

December 2003

"To be an American is a complex fate."—Henry James

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Signals in the Static: Reclusive writer **Thomas Pynchon** will appear on the Jan. 25 episode of *The Simpsons*. **Jerry Seinfeld** will write, produce, and voice *Bee Movie*, a CGI-animated feature about a city populated by bees. Rapper **Sean "P.Diddy" Combs** is the voice-over for Sony's PlayStation commercials. **The Olsen Twins** launch the first non-cartoon celebrity toothpaste for children. **Kurt Vonnegut** turns 81. **Playboy** magazine turns 50.

A haircut at **Sally Hershberger's** salon in NYC costs \$600. The new **Mandarin Oriental** hotel offers a \$12,595/night suite, becoming NYC's most expensive hotel. **Hugo Boss** introduces a fragrance for men and women called **JustJew**, a "blend of cantaloupe, green apple, water lilies accented with peach, musk and sandalwood and notes of clean Israeli air" (2.5oz. spray/\$49).

The U.S. Department of Defense will adopt the **Segway Human Transporter** systems as battlefield robots that think on their own and communicate with troops. **Microsoft** has already installed its software platform in 23 different vehicle models, including the BMW 7 series, Daimler, Volvo, Subaru and Toyota. **Pfizer** is now placing tiny versions of supermarket bar codes on Dilantin, Lipitor and other pills sold to hospitals.

The Power of Teen Fashion: At a middle school in Brooklyn, N.Y., where the students are required to wear uniforms, 7th grade boys are using black markers and Wite-Out to pen the names of their favorite skateboard and snowboard brands on their book bags. Girls in the same class are writing popular fashion styles like "velour" on their book bags to indicate that if they had the choice, they would be looking cool in velour.

Four American Trends: • A resurgence of popularity in "ironic pastimes" like camping, lawn bowling, and knitting. • "VIP Culture"—creating the illusion of exclusivity through platinum-card credit cards and limited editions from mass brands like **Nike**. • Reappraisal of the "uncool," such as trucker hats, **Pabst Blue Ribbon**, and heavy metal music. • "Neighborhood pride"—a renewed interest in local identities. *O&M Adv.*

What's Selling This Holiday Season: Pink Burberry trench coats (\$1,095), Banana Republic cashmere sweatshirts (\$168), fig-scented candles (\$19.50), J. Crew heather-rose cable-knit sweaters (\$68), Victoria's Secret cream-and-black unpadded push-up bras (\$38).

New York Nightlife: The **APT Club** in NYC's meatpacking district features "MP3Js" who mix song sets against other "MP3Js" on "iPod Nights." **Pianos**, a popular Lower East Side bar, holds *staring contests* accompanied by music, cheering audiences, and judges. A NYC club, **Remote Lounge**, hosts "Karma Sutra Karaoke," where male/female teams perform 1-minute audio for the sexually graphic video clip playing on screen. The crowd then decides who has delivered the most comic and/or believable performance.

The Most Popular Age is Middle Age: When Americans were asked what age they'd choose if they "could stop time and live forever in good health," the average age chosen was 41. About 2/3 of 18-29 year olds wanted to remain in their twenties. Those 30-39 chose 37, and those 40-49 focused on 40. People 50-64 longed to be 44, while people 65 and over wanted to be forever 59. However, 8% of adults (including 20% of those 65-plus) put their ideal age at 90 or older. *Harris Interactive Poll.*

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The Best of JOHO, 2003:

Died: Radical artist **Doug Michels**, 59, best known for "Cadillac Ranch," a huge sculpture in Amarillo, TX, consisting of 10 Cadillacs planted nose-first in the ground; Florida senator **Charles Bennett**, 92, who put "In God We Trust" on American money in 1955.

Lunch menus in Philadelphia public schools are printed courtesy of the **Cartoon Network**. Along with the daily specials, they feature the network logo and promotions about upcoming shows. **Princeton's University Store** now offers women's thong underwear emblazoned with the school insignia. Deep-fried **Twinkies** (450 calories, 10 grams fat, \$3) are popular at the Iowa State Fair. Portland, Ore. introduces oversized ambulances to improve comfort for severely obese patients (up to 1,000 pounds). **Hershey** replaces the 1936 two-piece wrapper on their candy bars with a one-piece wrapper sealed at both ends. **Sheraton, Westin, and W** hotels now supply travelers' dogs with pet pillows, food and water bowls, pet toys, pet robes, and treats. The **gray wolf**, once nearly extinct, is taken off the U.S. endangered species list. Sales of Hasbro's **GI Joe** action figures rose over 45% in the past year, along with other war-themed toys. Seen on the Street: A woman with a "jack-plug" tattooed on the back of her neck, as in *The Matrix*.

Young Shoe Endorsers: Nike signs **Freddy Adu**, a 13-year-old soccer prodigy, for \$1.5 million, one week after signing 18-year-old Cleveland high school basketball star **LeBron James** to an endorsement contract worth more than \$90 million. Reebok is building its new summer ad campaign around **Mark Walker**, who states "I am Reebok" at

the end of the commercial. Walker is 3 years old. *slate.com*

The Next-Generation Rifle: The U.S. Army plans to deploy the 33-inch long XM29 rifle in 2006. It is designed to fire standard bullets and grenade-like ammunition that explodes in the air. Each of the air-bursting rounds comes imbedded with a computer chip, allowing the soldier to program where the ammunition should explode. Also in development: Thermobaric ammunition which injects a fine, flammable mist into the air. When ignited, it creates a mammoth fireball and pressure wave, then sucks all of the oxygen out of a confined space. *Wired*.

SuperSize It: The typical serving of salty snacks rose from 1.0 to 1.6 oz. between 1977 and 1996. The average soft-drink serving grew from 13.1 to 19.9 fluid oz. A hamburger grew from 5.7 to 7.0 oz. *Journal of the AMA*.

Human Billboard: A Web-hosting company has hired an itinerant nuclear power plant laborer as a "human billboard." The company is paying Jim Nelson \$7,000 to display a 5-inch **CI Host.com** tattoo on the back of his head for the next five years. *siliconvalley.com*

Quote of the Month: "If I can operate Google, I can find anything. And with wireless, it means I will be able to find anything, anywhere, anytime. Which is why I say that Google, combined with Wi-Fi, is a little bit like God. God is wireless, God is everywhere and God sees and knows everything. Throughout history, people connected to God without wires. Now, for many questions in the world, you ask Google, and increasingly, you can do it without wires, too." —*Alan Cohen, V.P. of Airespace, a new Wi-Fi provider.*

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