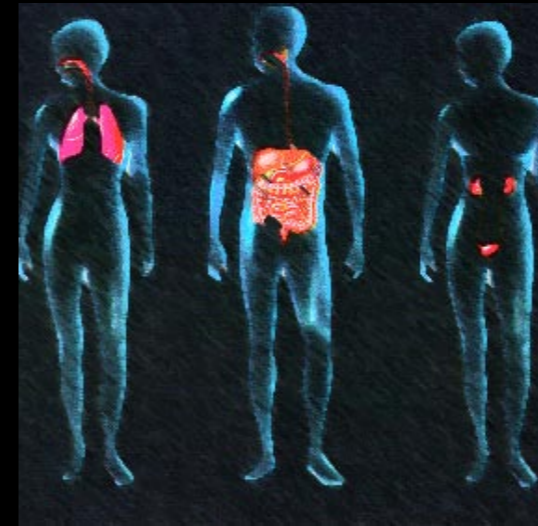
The discussion of breastfeeding has been high on the Butcher household agenda over the last few weeks. It is the concern of every mother-to-be, whether the ‘connection’ can be made with their child and be able to naturally feed them. Breast milk contains anti-bodies that cannot be reproduced in powered milk and sucking upon the nipple is a calming process – any man can tell you that.

Now, what do you think about a baby suckling upon a man’s nipple? I am not joking because it seems that a man’s nipples are perfectly suited to soothing a crying baby until it can be fed, according to a report on fatherhood. The report states that the Aka Pygmies, a hunter-gatherer tribe from the northern Congo, as the best fathers. When the mother is not available, the father calms his baby by giving it a nipple to suck.

Okay, then. I guess this means shaving my nipples on a daily basis and I will require some moisturiser to avoid any tenderness, then there is the issue of cracked teets that...hold on, let’s back up a minute. A man is willingly placing his nipple into his infant’s mouth and Social Services are not involved? The father’s family are still talking to him and his friends have not completely ostracised him? Get real!

On the same day this report was published, I read another article about the problems women face when breastfeeding in public and how they are made to feel dirty and ashamed of a natural act. Let’s take a moment to combine the two stories and imagine a man whipping his nipple out in restaurant to calm his crying son. Imagine the moral outrage, the screams, the shouts, the abuse and one solitary man frantically trying to find the paper upon which he printed the Aka Pygmy story.

We are living in an ever-changing world, or so we are told. In reality, nothing ever changes when it comes to social and cultural squeamishness, whether it is a breastfeeding mother or seeing gay couples holding hands and kissing. There should not be anything wrong with a man pacifying their child with a nipple but it goes against our personal moral code. It feels wrong, but does it mean it is wrong? You never know when you may have a similar conversation, “Sorry Thanos, I can’t come to the pub tonight...Yeah, my nipple is pacifying the kid...Yeah...See ya then...”



# Donate your heart

By Thanos Kalamidas

A few days ago an eleven-year-old boy died in a hospital after living for the last 11 months with the support of a mechanical heart. The news and photos of this child were breathtaking but it also highlights a problem. The boy died because the doctors could not find a heart, which raises the issue of organ donation.

Our western civilization and scientific improvement brought the cure for many diseases but also brought accidents, alcohol, drugs and obesity. People are dying from failing hearts, kidney and liver. Europe has the record in car accidents, but also in organ donation and transplantation which has saved the lives of countless people.

People can donate organs while they are alive, for example donating kidneys, skin tissue for treating burns and bone marrows, while other organs like heart, lungs and eyes can only be donated after death.

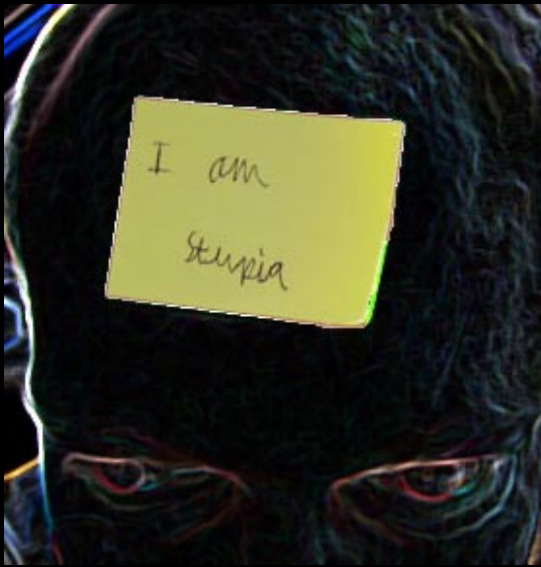
Having a medical condition does not prevent you from becoming a donor, on the contrary it makes you more aware of the needs. This is not an article to promote organ donation, it is just to remind you that we have no excuse for the death of an eleven-year-old boy. To make it worse, the boy’s eyes and kidneys were donated to help some others who had the need of a transplant.

A good start is blood donation, which is something that most people can do without worrying; it only takes a glass of orange juice to replace the blood taken. There are thousands of people who need blood across Europe and millions around the world.

I, myself, became an organ donor around twenty years ago. Actually, I was somehow forced to become one when a very close person suffered from leukemia and was in great need of bone marrow. So here was me. What made me aware of the need of organ transplant, even coming to blood or bone marrow, was the little possibilities to find them. We waited for two weeks desperate to find a donor, even though I had offered myself the doctors insisted waiting a bit more.

Twenty-five days after I was forced (forced is not the right word since I was willing to do it from the beginning) to do it because nobody had appeared. The thing is that this was a one-hour procedure, including the tests, and anybody could have done it - probably much faster than me since I was scarred of the needle.

The next day I became an organ donor and the only thing I have to do is carry a small card in my wallet and hope that I will be able to help people even after my death.



# Disabled not stupid

By Nicky De Jong

Are people with mental disabilities stupid? If you check the word in any encyclopaedia you would definitely say, 'Yes they are', but is this a reason to treat them as if they are stupid? Most of the time people only see the disability, unable to look any further to find the person behind the disability.

I'm come from a family with two mentally disabled brothers. The older one has a mild retardation; he is very independent and needs help very rarely. His appearance is just like any other man, although usually people sense that there is something strange about him after observing him. It is then that they begin treating him differently, talking to him like he is a two-year-old or as though he is not able to handle any kind of regular conversation.

What most people don't understand is how many things my brother knows about certain things and how interesting a conversation with him could be. For example, he is totally into movies, he is a human film library knowing movies, actors and actresses, the year they were filmed and all the small details. Formula One and music from the '80s are two more examples that he has slowly become an expert. Unfortunately, people never give him the chance to talk about these things, something that shames me and irritates me, especially when I see people's reactions when we are out somewhere.

When he's out shopping and paying, it is something that takes time since he has to carefully check every single note or coin; this is a slow process. The people queuing behind him become anxious and loud, so the next natural step is that my brother gets nervous and becomes slower and slower.

He lives alone and he has a job in a supermarket; a job that makes him proud. He's so loyal to the business that there is no chance that you could make any comment about that certain shop or the whole chain itself without him taking it personally. In fact, he expects us all to do our shopping from that supermarket for which he's working. The thing that upsets me most is that there

are people who try to take advantage of him and influence his innocent approach to life.

My other brother is a completely different story. He's severe mentally disabled and at the level of a year or two-year-old kid, plus he will never win a beauty contest, maybe a freak contest.

When people first see him they get a real shock, even people who were warned and claimed that they could deal with him, pull away the first time. When I was around six or seven, he was moved into a special home. There's not much known about his disability and the only thing doctors said was that he wasn't going to get old and wouldn't be able to learn anything. They said that there wasn't any chance to communicate with him.

Well, he proved them all wrong since next month it's going to be his 26th birthday, and in those years he learned to walk, he recognizes people and we have found a way to communicate with him.

If you talk to him and give him small tasks, like 'close the door' or 'can you give me a cup', he is able to do them. The rest of the communication is unique and is mainly symbols or meanings, things that you show him have a different symbolism for him; for example, a toy car means that mother comes to pick him, a glass is his favourite lemonade and a cup stands for coffee.

When he goes out in public his behaviour and appearance makes people nervous. He's not the silent Bob type, when he's trying to communicate emotions in his way he can become very noisy. He has many fixations, like 'digging', which is digging up his anus, getting it out and then it is party time. There is also automutilation, scratching, biting or hitting himself or if you're lucky enough to stand near him it's going to be you. He also has this thing for baby dolls' heads, in which he keeps pressing the eyes on the doll's head until they fall out then he's not interested anymore.



# Losing your appetite

By Nicky De Jong

I never really realized that my brothers were different until I was around nine. I had a friend over from school and everything was fine, we were just playing and then my brother came home for the weekend. She saw him, immediately wanted to go home and, the next week at school, nobody wanted to play with me anymore. That incident made me realize that things weren't as normal as I thought and I started to feel ashamed of my brothers; I actually started blaming them for many things.

Later, when I moved to the secondary school, I was so happy because I didn't know many of the other pupils so they didn't know anything about my brothers. When people asked me if I had any siblings, the answer was always, 'yes two brothers'; I would never give any further details. I would only invite people over to my house when I knew for sure my brothers weren't home.

A few years ago, I got an opportunity to work in the USA with mentally disabled adults for over three years. In that organization I had many of the same experiences that I had already from home but somehow I became more aware of it. Going anywhere with people who have mental disabilities is interesting in the sense that you come across situations you never dreamt of, both good and bad.

One of the memories that I will never forget is when we were out for dinner once and I had to go outside to get something from the van. A woman followed me outside, came up to me and said, "Thanks, you just made me lose my appetite. Why the fuck did you bring them here?"

I could not answer that woman. I just stood there wondering if she had really said what I had just heard. Generally, when we went out for a meal, restaurants would put us in the furthest corner of the room or, if we were lucky enough, we would get a whole room for ourselves - special treatment and we were not even famous.

People never sat near us or got on the same elevator, which was fine for me, at least. I always knew that we didn't have to stand, queue and we had all the space for only us. We never had to wait in line in theme parks, since there was always someone who made sure we could get on as soon as possible. Nobody wanted to share the ride with us, so we got our own private rides: how many people can boast that?

You almost get a shock when people decide to talk to you. When

out with one of my clients, somebody would come to start a conversation about the client but never asked my client anything, they just ignored the fact that he was there understanding everything of the conversation. Usually, when people came over to talk, they were all like, "Oh I respect you so much for what you do." If I had a penny for every time I heard that, I would be a penny short of a million.

But what do they mean by this 'respect'? Is respect built upon what kind of job we do? I think everybody can work with mentally disabled people, since it's just a case of willing and wanting to do it because it's nothing special. What I like working with these clients is that they are pure and real. No false emotions, what you see are what you get.

Some of these clients I will never forget, some of them thought a lot of me. I went on rollercoaster rides with someone who was crying all the time, I thought he didn't like it but he actually wanted more. On a bus from Washington to New York City, we were singing along to The Beatles greatest hits; believe me, after that you don't want to hear The Beatles ever again, and then we were once pulled over by some cops, while we were singing along to a song called "NYC cops, they aren't too smart" - guess who kept singing?

Two days before my birthday one of the clients came up to me and said, "Don't tell anyone but on her birthday we are going to have a party," then looked at me and whispered, "Don't tell anyone I said it. Say it was your mama who told you." A client proposed to me a couple of times a day, then his best friend became jealous, so they got into a fight, made up and decided to share me.

We got lost on the way to a client's home, who said he didn't know where he lived. It was getting late so we decided that we were going somewhere to eat. After we found his home, he thanked us for the meal and we found out that he knew exactly where he lived, he just wanted to go to McDonalds.

People with mental disabilities don't have the master brains and that again depends upon their disability, but some of them understand a great deal of what 'normal' people say around them. It hurts them when they see the reactions and responses of the people around them. It's just as my brother always says, "I wish I had your brains, so I would be normal too."



## Stop: End of an era

By Asa Butcher

News from America this month that Wal-Mart Stores Inc., the world's largest retailer, plans to begin phasing out VHS tapes is heartbreaking, yet unsurprising, news, and late last year, Dixons, the UK's largest electrical chain, decided to stop selling videocassette recorders. After 26-years of domination, the DVD has swiped its crown and is performing a merry dance next to the freshly dug grave.

Feelings are mixed. VHS is the format my generation grew up with and many of us remember heading to the cramped local video rental shop to argue over what to get; this was long before the arrival of the multi-selection glory of Blockbuster. My first VHS was Ghostbusters, my first sneaky recording of late-night German porn was on VHS and countless others memories follow – some accidentally recorded over.

The bulk of my film collection is VHS, although my wife insists that one day we swap them all over and sell them. Why? Look at the arrival of CDs and the disappearance of vinyl...hold on, vinyl has not disappeared and it is still the enthusiasts' choice of format. I will hold on to my videos for the time being for both nostalgic and perhaps future investment.

On the other side of this, I love DVDs and I adore DVD box sets. The best argument about the domination DVD is the box set,

with their embossed covers, multi-boxed, multi-shrinkwrapped, objects of joy. Hell, sometimes I don't even watch them. I caress their sturdy external box, inhale the fresh smell of plastic and revel in the words, "Director's Commentary", "Never-seen-before footage", "Hilarious Out-takes", "Behind-the-Scene's Documentary" and "Theatrical Trailer" – ohhhh!

DVD has pushed the collector in us to new limits. It used to take time, energy and financial resources to amass the entire collection of a TV series, but now you can buy the entire series in one fell swoop – how much is the A-Team Complete Series One? Television series on DVD make up more than half of my DVD collection, which shows that either I am obsessed with TV of yesteryear or the format has breathed new life into a genre that video tended to overlook.

How long until DVD suffers the fate of VHS I do not know, but one day my daughter will be lucky enough to inherit my dusty collection of Red Dwarf videos and may pawn my geeky X-Files videos for a packet of cigarettes. Even so, my videos are like another man's vinyl and this will be drummed into her from an early age.



## 48-year-old Mr. Smith

By Thanos Kalamidas

One spring morning, the police, to the surprise and astonishment of neighbours and friends, arrested a 48-year-old man named John Smith. According to his police file, Mr. Smith, son of an army officer, is a civil servant with an average salary and an average life in an average apartment. No former crimes, there were some suspicions a long time ago but nothing was proved.

His neighbours and friends said that 48-year-old Mr. Smith is a very quiet man who lives most of his life in his house and has an extreme passion for kids. He actually plays with the kids in the playground, taking part in games like hide-and-seek and climbing the trees, for example. He always buys sweets for the kids and occasionally he invites them to his house for a game of monopoly or to watch cartoons on TV.

The psychologists say that 48-year-old Mr. Smith, due to his travelling childhood, he always trying to recreate his lost childhood by surrounding himself with kids. There are other examples, such as his marriage that failed after a few months and fathering children by an unknown mother and an unknown father, which may suggest certain sexual problems.

According to the kids, 48-year-old Mr. Smith's games were sometimes more physical than others including touching their genitals. The kids excused these games as 'boys' games, while the alcohol involved was nothing more than a test to show how drinking is a horrible habit. Some of the kids explained that beer and wine are bad, but they didn't mind champagne, especially when it is French!

The police took 48-year-old Mr. Smith into custody and lead him to the courtroom, where eleven average men and women, with average lives and kids are going to make a decision. After listening to all the evidence and the stories, the eleven men and women are locked in a small room for half-an-hour before emerging to announce their unanimous decision.

Mr. Smith, aged 48, is sentenced to 20 years in prison. This includes a combination of psychological help and the obligation of the court to check every two years in cooperation with the doctors on his improvement.

In his first week in prison, Mr. Smith, two years from his 50th birthday, found himself in total isolation from the other prisoners since paedophiles are the worst kind of criminals, even between criminals. The surprises that the inmates will save for the paedophile are not fit to include here right now. The 48-year-old Mr. Smith's case proved that justice is a blind lady that knows how to punish a criminal.

In another case, justice has proved that she is not only blind, but also deaf and mute too. A very close friend, who followed this case, said that money and fame are the innocent verdict. It was O.J. Simpson a few years ago and it is the 48-year-old Jacko today! At least the Mr. Smiths of this world can sleep better in their cells knowing that their idol is free and proven innocent! For a strange reason, I just remembered a couple of songs now: Bad, Dangerous, Thriller and Beat It.



# Damned superstitions

By Asa Butcher

Thankfully, the English football season has ended. My relief has nothing (well, a little bit) to do with my team's lacklustre performances, on-field boxing matches, monumental mistakes and continued lack of silverware, but my matchday routine. Superstition is not restricted to voodoo, witches and Stevie Wonder, but football supporters have some serious neuroses when kick off approaches.

The arrival of a new shirt, scarf or pair of slippers requires careful testing because the item of apparel could be the reason your team let in a last-minute goal at home. Don't smirk! A vintage Newcastle shirt arrived and the first game I watched wearing it we beat Everton 6-2, although it may have something to do with either Alan Shearer or the seat I'd chosen on the sofa.

The choice of chair is key to a result but it is usually in conjunction with a certain replica shirt or drinking a certain brand of lager. For example, opening a Newcastle Brown Ale is usually a sign that the game is not going as hoped and superstitious reinforcement are demanded. Note though – it should be drunk from a small glass, not the bottle, because the latter can be unlucky, and drinking it with a Mexican meal is lucky.

Alcohol is dangerous, since a friend insists that if he has a hang-over then Newcastle lose and another argues the opposite – if they are both at the bar we usually draw. Superstitions are tiresome and involve considerable effort, especially when a change of shirt is required at half time or you must not visit the toilet due to the fear of another Michael Owen hat trick.

Those around you play a role in the proceedings, for example when my brother watches a game with my Dad back home Newcastle never lose, if they do it is because I am there too or he forgot to get a bottle of Newcastle Brown Ale...in a small glass and cold. I am sure my Mum has some influence but this is becoming too exhausting to think clearly.

In the end you decide that all this superstition is not worth the hassle and don't do anything...then your team lose 3-0. The panic sets in and you ask, "Was it my fault?" One superstition that I tried to convince my wife was that when we make love on the day of the game we always win, but she wasn't interested in helping anybody score.



# Who's paying the price?

By John Pederson

No matter the score, you can count on fans at West High School to support their Lions. They'll brave any conditions cheer on student athletes - even multi-million dollar budget deficits.

Wisconsin's Madison Metropolitan School Board raised participation and admission fees last year to make up for a ten million dollar budget gap. Parents rallied against the measures until board members repealed them in a special meeting earlier this year. But with an even larger deficit projected for next year, it's clear this debate will go into overtime.

Board member Ruth Robarts felt the rollbacks appease outspoken parents but are not a long term solution. Athletic Director Chris Nelson acknowledged this aspect of the decision, "No one expects this to solve the problem, but, in the end, sports sell papers."

This debate has received more press lately than prep sports. The Wisconsin State Journal criticized the board's decision but sympathized with district parents who still pay the highest fees in the

conference. Nelson feels both sides may have lost yardage on the play, "It's clearly not a move that moved us any closer to a solution, but something had to go."

The board will use a reserve fund to cover the decreased revenues earned from last year's fees. The move will cut the money available to hire new teachers in half. This will likely spur a new debate considering the increasing rate of enrollment in area high schools. The board appointed a special committee to tackle these issues.

The group will study the district's athletic programming and administration over the next four months and present their findings later this summer for next year's budget face off.



# 6,600 opening moves

By Thanos Kalamidas

What would you think if I told you that there is a game where for the first three moves there are approximately 6,600 opening sequences? And I'm talking about a board game that is not chess!!!

I know that chess is the game of the intellectuals and it has nothing to do with luck but with intelligence and strategy. What is important, until you can play good chess, is to have an opponent who plays as well as you do. Then what? You just wait to see when your opponent will make a mistake. It sounds stupid, I know, but I'm one of those who play chess and I do love chess but the bishop will always move diagonally whatever you do.

Now, backgammon is a totally different case and even though you need two dice to play you find soon enough that it is not just an amusing little parlour game. To surprise you further, I must tell you that there are books from the beginning of the 19th century about backgammon and some of them considered classics.

Even NOKIA's latest mobile telephones have backgammon as one of the games. That proves that backgammon is not pure luck and I'm very proud to say that after eight months my NOKIA has beaten me only once.

Ok, one of the most famous books happens to be Playboy's Book of Backgammon, but does anyone remember the bets and parties the bookies had with the game 'The Big Blue' versus Kasparov?

People connect backgammon with money for one reason only and that is it includes dice. What they forget and any good player knows is that luck has nothing to do with backgammon. What it requires is a choice of different solutions and opportunities in

the game. There is no good or bad throw of the dice; it is how cleverly you have placed your checkers in different 'doors' to use backgammon terminology.

Currently, there are nearly thirty magazines in the USA that specialize in backgammon and there columnists who actually make a living writing about just backgammon.

There are tournaments around the world and online; unfortunately, many are sponsored by betting sites and online casinos, but backgammon is a nice game between friends. I have really enjoyed games and tournaments between friends and I would suggest the next time you find somebody who knows how to play backgammon just ask them to teach you and you will find it a thrilling game.

Finally, remember these tips because you will find them useful when you start playing backgammon:

1. Buying your opponent drinks is the best investment you'll ever make.
2. The number of good rolls is directly proportional to the number of good plays.
3. It's easy to make a great play: just think of a really dumb play, then do the opposite.
4. If you want someone to really hate you, then right after you win a game point out what they did wrong.
5. If you are playing this game for a living, you aren't living.

So, roll the dice!



# African jewel

By Asa Butcher

Board games, we are all familiar with them. We all have our favourites. When I was growing up I loved Lost Valley of the Dinosaurs, Escape from Atlantis, Game of Life, Go for Broke, Heroquest, well you get the idea that I enjoy a good board game. Each of these games requires little skill, thought or time, unlike Risk and Monopoly that my brother enjoyed kicking my arse each time.

Huge amounts of brainpower and patience are not found in abundance on a rainy Sunday afternoon, which is when I first met the board game Afrikan tähti. The day was like the aforementioned rainy Sunday, except this time I was in Finland and my wife suggested a game of Afrikan tähti, later revealed to mean African Star – I could have worked that out.

Designed by 18-year-old Kari Mannerla in 1951, it's has to be the most-loved board game in Finland – not that there are many – and has sold over three million copies. The game has also remained unchanged since its creation. You may ask why it is important to mention that it has not changed, well the board features some politically incorrect imagery for the 21st century, such as black dancing tribesmen and white colonial explorers, but, hey, it is just a game!

African Star is a luck-filled roll and move race for the elusive and valuable Star of Africa jewel. Players begin in either Cairo or Tangier and start exploring Africa in an attempt to find the jewel and return home first. Naturally, there is a twist or the game would be rather boring. At each city you flip over a token, there can

be other gemstones that give you money, gangsters that rob you, nothing at all or a horseshoe.

A horseshoe is a bolt from the blue and not very African, if you don't mind me saying. Upon the discovery of the single Star of Africa, a race begins to find a horseshoe (prior discoveries do not count). If you quickly find a horseshoe, you can attempt to get home first and snatch victory. Exciting stuff!

One of the beauties of the game is that it can last until the final token is turned over or the Star of Africa is found immediately – these have both happened to games in which I was involved. Since the tokens are randomly distributed at the start of the game, no game will ever be the same. On occasion, there can be no winner if the jewel is on an island and nobody has money to fly or sail there, plus a player can be stranded should a gangster appear on an island token.

African Star has found a place among my board game loves and copies have even managed to find homes in English cupboards. One word of warning: always check the Star of Africa token because it may be subtly marked with a nail. My wife never realised that was the reason her brother used to win every time. Cheeky boy!



# Birth of Toonzine

By Asa Butcher

According to Newcastle United's Club Historian Paul Joannou, life on Tyneside before the start of the 1985/86 season was pessimistic. Chris Waddle, one of Newcastle's native star players, grew tired of manager Jack Charlton's style of play and decided to go elsewhere. Willie McFaul replaced Charlton as the club's sixth boss in only a decade and began restoring some confidence to the team. His first season in charge left the Magpies languishing in 11th place and the subsequent 1986/87 season ended with the team in 17th spot. After narrowly avoiding relegation to the old Division Two, another talented local player, Peter Beardsley, was lured to Liverpool for £1.9m; a British transfer record.

One brief glimpse of hope emanated from a single player on the NUFC team sheet, Paul Gascoigne, known affectionately as Gazza. His potential was obvious and he was somebody to build a team around, so in January 1988 the club began to negotiate a new five-year contract worth £1m with him. As talks moved into the fifth month fans began to fear the worst - the imminent departure of another rising Geordie star. Eventually, Gazza followed in the footsteps of Beardsley and Waddle, deserting the club to play for Tottenham Hotspur, in another record transfer worth £2.3m.

The mood among the fans was one of dissatisfaction, they had seen three local players who could have been the backbone of their team depart for richer clubs and it spurred both agitated supporters and shareholders into action. Mark Jensen, editor of the zine *The Mag*, recalled the sale of Gazza being the final straw, "Whatever team you are, you don't get anywhere by selling your best players, so that just added to the mood of discontent." A friend of Mark's, Chris Tait, showed him an issue of WSC, neither had seen anything like it before and when they realised arch-rivals Sunderland had a zine they launched into action.

Mark's only previous experience with journalism was writing letters to the local paper and knew nothing about publishing, financing or distribution. The starting point was to make a list of subjects that fans talked about in the pub, they then cut halved

the list and that was the birth of *The Mag*. After being named by Chris, though Mark's suggestion of 'Tyne Talk' became the title for the editorial page, they faced the task of publishing the first issue.

While they were preparing the first issue, a number of dissatisfied shareholders had begun to organise a full-scale hostile takeover at the club. Only a few months earlier Gordon McKeag had taken over as chairman of the board and one of his first problems was fighting the revolt. During June 1988, millionaire property developer, John Hall, and shareholder, Malcolm Dix, formed the Magpie Group with the objective to open up the running of the club and democratise ownership. The ideas of Hall and Dix ran parallel to those of *The Mag*'s editors, so Mark wrote letters to all the members of the group asking for help publishing their magazine. Brian Reed, who owned a printers, replied.

Unlike the majority of zines being released at the time, *The Mag* was not a cut and paste product with amateur design; it was prepared on professional publishing equipment usually used by customers like Scottish & Newcastle Breweries and other blue chip companies. From the beginning, Mark never described his publication as a zine, instead preferring to call it either an independent supporters magazine or a magazine for fans. Brian Reed offered to underwrite the first issue to allow some financial breathing space for the duo, although a few days before it was due to be printed he pulled out of the Magpie Group and felt he could not fulfil his commitments.

Luckily, the expensive aspect of designing the layout had been completed; thereby reducing the cost at the printers, but Mark had to put the costs on his credit card. The overall appearance of the first issue was very professional in comparison to other zines that had been released at the time; there was the added advantage of finding Andy Mullins, who was skilled in page layout and willing to do the design in his spare time.

Hall revealed his determination with an outrageous bidding war by offering £500 to fellow board members for every 50p share, but McKeag was not to be beaten easily and soon shares had soared to £7,000. The *Evening Chronicle*, the regional paper, backed the Magpie Group and provided an excellent forum to voice complaints against the regime at St. James' Park, which in turn provided them with support from the fans.

Hostilities were fanned by all the media attention and protests were soon heard on the terraces. Anger and hatred were directed at the board and as the debacle continued it began to take its toll on the players. During the anarchy on Tyneside the first edition of *The Mag* was published, Mark Jensen recalls, "Standing on a street corner feeling like a total prick, trying to explain what it was all about when the vast majority just wanted to storm the gates and hang McKeag from the nearest lamppost."

On the day of *The Mag*'s release, Mark and two others stood optimistically outside St. James' Park with 4,000 copies to sell between them. At the end of their first day they had sold only 200 copies at 50 pence each, Mark recalled thinking, "Only £100 worth, Christ what have I done?" The following match was on a Bank Holiday Monday and Mark managed to sell over 200 by himself, the outlook improved further when 800 were sold at the next home match and as word spread the printing bills began to be covered, bringing a wave of relief to its impoverished editor/financier.

The first copy covered topics that were either long-running issues or commonly discussed subjects in *The Strawberry* pub before matches. There was a review of a BBC2 documentary featuring Beardsley criticising the NUFC board, a piece targeting racism in the ground, an article against BSkyB bidding for football broadcasting rights and the campaign to improve facilities at St. James' Park. A laughing Gazza adorned the cover, accompanied by the caption: 'Laughing all the way to the bank,' squarely aimed at both the board of directors and the avaricious player.

During the 1988/89 season there was much more to be agitated about. Manager Willie McFaul was sacked after a club record of only three home wins, a meagre 32 goals were scored, 35 different players participated, and they finished bottom of Division One. Following relegation they remained stuck in Division Two, the new manager Jim Smith was unable to solve the problem, the average home attendance had dropped below World War Two figures and, surprisingly in April 1990, McKeag and Hall finally called a truce, which was due to worsening finances caused by the deepening recession and soaring interest rates.

In October 1990, it was decided to transform the stadium into a 41,000 capacity stadium, which would provide economic security but to accomplish this the board of directors proposed a public share issue that would democratise the club and raise the initial £2.5m. A new ground would allow NUFC

to develop their corporate hospitality, which was already the largest in the UK with 58 Executive Boxes, restaurant, function suite, numerous sponsors' lounges, executive clubs and club shops.

Barely half the £2.5m needed was pledged, local companies could not afford major investment, the supporters were not bothered and some members of the Magpie Group failed to produce the money. Following this humiliation McKeag resigned as Chairman and, in December 1990, George Forbes filled the vacant position, though many supporters believed that somebody with more financial power was required, somebody like John Hall. The head of the Magpie Group was also devastated by another fiasco and left the board, though the Hall family remained major shareholders; it was a decision that left many confused.

NUFC's irregular fortune continued throughout the 1990/91 season beginning with a £1.1m three-year deal with Newcastle Breweries and finishing with the resignation of manager Jim Smith, with eleven games to go. On his departure Smith lamented, "If you make a mistake here, it's not just a mistake - it's a disaster." Attendances were averaging around 17,000, but at an FA Cup tie they soured back to 30,000 capacity hinting at the club's potential. At that time, *When Saturday Comes* magazine questioned the fanatical passion of the supporters on Tyneside and the belief that they are a 'sleeping giant':

"The fans attitude to their football team is equally disdainful to reality...even more amazing is their belief in the capabilities of a team which remains stubbornly ordinary...The Geordies will never resign themselves to the fact that United are crap."

Despite the unwavering faith and devotion, the giant remained asleep throughout the 1991/92 season, but signs of an awakening were upon the horizon. After a boardroom restructuring in November 1991, recently knighted Hall was about to make NUFC's Centenary year even more memorable. Four years of campaigning to take control finally ended in success as Sir John Hall replaced George Forbes as Chairman and the Magpie Group took control of the financially challenged club.

English football was about to witness the inception of a new super league consisting of England's top teams, the FA Premier League. The BBC and BSkyB procured a deal with the Premier League, worth £304m over five years, entitling them to broadcast live games and highlights. Supporters feared the whole scheme was based upon greed and would become a passive form of 'entertainment' manipulated by directors, sponsors and the mass media, but one zine lamented:

"The Premier League is here - here to stay. We must strive to be part of it, even if it is perhaps morally wrong. The clubs who miss out now are going to face a struggle to survive and we must not become one of those clubs."



# The small things

By Asa Butcher

The time is 1:20am. Tonight I am alone. The flat has two cats sleeping on the sofa and I am typing these words right now, plus Winamp is playing Carly Simon's In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning – how strange. 12 hours ago, my wife was instructed to stay in hospital overnight for observation and we only went in to visit a friend.

Okay, I am joking. Päivi, my wife, is pregnant, for those who have not been following, and she is a few weeks from the delivery date. In the last few days, she has started to experience some symptoms of pre-eclampsia, which has required a trip to the hospital today. Our arrangements for the day were suddenly cast asunder when the doctor decided 24-hours of observation and the collection of her urine would yield more results.

So, I am alone for the first time in four years and not really knowing how to feel. Men joke all the time about how much their wife whines and makes their life hard, but when they are sat by themselves in their home their presence is sorely missed, even the cats are hunting for her scent. On the flip side, I would not be sat at the computer in the wee small hours of the morning because she would be demanding my presence in bed.

Stop the giggling...pregnancy means she has poor nights of sleep, plus she has difficulty falling asleep unless I am next to her. It is sweet but very frustrating, especially when I am in the mood to write stuff for Ovi. No bedtime curfew and the computer all to myself are two bonuses, but they are our routine and it isn't the same breaking the rules when nobody is there to see it.

I know how she will react to loud music, "Does it have to shout?" and this obsession with going to bed early, yet she is still half-an-hour behind me climbing under the duvet, which gives me time to read a chapter of a book. There is nothing wrapped in Clingfilm in

the fridge and there is so much shelf space in the bathroom that my personal hygiene feels inadequate.

Päivi began her maternity leave at the beginning of June and I laughed about how some couples' lives are thrown into chaos when they are forced to spend all week together, which may explain why so many get divorced once they hit retirement age. I made all the stereotypical jokes, such as she could cook all the meals and do all the housework now, but we have always shared all that and we actually enjoy one another's company, which may sound obvious but not all couples would agree.

Is it romantic? Is it just plain sappy? All I know is that it is our daily life; the small things keep the big from taking over and overwhelming us. We all should take comfort in the idiosyncrasies that drive us nuts one day but leave us naked the next. The kiss that precedes the darkness, the reassurance of a partner after a bad dream and the sound of the toilet flushing once the sun streams through the window; these form the security of a relationship.

These are basics and they were probably subconsciously learnt via our own parents, even my Dad offered some advice tonight, "Don't forget to take the takeaway boxes out of the house, burn them and then bury the ashes three miles away!" He forgot to say wipe the worktop because upon the homecoming, Päivi asked, "Is that chopped ham from a takeaway pizza?"

Naturally, I am joking about her observation, since I was honest with her about my dinner plans...for the first night at least. Love, sex and trust are great facets of partnership, but tonight I may have enjoyed a pizza, many lagers, a late night and loud music, but I can't wait for the half-an-hour ceremony of creams and preparation that precede the meeting in the middle of the mattress for the kiss goodnight. Romantic and sappy? I suppose both.



# Smurfs and sidewalk chalk

By John Pederson

Grass stains and soccer cleats  
Kickball, hotbox, night games fill summer weeks

Sidewalk chalk, gardener snakes  
In at 9 and don't be late

It's almost dark as we run back  
The yard still coved with ball and bat

Strip down, mom orders, you're coved in dirt  
Wash your hands and give me that shirt

Up to the bath, take out the toys  
One of a dolphin that makes a flipping noise

Dessert is ice cream, three big scoops  
Hershey's sauce, butterscotch chips, swirled into a chocolate mousse

Up to bed, climb the ladder  
Say your prayers and stop the chatter

Sprinkler sounds, dogs bark  
A smurf night light to chase away the dark