

December 2008

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

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Signals in the Static: **Woody Allen** turns 73. **Paul Simon** turns 67. **Kim Basinger** turns 55. The **computer mouse** turns 40. The **Altamont tragedy** turns 39. **Sarah Silverman** turns 38. **Chicken McNuggets** turn 25. **Calvin & Hobbes** turn 23. **The International Space Station** turns 10. Died: **William Gibson**, 94, author of *The Miracle Worker*; The **Rev. George Docherty**, 97, who, in 1954, convinced Congress to insert “under God” into the Pledge of Allegiance.

On Dec. 4, a **live 3D feed** of the San Diego vs. Oakland football game will be made available to industry executives as part of a test. In the new bisexual MTV dating show, *A Double Shot at Love with the Ikki Twins*, contestants don lingerie and tails and snouts to strut around a mock barnyard as kitties, piglets, and donkeys. **God, Inc.** has been picked up by the Sci-Fi cable channel. The series depicts a corporation run by God, consisting of such sectors as “The Miracles Department” and episode titles like “In the Beginning There was Paperwork.”

Nissan offers a budget model of its **Versa** sedan for \$9,990, more than \$1,000 cheaper than any other new car sold in the U.S. To cut costs, **UPS** begins delivering packages by bicycle in Oregon, California, and Washington. **Best Buy** is selling a gift card that doubles as a speaker for iPods. **Target’s** gift card also works as a digital camera with 8MB of storage. **Pizza Hut**, having sold more than \$1 billion pizzas online, launches a **Facebook** application that allows fans to place orders without leaving their profiles.

Ad News: **Burger King** drops 5,000 wallets in Chicago and Orlando. They contain cash (\$1-\$100), a BK gift card, and a note telling the finders to keep the wallet. NYC and LA outdoor billboards for **Jameson Irish Whiskey** show real-time text messages aimed at specific

people passing by. Heated Chicago bus shelters are sponsored by **Kraft’s Stove Top**. **Wal-Mart’s** new in-store TV network incorporates interactive “virtual assistants” from which shoppers can get product information. **Pepsi** fires BBDO, its ad agency since 1958. **Buick** fires **Tiger Woods**, its spokesman for 9 years.

Emergency Responders: By 2011, the U.S. military will have 20,000 uniformed troops deployed inside the United States, trained to respond to a nuclear terrorist attack. The first 4,700-person unit, built around a combat brigade, based at Fort Stewart, Ga., was available as of Oct. 1. *Washington Post*.



*Upscale NYC retailer **Barneys’** current window displays feature ‘60s peace signs, singers Joan Baez and Janis Joplin, and the theme “Have a Hippie Holiday.”*

JOHO thanks you for your support in 2008 and wishes you a wonderful 2009!

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The Best of JOHO, 2008

The U.S. State Department establishes an embassy in [SecondLife](#), joining the U.S. House of Representatives, NASA, and the Dept. of Homeland Security in this virtual world. [Subway Crush](#) is a new "missed connections site" for people who just didn't get to talk to that stranger at the end of the car. At least 13 of the 30 U.S. major league baseball teams offer an "all-you can eat" seating section with unlimited hot dogs, nachos, and soft drinks (\$30-\$55/seat). **Twentieth Century Fox** has trademarked [Slurm](#), the once-fictional addictive beverage from the animated series, *Futurama*, made from "the secretions of a giant worm Slurm Queen harvested by singing [Grunka-Lunkas](#)." Upon request, NYC-based [MethodIzaz](#) will send an anonymous photographer to surreptitiously photograph select moments in a consumer's life. **ESPN** runs ads for [AshleyMadison.com](#), a dating service for extramarital affairs. Cable's **G4** channel launches [Hurl](#), a competitive eating show. A new skyscraper, **Chicago Spire**, to be completed in 2010, will have [an amazing view from its top floor](#). Chicago's **Hush-a-Bye Baby Nanny Service** sends nannies to stay cribside with a child until she falls asleep. South Carolina approves [license plates](#) emblazoned with the phrase, "I Believe" and an image of a Christian cross over a stained glass window.

Hypermiling: This radical driving technique is being adopted by motorists in order to squeeze every last mile from a tank of gas. It includes pumping up tires to the maximum rating on their sidewalls, using low viscosity engine oil, and the controversial practices of tailgating larger vehicles to cut down on air resistance and the "auto stop," whereby the car is put into neutral and the engine is turned off but the vehicle continues forward due to momentum or gravity. Hypermiling is said to more than double gas mileage.

Pot U: Oakland's [Oaskerdam University](#) trains people for jobs in California's state-sanctioned medical marijuana industry. The two-day weekend course costs \$200, plus textbooks. Trained "budtenders" can earn over \$50K/year.

Plum: It is today's hottest new branding color. Examples include The Plum Card from American Express; Plum TV, a channel available in resort communities; new plum-colored labels for [Penta Water](#); RedPlum newspaper ad inserts; Plum Organics baby food; and PlumChoice Online, a PC services company. *NY Times*.

Undo: **Hershey** discontinues production of [Ice Breakers Pacs](#), white-powder mints that come in thumb-size blue pouches that dissolve on the tongue, because the product closely resembles crack cocaine. After 28 years, **Isuzu** will exit the U.S. next January. **Polaroid** stops manufacturing film for their instant cameras, which they quit making a year ago. "**The Montel Williams Show**" will leave the air after 17 years.

Gold Rush: The [rising price of gold](#) has encouraged recreational prospecting and an increase in mining activity, especially along California's Highway 49 and the Sierra Nevada mountains. The **Charleston Place** spa in South Carolina offers a 24-carat gold facial (\$360).

Prison Nation: For the first time, more than one in every 100 American adults are behind bars. The prison population has tripled over the past 30 years, to almost 1.8 million, with an additional 723,000 people in local jails. One in 36 adult Hispanic men, one in 15 black men, and one in nine black men ages 20-34 is incarcerated. The U.S. imprisons more people than any other nation, 8 times the rate in Germany. According to the FBI, over the past 20 years, the rate of violent crimes in the U.S. fell by 25%. *NY Times*.

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