Is there room for the authentic in an artificial world?

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"The Big Three"

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for their profound dedication and service
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Is there room for the **authentic** in an **artificial** world?

The Contortion of Blue Jeans: An Authentic American Story  
by Christina Corley  
Page 6

Online Frenzy: A Glimpse Into the Mind of an Internet Maniac  
by Shekira Dodd  
Page 10

More Than Skin Deep  
by Samantha Murray  
Page 14

Simply Happy.  
by Linda Mills  
Page 18

The Makeover of the American Male  
by Gabriel Walvatne  
Page 24

Keeping it Real? The Depiction of African-Americans in the News and Music  
by Bonita Weaver  
Page 28

In The Army Now: Or Are We? Looking Inside The Stereotypical Military Mindset  
by Amanda Hill  
Page 34
"To understand the meaning of form, that is conscious seeing of and feeling for form, is the indispensable preliminary condition for culture."

Josef Albers, 1941

And so no small task have the editors and writers of the 2003 New College Review imagined for themselves. At our current moment of doubletalk and double jeopardy, we take for granted the pervasiveness of the disingenuous. Worse still, the erosion of our ability to distinguish between the real and the fake is seen to have little moral import. Landscape equals dreamscape equals escape. . .

Luckily, however, this hardy band of thinkers/contributors are not mere nostalgic puritans. The work included here has been pursued in the spirit of true inquiry and is neither about tabloid sensationalism nor the spirit of censorship. More elegantly this edition of the review asks: "Does truth matter?"

Over the years, the New College community has come to appreciate the Review as amongst the very best advertisements for the education we try to offer. It has consistently reflected our commitment that a meaningful undergraduate education provides "equipment for living." This issue is no exception, and I congratulate everyone who has worked to bring it to fruition.

Jim Hall
Director, New College
In my introduction to sociology class, the teacher showered tidbits of facts over a classroom of uninterested students. I seemed to be the only person engaged in the topic of the day, social deviance, particularly when he brought up blue jeans. In the sixties, deviance was expressed by wearing it. Jeans were a symbol of the working man and were worn by college students to show their support of a more egalitarian, anti-capitalist society, the teacher informed me. I was not shooting for brownie points that Tuesday afternoon by staying awake. I was truly intrigued. I had never thought of blue jeans this way.

When I left class and walked across the campus of my university, I noticed for the first time the hundreds of denim legs walking to class. The flow of students around me was an ocean of blue. I thought that it must have been one of those serendipitous days when everyone happened to wear the same thing. But as the week wore on, I continued to notice that jeans, more than any other garment, enveloped almost every pair of legs on campus.

Why do we wear jeans with such devotion? What makes them so special? There certainly are other utilitarian garments that are more comfortable. Unlike the restricted fit of most jeans, khaki pants provide more room for moving around, have bigger
pockets and a softer and lighter-weight fabric. Army fatigues offer the same advantages as khakis with the added plus of all those pockets and are only slightly uglier than jeans. But Americans wear jeans. Jeans are the clothing staple in our closet, but they are more than pants. They are companions. They are part of our life. I have a friend who will not throw away what is left of her first pair of jeans, even though the past 20 years have shrunk them too small by several sizes.

When I ask fellow students what the fabric means to them, these jeans they wear like a second skin, they reply with I-don't-knows and because-they-are-comfortables. But I think it goes deeper than that. I think jeans are a symbol to us, part of the fabric of our identity. And in that melting pot way that is so American, they are many different things to many different people. No student consciously wears blue jeans as a symbol of their culture, of America, but it is there, nonetheless. For me, if the choice is between waving an American flag or wearing a pair of blue jeans to embody quintessential America, I choose blue jeans. Paradoxically, the material "American" blue jeans are made of was born in Europe in the 1600s. Originating in the town of Nimes, France, denim is derived from the French de Nimes, from Nimes. Jeans was the name for sailors' pants in the 1600s. In the 1700s, both the fabric and the name traveled to America along with European immigrants. American jeans were created from the ingenuity and perseverance of Levi Strauss, a Bavarian immigrant with a dream of independent business success. Levi ventured from his family's textile mill in New York to California with bundles of denim tent fabric. The coal miners were quick to point out that they did not need shelter from the beautiful California weather. So Strauss cut a deal with a local tailor named Davis. The original Levi Strauss riveted blue jean was born in 1873, and they were all work. When Levi constructed a highly durable work pant for coal miners, he created an American icon.
In the 1930's, blue jeans and cowboy boots were standard dress for little boys who wanted to look just like movie idols and on-screen Western cowboys John Wayne and Gary Cooper. Jeans embodied the spirit of the American frontier adventure and rugged individualism.

"deviant" counterculture. Jeans were embroidered, hip hugging, psychedelic, peace-loving pants whose meaning was so radical that denim was a forbidden fashion in some schools.

Jeans were transformed from pants into art in the 1980s as America got its first dose of designer jeans. Today, the designer jean fashion continues, to the deep disappointment of many who see it as a debasement of a true American icon. In September of 2002, USA Today remarked, "The whole notion of designer jeans seems anathema to a work where denim once designated counterculture."

What originated as a cheap pair of work pants for hard working coal miners has now been twisted into a $2,000 piece of fashion for the elite. It is a disgrace to the essence of jeans. Or is it?

Above: Levi Strauss, the man that started it all.

Left: Denim is such a phenomena it inspires books on the topic.
Perhaps designer jeans have only brought jeans full circle and made them all the more American. No doubt there were a few who were outraged when Strauss had the audacity to put tough tent fabric on the human form. That impertinence isn’t so far afield from the motivation of fashion designers today, although Strauss certainly had utility in his favor. Runway jeans exude American ingenuity, the talent of creating artistic clothes out of even the most modest of materials. The high prices of popular name brand jeans are American capitalism at its best. The inexcusable faux pas of multi-colored and patterned pants that defined the 80s were just another reminder that in America bad taste never gets in the way of making an impression.

Today, jeans sink lower and lower on young hips and take on personalized shape, size, style and price for any American. We may fear that, after years of occupying an average of seven coat hangers in each American closet and morphing into so many creations, the original jean is lost, with its utilitarian purpose and price. But it isn’t. Levi Strauss’ original blue jeans remain at a reasonable price. You’ll find the price of Levi’s 501 blue jeans under $30 at stores like J.C. Penny. Coal miners, movie stars, revolutionaries, models and college students all have an affinity for jeans like no other article of clothing. It is this magnificent malleability that keeps my attention in introductory sociology and my belief in jeans as the true American symbol.

America’s obsession with “new” jeans” - or with the “old” jeans for that matter - just shows us that anybody can wear them for any reason, and everyone does.
A Glimpse Into the Mind of an Internet Maniac

Is the life of an Internet Junkie for you?

by Shekira Dodd

It's 3:34 a.m. and I am awake and alive on my computer. Sleep? There is no time for sleep. I am steadily awaiting a response from the latest winner of my online auction of 16 half-used nail polishes. Who would buy such a thing? Beakerbeaker1200, that's who. But who am I to judge Beaker? I have made some outlandish purchases in my online time as well. One might look at my I Dream of Jeanie trashcan, the Homer Simpson Hibachi Grill and my bronzed Val Kilmer face and think that I am a bit of a freak. Where else but the Internet would I find such an eclectic array of items? Feeling a bit frightened? There is nothing to fear, Internet Novice. Come, let me guide you, let me show you the way. Let me enlighten you to a world of never having to leave the house again. The Internet is a virtual extension of one's self, so what else could you possibly ever need? Be careful not to get sucked in. While it can be the most helpful tool ever used, the Internet can also be an all-consuming beast come to wreak havoc on normal existence.

One's "normal existence" might include the occasional visit with friends; a little shopping for gifts, personal items, groceries; some romance here and there; work and play. Now there are more options at our fingertips to help us achieve our normal existence. For example, why go through the stress of holiday shopping? Ever heard of the term "Black Friday?" Black Friday describes the day after Thanksgiving: the busiest shopping day of the year. On this day, retailers across the nation put up one-day-only sales to the delight of their customers. The terror in this for both the retail worker and the shopper is the utter mayhem that ensues when
Sure, there is the cost of shipping, but isn't that worth not having to race through hordes of people trying to get the last Rapunzel Barbie? I would have to say so.

the majority of a city's population heads out to the mall. There is never enough parking, the mall is always packed and one must plan to stand in line to make purchases for an unusually long wait. Black Friday very well could be described as Holiday Hell. But why the hassle? The same one-day sales are probably at Gap.com or Sears.com. Most major mall retailers have their own website. The customer need never leave his or her pajamas and can shop without the wait. Many times, they do not even have to pay tax on their purchases.

Sure, there is the cost of shipping, but isn't that worth not having to race through hordes of people trying to get the last Rapunzel Barbie? I would have to say so.

For me, shopping is the ultimate in stress relief. My second cure for this ailment would have to be a little gaming. Imagine my excitement when I found I was chosen to be a Beta Tester for the new Sims Online Game. The Sims is a virtual environment in which the player creates his or her character, builds their personality, their body structure, clothes them and then designs their house with various wall treatments and furnishings. In the online version, you create this Sim and have a choice for them to either build their own house which they can incorporate other Sims as roommates, (other Sims being other online players,) or have them start their own business on their own or with another Sim where other online Sims can hang out at. The game itself ends up being like an interactive chat room where people from any location can get to know others in a friendly, or sometimes more intimate setting. In this game, skills must be built in order to build the character's personality. Skills are built by using appliances at other Sims houses or businesses. Once a skill, such as Creativity, has been built up all the way, the character can become things like a master painter, selling his or her art for high prices and building up your own financial status. This game takes an immense amount of time. If you go a week without playing, you have given other Sims a chance to leap ahead of you in the game. I will think to myself, "If I get offline, that is going to give other Sims a chance to advance ahead of me. I can't let that happen!" This is the mentality of most players of online multi-player games. NATHANHDJ1, my online buddy, says "The main idea is: if you don't stay online, you lose; and you don't want to lose. Ever."
Ah, and now the obsession begins to set in. I'm careful to pace myself with my gaming; otherwise, I would get nothing done. A game like this is ever changing; boredom doesn't happen, making it completely addictive. I myself am a strong person and I know when to say when. For others, this is harder than it seems. An obsession can develop that results in the neglect of real life duties, like leaving the house, going to work or school, socializing with others, exercise, and so forth. I have seen a person so involved with his online gaming that he became completely antisocial and developed a sense of paranoia that went beyond the understanding of his friends. This man played his games for days at a time and when he wasn't playing them, he was plotting against others who might also be playing the same game. His scheming to bring down his opponents traveled outside the realm of his game as he began plotting real life evils against others. He decided that because no one called him anymore, there was a conspiracy to avoid him. In reality, his friends knew that he wouldn't be interested in leaving his game long enough to hang out. This person couldn't see what his obsession with his computer and gaming had done to him. He only saw that others were out to get him. Among the terrible things he did to his friends was setting a brown recluse spider free in his roommate's bedroom as well as deleting the last writing's of his friend's deceased father from his computer. His obsession drove him mad. I would like to think that, if he had gotten outside more often to smell the fresh air and bask in the glory of the sunshine, maybe he

\[\text{NATHANQ1: The main idea is: if you don't stay online, you lose; and you don't want to lose. Ever.}\]
wouldn’t have turned out to be such a collapsed form of himself. He alienated himself from the world, and in turn, the world alienated itself from him. He didn’t know when to say when.

Oh, but you, the reader, you are much more intelligent than that! You can handle this wild beast we know as the World Wide Web. Is gaming not your bag? Yes, I can see that you are more into socializing. Never fear, socializing is still possible without having to leave the house. How about a visit to Match.com or Singles.com where meeting other singles like yourself is easy? Need more adventure? Then why not peruse the selection at PrisonPenPals.com? I’m sure your ultimate match is there. Personally, I haven’t delved deep into this area of the internet, but its always fun to do a search for people in your area and see someone you know on the singles network. I once found four people at match.com that worked at my very office. Perhaps they should have saved some time and just matched up with each other.

Even if you aren’t into finding your soulmate online, you can utilize one of millions of chat rooms that are based on a variety of subjects from miscellaneous to Limp Bizkit to the writings of William Wordsworth. You ain’t seen nothing until you have seen a chat room called “The Hot Tub: Swim Suits Required.” You ask yourself, what does that mean? That, my friend, is a sign of someone yet again taking his or her online experiences too seriously. People like you and me are obviously in much more control of our realities and know where to draw the line. Are you aware that computer hardware designers have built USB (universal serial bus) devices that you can plug up to the USB port in the computer that allows one to have interactive cyber sex with another individual? Your cyber partner can control this device and what it does to you. There are even full body suits that cyber partners can wear, covered in vibrating electrodes with which they can use to satisfy each other. I guess this solves the problem of never waking up next to a monster in the morning after a wild night at the bar! Total anonymity; it’s the wave of the dating future. Not for me, mind you, but have fun with that if that is your cup of tea.

Are you hooked yet? Are you ready to submerge yourself into the online world that awaits you? While writing this, the Internet has never left my side. Am I a junkie? No, I’m just utilizing advancements in today’s technology to my benefit. I’m an innovative, smart and enterprising individual who will one day rule the world. Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go purchase an oil painting of a Monkey dressed as the Queen of England on Ebay. Good day to you, and happy surfing. :-)

Monkev Is Qu .. n of Jungen Oil Painting 12x16
Item #: 2952006
Current Bid: US $30.00
Bid increment: US $1.00
Your maximum bid: US $30.00
Minimum bid: US $20.00
You will receive an E-mail notification if you are the winning bidder.
I'll show you mine if you'll show me yours. My tattoos are my most prized possessions. I love them because they will be with me forever. Unlike the people who were present at their creation, the tattoos will never betray me, never forget to call and never fall victim to drug abuse. My tattoos are perfect. They are the product of months or seconds of thought that brought out a piece of my internal world. Each one has a story.

What about you? If you don't have one, I'll bet I can guess why: it's permanent. Why does this indelibility have so little appeal to others? One girl told me she couldn't think of anything she would want on her body for a lifetime. Others are still waiting for inspiration. My friend Danyel is sketching and searching for the perfect incarnation of a dryad. A girl I polled on my university campus informed me that tattoos are "tacky." Her friend added "unladylike," along with a dirty look from behind her heavy makeup. Indeed, the average American considers tattoos vulgar, freakish and counterculture. This isn't so in other places. Many people in less industrialized nations proudly display not only tattoos but intricate scarring or body painting. These decorations serve to protect the wearer from evil spirits, identify members of a group or are perceived to enhance beauty. In Chad and Zaire, "tribal marks" have been outlawed to break down group identity. Perhaps this is how Europe came to have a blank population.

In Roman society, slaves, convicts and mercenaries were given tattoos for identification purposes. This made the practice of tattooing generally undesirable for the rest of Romans. Soldiers often got tattoos during their service but had them removed when they moved up in rank. As the Roman Empire grew, so did the countries in which tattoos were discouraged. The common person sometimes had a tattoo for the purposes of decoration or as a charm for strength, but the upper class citizens did not.
In the Middle Ages, the newly emerged middle class tried to emulate the upper classes. This included spurning permanent body art in favor of faddish clothing. When the middle class began mimicking the upper class, a peculiar practice began which continues to this day: the constantly changing fashion.

Suddenly what was considered chic changed at a very rapid rate. As the middle class caught on to one style, the rich adopted another. It was not desirable to have any sort of markings that couldn't be changed as fashions changed. The permanent tattoo fell out of favor for those who had disposable income. Tattooing survived in the lower classes and the military. These groups were not concerned about maintaining an appearance of wealth.

Today, wealthy people tend not to have tattoos while those who work in blue-collar professions or are in the military are more likely to have a snarling tiger inked onto a bicep or shoulder. The upwardly mobiles do not get tattoos, or at least not visible ones. There is a good reason for this: there are very few places that employ individuals with visible tattoos, and the places that do are not the sorts that make anyone rich. What is it about a tattoo that is inherently “unprofessional”?

The tattoo is a very personal statement and corporate culture is markedly impersonal. Until recently, most corporations did not allow employees to display any personal objects on their desks. Likewise, it is certainly unacceptable for employees to display personal stories on their bodies. This imposition of rules is so strict that in some states tattooing on the hands, face and neck is illegal, as I discovered while attempting to decorate my fingers on a trip to Maine.

Tattooing on the rest of the body is only taboo. Because of our society's need to rapidly change with the fashions of the day, individuals want to avoid making a statement they may have to retract later. To declare that they find an image beautiful or meaningful enough to emblazon it on their bodies is too risky. They may decide later that it wasn't really that meaningful after all: Mom's death wasn't that tragic; I wasn't that proud of my Irish heritage.

The insistence on change in our culture has produced a large group of those who are afraid to commit to anything. Talk shows are full of philandering men with mullets who can't com-
The tattoo, like the chicken pox scar and smile lines, is a visual history.

mit to one partner. Commercials reassure that their products carry "no contracts, no commitments." Magazines make millions informing people of this month's hot items, to be replaced next month and the month after that with something else. One would be crazy to put marks on oneself that last forever.

Yet people continue to get tattoos. I have one that I planned for years, a lotus. It stood out to me from a Hindi creation story I encountered my freshmen year of college. My mother was about to begin chemotherapy, I had had a nervous breakdown, the world was falling apart. The lotus had ever-opening layers, on and on forever. It gave me hope that my life would continue. It did. Today I carry the lotus with me on my abdomen, a location chosen for easy viewing purposes as well as for its life-giving symbolism.

The tattoo, like the chicken pox scar and smile lines, is a visual history. A girl in one of my classes confided that she hates her tattoo. She picked the image off the wall of the tattoo parlor at the age eighteen and she is now embarrassed by her choice. It is, however, part of her life, a reminder of a time and a part of herself. This is an important aspect of tattoos: as surely as a photograph or an old favorite song, the tattoo brings back memories. Here is an exercise:

the next time you hear that someone has a tattoo, ask them about it. Chances are good you will get a story rather than a description. It is no coincidence that bikers and sailors are stereotypically conjured up when tattoos are mentioned. When travel is a way of life, it can often be difficult to remember where one has been and with whom without a visual cue.

The tattoo serves as a catharsis as well. A tattoo can show the world the things that haunt the mind. The physical pain of the tattoo lessens grief and the image offers others a chance to share in the bearer's sorrows. This is why there are so many tattoos memorializing dead family members and lost loves.
It saddens me that there are those who shun tattoos. These people choose to subject themselves to a "fashionable" blankness that is more than skin deep. The un-inked lose out on a basic human drive for decoration that is so multifunctional. There are many reasons that the tattoo is so pervasive in so many other cultures. There is a human need to exhibit the hopes and fears of an individual or group on the body. Suppressing this need surely wreaks some sort of psychic stress. That is why so many people continue to have tattoos. They have them for protection from evil spirits, to signify their group affiliation or simply to decorate their bodies. There is something comforting about a tattoo. In a world that is constantly changing, tattoos are forever.
Simply Happy.

Photos and story by Linda Mills

The Amish in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, may seem to have a laborious and boring life compared to our luxurious one of electricity, television, computer technology and fast-food. But after spending a weekend Amish-style, I never felt more relaxed and rejuvenated in my life. The absence of our so-called luxuries wasn’t half bad; in fact it was wonderful. Peace of mind is worth more than all the luxuries in the world, once you experience it.

My trip began as the sun was coming up on a Saturday morning in November. As I left the farms the following morning, I saw a man that I had talked with the day before. Mr. Yoder waved his hands for me to stop. We chatted a while on his front porch. Like other Amish houses, his house was barely furnished. His living room held only one straight-backed chair and a desk. Of course, there was no electricity. The day was rainy, dreary and boring. As we walked out to my car to say goodbye, I asked him what he was going to do that day.

He smiled and said, “I am going for a walk.”

“But it is raining,” I said.

His smile got bigger and he said, “That doesn’t matter.”

As I drove away, I looked back to take in the last moments of the Amish farms. I saw Mr. Yoder, walking down the road in the pouring rain. It was beautiful. The land was untouched by machines. The streams were running peacefully and the animals were prancing around as if they were children in a playground. In those last moments I decided that the Amish live a beautiful life and, while giving up electricity and computer technology may not be in my future, they inspired me to incorporate more simplicity into my own.
Above: Amish boys of Lawrenceburg, Tennessee sell candles, applebutter and honey in town.

Right: An example of the Amish transit system.
The Amish provide a living for their families by selling hand-made products. Furniture, candles, molasses, apple butter and quilts are some of the most common items for sale. They are sold at very modest prices so that the products are available to all income families.
The Amish are often referred to as plain people, because of their unadorned style of dress, horse drawn vehicles and family-centered lifestyle. The plain lifestyle of the Amish provides them a peaceful yet fulfilling life that has become almost impossible to achieve in the modern society in which we live. Yet beneath this plainness is a rich reservoir of peace fed by their deep spirituality, thrift, emphasis on living harmoniously with nature and reliance on family and community. This all adds up to a remarkably worry-free life.
Above: An Amish school house. Below: An Amish family travels down the road.
Decades of advertising and social pressure have convinced women that they are intrinsically ugly. Now men are being pressured to follow the same futile path to cosmetic perfection.

The tan was just right. Diet and exercise had shaped the body into a real specimen. Painted in body glitter, his confidence oozed at the dance clubs or when he strutted half naked on the beach. But all was not perfect. There was one flaw that could not be overlooked—the calf muscles were too small. Hours of leg workouts had failed to make them textbook examples, so Luke, from Music Television’s reality show “Vice,” decided to get calf implants. MTV wannabes are not the only victims of this socially transmitted narcissism; it’s happening in our backyard.

Owner and manager of Impressions Tanning and Fitness, Ryan Jones, is a happy man. Business is booming in his Tuscaloosa, Alabama, store as more customers than ever are pouring into his 13-year-old salon. Once, Ryan’s clientele was 90 percent female, but in the last five years he has noticed a significant increase in the number of male customers coming to his salon for a tan; men now make up 30 percent of his customers.

Women are relentlessly pressured to look perfect, to live up to that airbrushed ideal on the cover of fashion magazines. They struggle with make-up, hair care products, exercise, diet, tanning, creams, oils, lotions and even surgeries to become the “beauties” that are only recreatable through computer enhancement. Now men are under pressure to pursue that same airbrushed ideal, and
they are giving in to it.

Five or 10 years ago, we laughed at tanning beds, skin cleansers and cosmetics. Now men I know employ tanning salons and apply conditioners, exfoliators, hydrators and oxygenators as thoughtlessly as they fill their cereal bowls with milk. Some of us even wear makeup. Recently, I saw a man at my university wearing eye liner, eye shadow, mascara and possibly blush.

A new haircut or a shaved beard is a real upgrade for many men. But a shave isn’t even a shave anymore. Gillette Series shaving creams are now marketed to men as “skin care products” fortified with things like tea tree oil, menthol and aloe to moisturize, revitalize and soothe our skin.

Humans want to look the best they can. We men have always been aware that others, in some capacity or other, judge us on our appearance. There is always a standard—a Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, or Sean Connery—to which every male is compared. But with so many artificial beautification products and surgeries available today, that ideal is becoming more and more far-fetched. Not even those legendary male icons meet today’s expectations.

Just look at what we can do to “improve” ourselves. If I’m unhappy with my face, I can get a face-lift, forehead lift, eyelid augmentation, collagen, botox injection, ear reduction, or nose sculpting. If I’m unhappy with my arms and torso, I can get a tummy tuck, hand forming, microsurgery, or breast implants (yes, for men). If I’m unhappy with my lower body, I can have liposuction, and if I’m unhappy with my whole body, I can have my skin contoured, laser skin resurfaced/dermabrased, or complexion peeled.

A few days ago, my roommate commented on how skinny I look. I have the metabolism of a humming bird and have always been a bit self-conscious of my “lanky” appearance, but now I must fight newer, more sinister attacks on my self-perception. I am feeling increasing pressure to exhibit picture perfect skin, rock solid muscles and a golden tan. I hear women comment on how nicely tanned so-and-so is and how big and firm his muscles are. I hear guys unabashedly discussing the hours a week they spend tanning and working out. I see advertisements that display unhumanly flawless reverse Frankensteins urging me to get started on a better, healthier me right away. I find myself making self-effacing comments and excuses as to why I am pale skinned.
and slim. Why should I have to apologize for the way I naturally look? Why should I be embarrassed of my body the way it is? I shouldn’t, but I am.

Advertisers are conveying their insidious message well. If they cannot convince me to “achieve facial nirvana,” then they will try to get my girlfriend to “follow this guide to make sure the man in your life has great-looking skin too.” They want me to “get inspired, see your stylist.” Everything is “clinically proven” to build human growth hormone, testosterone, nandrolone, and 30 other “Iones” that supposedly “enhance” the human body. According to the ads, if I just follow a hypoallergenic, anti-aging, fat burning, vitamin replenishing, cleansing routine, I can “eat guilt free,” flush away fat and finally achieve one of the “bodies by God.”

Read the fine print. The hulking and handsome tan man in the photographs has been “remunerated”—paid to lift, trick and polish his body for the company whose product he is pushing. It’s a full time job, this body beautiful. Quit the job and all will droop and fade back to normal.

What has the world come to when my 14-year-old brother asks me if he is tanner than the last time I saw him? This is a kid who should be thinking about backyard football, Playstation and girls. Instead, he wanted to know if the pigment in his skin was a particular shade of brown. I wasn’t even aware of tans when I was his age—on guys or girls!

So what’s wrong with spending time and money on our appearance? We are saying that simple and natural cannot be beautiful. When we buy the advertising lies, we are saying men are not naturally attractive and that we who do not use mousse, hair spray, gel, hair dryers, moisturizers, exfoliators, wrinkle removers, rejuvenators, tanning beds, workouts, diets and body wraps cannot be handsome. No man is blemish free or cut like a superhero. Men (and women) need to follow the lead of actress Jamie Lee Curtis. In a recent interview and photo shoot with InStyle magazine, she refused to let stylists cake make-up on her face and airbrush out her love handles. Instead of standing uncomfortably posed, she slouched in her natural position and didn’t worry about the wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. Like Curtis, we should say to hell with this vain, unhealthy, impossible struggle for perfection, because if this pretense that we can be perfect continues, soon everyone will be a cosmetic Frankenstein. And that is not beautiful.
Keeping It Real? The Depiction of African-Americans in the News and Music by Bonita Weaver

It’s more than just entertainment. Media helps to define the identity of an entire race. But is the right image being put forth?

His look was incredulous at best. The clerk behind the counter of my favorite mom and pop music store paused long enough to take his hand off the laser scanner and scratch his head.

“So, you want the new Foo Fighters?” he finally uttered.

I pondered what to say next. Do I restate my request or do I let my irritation erupt and spew a sarcastic barb? I decided to blend the two.

“Yeah. I want some Foo. I bet you don’t get many black chicks who ask for that band, huh?”

What makes the act of my asking for the compact disc of a white rock band so unbelievable? Why is it that I, an African-American woman, seem to shatter the image of who I’m supposed to be when I show that I have varied and eclectic musical tastes? Who established this identity for me? I’ll wager that the clerk’s expectation...
of who I am and what I like stems from the media, the source of much of our impressions about nearly everything from ethnic groups to spaghetti sauce. My experience in the music store is just one example of the side effect African-Americans suffer from the media's portrayal of us. Sadly, that depiction isn't always imposed, but lies in how we as African-Americans define and derive our own sense of identity and culture. The media could aid in this endeavor, but doesn't. In this country, the media does not bridge the gap of cultural misinformation and ignorance, but widens it by reflecting distorted images and creating false impressions of African-Americans. Media dictated notions of "blackness" are unfounded and largely untrue and only serve to polarize our community and alienate African-Americans from society at large.

"That's the Way It Is": African-Americans in the News

Unlike other genres that appear on television, newscasts are not fictional and more than other forms of programming, serve to define the image of African-Americans. Caucasians construct a sense of "blackness" and what traits African-Americans possess from the sometimes subtle and other times blatant racial inequities depicted in the news.

A study done by psychologist Eleanor Rosch in 1971 and first published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology showed that news broadcasts aided many whites to construct a prototype of African- Americans. Rosch implemented a series of simple tests to see how people think in categories. For example, when asked to name birds, many people listed cardinals and robins, but failed to mention other types of birds such as chickens and penguins. This reflects the subliminal hierarchical key to prototyping. Rosch's study explains the importance of prototypes in social cognition. The study concluded "prototypes aid people in their appraisal of others. These appraisals are stimulated by characteristics as marking category membership, as in the case, of skin color. Skin color is often sufficient to stimulate expectations of stereotypical behavior. Once activated, these expectations drive social perceptions and act as inertial restraints on peoples' ability to interpret behavior that is incompatible with their stereotypes."

Another similar study was commissioned by The President's Initiative on Race in 1997 by President William Clinton. It pointed out that in news coverage, African-Americans are rarely seen as members of the middle class and of the educated masses. When covering stories involving
knowledge of science, technology, health and politics, African-Americans were 70 percent less likely to be featured as experts in these fields. However, in news features concerning entertainment, crime and discrimination reports, African-Americans dominate the coverage. The correlation between news coverage and the construction of the prototypical African-American begins to crystallize. Unlike whites in the news, African-Americans are typecast in rigid and narrow roles. He or she is an actor or the perpetrator or victim of a crime. African-Americans can sing a song or score the winning touchdown, but cannot perform life-saving surgery or offer tips on stock market performance. News coverage also furthers fear among whites concerning nonwhites. The fear of being a victim of crime translates into a fear of African-Americans who, to many whites, are synonymous with crime.

Equally disturbing is the effect of the discrepancies in news depiction as it links the poor with African-Americans. The media presents few images of poor whites, yet African-Americans are consistently offered as the definitive face of poverty. When searching for visual signs of poverty, photojournalists do not travel to rural, predominantly white, communities. Too often, poverty is symbolized through the crumbling buildings, abandoned lots and graffiti covered walls of inner cities which whites almost certainly associate with African-Americans and other people of color. Fear of poverty alienates African-Americans from whites. Poverty is not the American Way, so middle-class whites fear becoming poor and thus do not attempt to make connections with African-Americans, regardless of the fact there are middle-class African-Americans. This distortion of African-Americans is not done deliberately. There is a visible absence of African-Americans in media gatekeeping positions such as editor, producer, station manager, owner, etc. The mostly white male constituency of upper management in the media is well versed in the stereotypes and prototypes of African-Americans. More concerned with ratings than integrity, many gatekeepers do not see their actions or lack thereof as harmful. Being that most are from the social majority on this country, they have no idea of the harm they are projecting on the social minority. Gatekeepers encourage lazy journalism. The tendency of reporters to return to the same sources for information compounds the prototype perpetuation. Uncovering African-American experts may take time, but the residuals of fair and equal representation outweigh all costs.
Ghetto Not-So-Fabulous: Images and Ideas in Music

Music has played a significant role in my life. As a little girl, I loved nothing more than sitting in my room listening to Duran Duran and Culture Club. I am a pop culture junkie. I truly believe video killed the radio star and that is the start of the problem.

The launch of MTV, the television network, on August 1, 1981, introduced an extra dimension to music. Music lovers could now see their favorite acts with greater ease than attending a concert. MTV forced the music industry to place an extreme awareness and emphasis on image. It also promoted certain genres unseen and under-appreciated by mainstream audiences. Hip hop music is a perfect example.

Hip hop has undergone many transformations. In its early years, the music highlighted the struggles facing inner city residents: homelessness, violence, unemployment and racism. One constant theme in hip hop history is that it celebrated a section of a popula-

The newest and hottest accessory for male artists? A scantily clad woman.

tion vastly ignored. With few and rare exceptions (Salt n Pepa, Lil' Kim, 3rd Base, Eminem and others) hip hop artists have primarily been African-American males. The association of African-Americans and hip hop is a double-edged sword.

There is a current and popular movement in hip hop known as ghetto fabulous, which celebrates life in the ghetto. The damage done by this type of music and videos is far reaching and complex. Anthems such as "First of the Month" by the Cleveland-based hip-hop group, Bone, Thugs and Harmony, suggest contentment with being poor, uneducated and dependent upon public assistance. MTV beams the video into the homes of middle-class whites who get the impression that all African-Americans share the same underachieving principles. The Ghetto Fab movement glamorizes and trivializes the plight of poor African-Americans. In the videos, everyone is smiling, barbecuing and dancing. Every person is wearing the latest designer jeans and shoes. The men are draped in diamonds and platinum. In the middle of this impoverished environment, a $50,000 SUV, such as a Lincoln Navigator, is parked outside of a decrepit apartment complex. The actors in the videos are no longer hired entertainers. Middle America views these caricatures as representative of the entire African-American community. It's no longer fun. It's no longer harmless. Whites see African-Americans as those who would rather buy gold chains than food. We would rather sit at home and collect welfare checks than to go out and find employment.

Ghetto mentality also hurts African-Americans. It marginalizes African-

31
bonded together by mutual experiences and a common ancestry. Until music produced by African-American artists reflects this, we are bound to be misunderstood. For if we cannot view ourselves in a favorable light, surely no other group will either.

I am college educated. I adore Shakespeare and Italian opera. Is it shocking that I'm African-American? I've had to endure weird stares from more than just music store clerks. It happens everywhere: at the public library, the waitress at my favorite restaurant, even from some of my professors. I once thought this surprise to be flattering. I exceeded their expectations. As I grow older and gain a deeper appreciation of the world around me, I realized that the shock arose because I met their expectations. I find it sad and frustrating when I am pigeonholed into a category. It saddens me more to know that other African-Americans deal with this same dilemma.

I wholeheartedly believe that race is an artificial, social and political construct. Who I am is not based on the color of my skin. There is no set requirement of how I should act simply because I am an African-American. It would be wonderful if one day I could walk into a music store and not get stares when I bypass the Nelly display in lieu of one of U2.

The misrepresentation of African-Americans, by those outside of the community and within it, is often just as subtle and long-lasting. Words and images have weight, impact society and ultimately influence lives in equally profound and inconspicuous ways. It is through the news that citizens learn of events that shape their lives and it is how they stay informed. News agencies, both broadcast and print, have a moral obligation to their readers to deliver non-biased reports. Entertainment should not come at the sake of integrity. Knowledge should never be compromised in the pursuit of profits. This is too often the case when it comes to how certain mass mediums depict African-Americans. In a time in which movie theaters become classrooms and in which compact discs jackets morph into Bibles, the time for fair and accurate coverage of African-Americans is needed more than ever.
In The Army Now: Or Are We?
Looking Inside The Stereotypical

The renewed sense of patriotism has increased interest in the Armed Forces. Yet, many may not be getting the real picture. Military life is not as glamorous as pop culture makes it seem.

There are always two types of people who have something to say about my being in the Army. I don’t know which ones I dislike more: The ones who ask, did your parents make you do it? Or the ones who ask, so you like to blow stuff up?

First, nobody made me do it; second, the Fourth of July is the closest I’ve ever come to blowing anything up. Sometimes I get angry when people say stupid things about the Army. But then I have to stop and think: unless a person grew up in a military family like I did, they probably don’t know any more about the Army than what they see in movies. There’s nothing like a good action movie, but because I did grow up in the Army and am now in it myself, I know that what is in the movies is usually inaccurate. I feel sorry for the people who don’t know the difference; they are the ones who view me either as a bad ass who wants to blow things up and shoot people, or who wonder how on earth could I ever want to subject myself to something like that?

Movies make us believe that the second a recruit steps off the bus into
Armyland he or she is either going to be shot at or handed a gun and told to shoot someone else. Everyone goes through some type of basic training where they learn how to use a weapon. The truth is the majority of people in the Army will never see combat and therefore will never use most of the training they received.

A movie of ordinary Army life would be boring, unless you make fun of it. Comedy. I hate those movies. Just as a normal day doesn’t consist of constantly blowing things up, nothing in the Army is ever as stupid as these movies. God forbid if any movie inspires someone to join the Army.

Music
The music industry’s take on the Army takes me back to the eighth grade, the first time I remember hearing the rap group No Limit Soldiers. What did they think a soldier was? A soldier is not someone who drives a fake gold tank and raps, but everyone is entitled to his or her fantasies. No Limit “Soldiers” rolled into the entertainment industry and from there the youth of America went crazy trying to look like they too were a “soldier.”

What did they think a soldier was? A soldier is not someone who drives a fake gold tank and raps, but everyone is entitled to his or her fantasies.

Stores filled with camouflage dresses, skirts, shorts, shoes; anything and everything was in camouflage. Then urban camo took over, reds and blues and various other colors. In my opinion black and brown don’t mix to make the most beautiful outfit. Throw in olive drab and sand and you have the perfect outfit to burn, but in the end, I am paid to wear it. What’s the excuse of people who actually pay for this stuff? A few musicians make an Army reference in a song and the entire country goes wild trying to see who can flash the most camouflage in their attire.

Today, I can’t listen to the radio without hearing names of military branches being shouted out in song. Numerous songs topping the charts say something about bringing in the Army or Navy or whoever is popular.
that week. There is a whole song dedicated to Nike’s shoe, Air Force One. The music and fashion industries are still working hand-in-hand to ensure that people feel the need to wear the ugliest clothes possible. Recent issues of People magazine featured photos of “what the stars are wearing.” In one issue, the fashion du-jour was Vietnam-era Army jackets. Who in the hell starts a trend that is associated with homeless Vietnam veterans?

Television

Generally the History Channel is a source you would turn to for the utmost of realism. Instead, its new reality series, Basic Training, is dedicated to watching six recruits try to get through nine weeks of basic training. The show, of course, only shows the highlights: shooting M-16s, throwing grenades and running obstacle courses. Never once have I seen an episode when everyone wakes up at 5:30 or earlier and stands like sticks in the chow line. As a matter of fact, I have never seen those kids eat at all. Standing quiet isn’t entertaining enough to get ratings. In the first episode a recruit declares, “One day I’m going to be a general sitting across from the secretary of defense in the Pentagon.” I wonder how long it was before someone told him that he had to go through college and become an officer first. You would think his recruiter would have mentioned this sometime during the eight months that passed before he entered basic training.

Even commercials make you believe you can do whatever you want once you join the military. Every branch has at least one commercial with a pop song playing in the background and an elite force doing something that looks cool to your average 17-year-old. The last movie I went to had two “Army of One” commercials in the previews. The average moviegoer is between 14 and 22 years of age. The older of that average is exactly who the Army wants. I never said the Army wasn’t sleazy. You do what you have to, I guess. Those commercials ask kids to enlist, which means they will go where the Army tells them to go and they must take the job they are given. If the Army tells them that they are going to get to do what they want, they are lying. Not everyone who enlists is doomed, but more are than aren’t. What can I say, recruiters are told to lie. It’s their job to make you feel like you are about to get your own personal piece of heaven when, in actuality, within three months you realize what you are doing is pure hell; you aren’t doing anything like those guys in the commercials and promotional videos. Thanks to movies, TV shows and commercials, aspiring soldiers don’t

Me at age eleven, in a CH-47 flight simulator.
feel it necessary to investigate the Army and how it really works. I guess they all think they are going to get to blow something up.

Growing up military: Family Day at the Dothan Air Force Reserve Center.

Movies

Movies and TV shows amuse me, so I watch them just like everyone else. Unlike many people, I have the knowledge to discriminate between reality and ratings. My father enlisted in the Air Force to be a police canine trainer. He ended up guarding gates to airfields. Six years later his enlistment was up and he decided to move back home. Soon after, he met my mother and decided he would try again. This time he pursued his second dream in the Army. He now flies CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters. That's what he wanted; that's what he got. However, it took six years and two tries. I have two-and-a-half more years in the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps before they stick me in a real position. By going through college, the Army gives me the option of doing what I want to do. The Army does all it can to make sure I get the exact position I want, where I want it. The Army is funny like that. They pay for your college tuition and give you the best training ever, then try to keep you happy so you don't leave four years later and waste their money and time. I have yet to decide what I want to do when I graduate, but I concentrate a lot on the idea of flying AH-64 Apache attack helicopters. So, yeah, I guess I do want to blow things up. I love my country, family and friends. Some people call me crazy. Some say I am wasting my time defending a horrible country and some say I have no soul because I am willing to kill for my country. Hate America and the military if you will. I myself am big on humanitarian issues. I just have a funny way of showing it. I don't really see the Army being depicted realistically any time soon, or ever.

Only in times of war is the military really brought into true focus and even then, most of the time, it is being discussed by people who have little or no idea what they are talking about. They just know they do or don't want war for some reason or another. Truth is, without the military this country wouldn't be free, and without having that freedom, this stupid Hollywood image wouldn't exist. Maybe that's not all that bad.
Staff Biographies

Sam Murray is a Taurus who enjoys photography and Chai. Her father suggests she might have a lucrative career in the circus as the Tattooed Lady. However, she has a diabolical plan to take over the world by changing all words to include her name. Until that day, she will spend her time taking her dogs outside thirty times a day and trying to convince people that performance art is samtastic.

Linda Mills is a senior in New College, with a depth study in advertising, sociology and environmental studies. She has many hobbies, and photography is one of them. After graduation, Linda would like to work in advertising specifically promoting environmental issues.

Shekira Dodd is an Internet Junkie who is a twice born psychic and has a healthy hankering for the “cosmic fusion between burger and bun” of Krystal’s hamburgers. When she is not being a dork, she is busy battling her archenemy, the credit card company. Her life goal is to slowly strangle the spiritual hitchhiker that is attached to her aura.

Turn ons: Kitty heads, shopping, Val Kilmer, Ebay
Turn offs: Jennifer Love Hewitt, vomit, Camaros, people with giant heads and little bodies

Amanda Hill spends her days watching Animal Planet and wanting any animal that isn’t her own. One day she’ll take some math courses and have enough hours to graduate. After that she plans on doing something that requires wearing ugly clothes.
Rebecca Florence is director of college relations for UA's College of Arts and Sciences and has been employed by The University of Alabama for 12 years. She has been an instructor for the New College Review since 1997 where she has emphasized work as fun, even at her own expense (see photo). Prior to coming to UA, she worked in journalism for 11 years, serving as editor of the statewide magazine Business Alabama, co-publisher of Inside Alabama Politics, and editor of the Mobile newspaper Azalea City News and Review, respectively. When not working with words, she is either gardening, riding her horse, reading good books or learning something new.

Gabriel Walvatne is a senior in New College studying various things in preparation for law school. His hobbies include watching television, sports in general, jay-walking and burning inconsequential things. He likes cold weather, overanalyzing and chicken broccoli casserole but despises reality shows, applesauce and politics at all levels. After serving as prime minister of New Zealand, he hopes to move to Vermont and become a writer.

Bonita Weaver is a senior English major. She is a Sleepy Jean, a daydream believer and a homecoming queen. If she is able to learn how to properly conjugate French verbs, she will graduate sometime in the near future. Her plans are to conquer the publishing industry and become editor-in-chief of Cosmo with the hopes of injecting some class and tact into the magazine.

Turn ons: good grammar, 300 count pima cotton sheets, Starburst (the green pack only), erotica and straight teeth

Turn offs: short, sensitive men who cry; cats; romantic poetry; Chinese food and R. Kelly

Christina Corley tries to save the world, fancies cherry Chapstick and is a vegetarian seeking Italian cuisine and culture on the banks of the Arno. She is in her second year of higher education studying sociology and cultural anthropology. Let's give a round of applause for Christina Corley!!!
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The New College Review is seeking writers, editors, graphic designers, artists and photographers for the 2003 - 2004 issue. All University of Alabama students may participate on the editorial staff through enrollment in NEW 338/339, independent study or as a volunteer.

For more information about how you can be an editor for the New College Review, contact Rebecca Florence, New College Review advisor, at (205) 348-8663.