

December 2005

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

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Signals in the Static: **FlavaFlav**, a black-separatist rapper, appears in a U.S. commercial for Miller Brewing Co., a South African beer conglomerate. Non-drinker **Donald Trump** launches "Trump: The World's Finest Super Premium Vodka." **Batman** and **Superman** will appear on U.S. first-class postage stamps (\$.39) next summer. Died: TV personality **Ralph Edwards**, 92, host of "This Is Your Life"; **Ruth Siems**, 74, inventor of Stove Top stuffing; author **Stan Berenstain**, 82, co-creator of the children's book series, *The Berenstain Bears*.

**Washington State** bans indoor smoking inside all public accommodations and requires that smokers stay outside, at least 25 feet from the doors of any such place. **New Mexico** will spend \$200 million to develop a "spaceport" in the desert for commercial spaceflight. Louisville, Ky, opens the **Muhammad Ali** Museum.

**Darden Restaurants**, the largest casual dining restaurant company (Red Lobster, Olive Garden), opens four new **Seasons 52** locations in Florida. Seasons 52 is a sophisticated grill and wine bar that only serves dishes under 475 calories. Coca-Cola launches **Blak**, a new mixed drink of Coke and coffee. **Walgreens** and 15 top package-goods marketers are rolling out a RFID system to electronically track when, how long, and where promotional displays are placed in the chain's 5,000-plus stores. **PodDater** bills itself as "the world's first video iPod dating experience." For free, people can upload a video clip of themselves, which potential dates can then download and view. **Duke University** enables students to download lectures from a Web site to be played on the student's iPod, eliminating the need to attend class. Berkeley High School in the Bay Area has a registered **Condom Club** that offers students 12 free condoms a week.

Hottest Toys of 2005: Black Belts Karate Home Studio, Dora's Talking Kitchen, Fly Wheels Assortment, Furby, I-Dog, iZ, Leapster L-Max Learning System, Pixel Chix, Shell Shocker.

What's a Wiki? A wiki is free software that makes it possible for anyone to create and edit a Web page using a Web browser. Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, is the most famous example of a public wiki. Organizations are using wikis to enhance collaboration and integrate knowledge from various departments and geographies into one central location.

Seen On the LA Street: Billboards with hundreds of words of copy, designed to be read while stopped in traffic jams. Memorial decals on rear windows, turning cars into "rolling tombstones." Parking meters accepting credit or debit cards, some of which allow drivers to add extra minutes via their cell phone.

Luxury Autos Slide: Once considered invulnerable to a sluggish economy, sales of high-end vehicles are weak. Lincoln, Jaguar, BMW, Lexus, Infiniti, and Porsche have all declined this year, except Mercedes-Benz which is up only 0.1%. (Cadillac's Escalade sales are down 12%). *Advertising Age*.

Executive Tenure: The average CEO at a Business-to-Consumer company is employed for only 44.4 months. CFOs and CIOs average 39.4 months and 36.4 months respectively. A Chief Marketing Officer serves in this position, on average, for only 23.7 months. CMOs averaged 12 months at industrial companies, but 40 months at financial companies. *Spencer Stuart Research*.

JOHO thanks you for your support in 2005 and wishes you a happy, healthy New Year!

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## The Best of JOHO, 2005:

HMO Kaiser Permanente uses **Bob Dylan's** '60's anthem, "The Times They are A Changin'" in a TV commercial. Rocker **Jack White** is writing a new Coca-Cola jingle. **Clear Channel** will introduce "ad-lets,"—:05 radio spots to compliment their :30's and :15's. For the first time in 40 years, all of baseball's **National League** games are played on natural grass. **Brittan Elementary School** in rural Sutter, California, requires all their students to wear radio frequency identification (RFID) badges to track their movements. Visitors to **Walt Disney World** in Florida must get their fingers scanned before entering the theme parks. **Nerveana**, a NYC Greenwich Village night club, opens featuring 1990's nostalgia decor (Spice Girls, Snoop Dogg, a white Ford Bronco, a Forrest Gump bench, and a stained Monica Lewinski-style dress displayed next to a chewed cigar).

The **University of Chicago School of Business** sponsors the first annual conference for "buzz, viral, blog, and word of mouth marketers." Flight attendants on **Alaska Airlines** now promote **Visa** cards over the aircraft intercom after landing. **America West Airlines** sells ad space on its tray tables and napkins. Vending machines selling **iPods** appear in San Francisco and Atlanta airports. **Sony** licenses Martin Scorsese's "Taxi Driver" for a video game. "American Idol" licenses its name for **Pop-Tarts**. **Everglo** is a new "alcoholic energy drink," a lime-green blend of vodka and tequila infused with caffeine and ginseng that comes in a glow-in-the-dark bottle. **Honda** will introduce the first motorcycle with an air bag next spring. **Wal-Mart** is opening in-store health clinics (\$25-\$60/visit) staffed by nurse practitioners.

Just How Lazy Are We, Really? SC Johnson introduces a \$24.99 device that installs in a shower to spray shower cleaner automatically with a tap of a finger, eliminating the need to squeeze the trigger on a bottle of cleaner.

Whisky, Guns, & Cars: **Crown Royal, Jack Daniels,** and **Smith & Wesson** become individual sponsors of 2005 NASCAR teams. *Brandweek*.

Robot Soldiers: The U.S. Army is sending 18 remote-controlled robotic soldiers called SWORDS (Special Weapons Observation Reconnaissance Detection Systems) to Iraq. The robot shoots only when its human operator presses a button after identifying a target on video shot by the robot's cameras. *Washington Post*.

Fertile Red States: Conservative Utah, where President Bush made his strongest electoral showing, has the country's highest birth rate. Liberal Vermont has the lowest. Fifteen out of 17 of the country's most fertile states voted for Bush in 2000. *NY Times*.

Illegal Drugs Get Cheaper: The inflation-adjusted average price for cocaine has fallen by 40.1% from 1995 to 2004, while opiates have fallen 49.3%. Today, the average price of opiates is \$116/gram, and cocaine retails at \$75/gram. —*Bloomberg*.

Viewpoint—Sports and Organized Religion: "Team sports provide three satisfactions of life to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Americans that, before the modern age, only religion offered: a welcome diversion from the routines of daily life; a model of coherence and clarity; and heroic examples to admire and emulate." —Michael Mandelbaum, *The Meaning of Sports*, PublicAffairs, 2004.

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