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[From *Harry Potter* to *My Summer of Love*, an interview with Tanya Seghatchian, British film producer.](#)

By P. Lavagne d'Ortigue.

Tanya Seghatchian graduated from Cambridge University with a first class degree in History and began her career in British Television as a documentary filmmaker. She then moved into the world of feature films. Having produced some of the biggest blockbusters in cinema history (the first four *Harry Potter* films, including the one coming out this November), this young British producer also produced the poetic and sexy *My Summer of Love*, directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. Amongst other prizes, the critically acclaimed *My Summer of Love* won the Michael Powell award at the Edinburgh Film Festival and the Best British Film BAFTA award, beating off strong competition from other British films in 2004 including (ironically) *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

Apart from being produced by Tanya Seghatchian and from being highly successful in their respective categories, these productions are radically different. However one can draw several parallels, while comparing them sheds light on the differences between the British and American film industries.

- You discovered *Harry Potter* before the J. K. Rowling books became a global phenomenon. What made you think that these quintessentially British stories could be universally appreciated ?

When I discovered *Harry Potter*, I was looking for something in England that would cut through in the global market. At the time, I was working for Heyday Films, as the eyes and ears of Warner Brothers in the UK and I knew that the ideal would be to find something British, which had the potential to grow into a franchise with enduring qualities – not unlike Bond - a story with scale, strong characters, and a recurring popular hero.

I came across *Harry Potter* when I read an article in the newspaper mentioning a series of books, the first of which had just been published, about a little boy who was sent to a boarding school, only his boarding school was designed for trainee wizards. I realised that this story, which was to be the first of seven, was set in a uniquely British landscape - the boarding school, but was littered with inventive and original twists because of the Magic and Wizardry at its core. For example, instead of chemistry lessons, kids would learn how to do spells and instead of school sports on the playing fields sports would be played out on broomsticks in the air, which all seemed much more fun than traditional boarding school fare and was choc full of magical wish fulfilment.

- The *Harry Potter* films are adapted from a British book, they have an entirely British cast and set, they are produced in the UK but they have an American screenwriter, American or Mexican

directors and they are financed by Hollywood. Could these films have been made entirely in the UK, without the backing of a Hollywood studio ? What would have been different ?

It is unlikely that these films would ever have been made with the same resources, scale and ambition had it not been for the backing of Warner Bros. There is not enough money in the British film business to make films on this scale. Unfortunately at present most British financiers cannot invest these amounts on their own without US backing.

Having said that looking at the books at face value it might have been possible to make a version as a long running TV children's drama series . But the ambitions and budgets would have been much smaller had this been the case.

Because of the risks involved in film making, the only people with the resources to invest in huge spectacles these days are Hollywood studios. When they do invest in a film, they tend to ensure that they control all aspects of the production, distribution and marketing. They are able to do so and to control every stage of their investment by synergising across their various departments : development, production, post production, and then marketing, merchandising, and distribution all of which are integrated in the studio business.

In the case of *Harry Potter*, which was going to have to be a big spectacle were it to work, having the backing of a Hollywood studio was an asset because it enabled us to be as creatively ambitious as we wanted. We were encouraged to think big.

- Could you describe the function of the producer before, during & after the making of a US studio film like *Harry Potter* ?

Producers tend to shepherd all facets of the production, creatively, artistically, physically, fiscally and politically from the beginning to the end. This means choosing the screenwriter and working on developing the screenplay. Choosing the director and work together with the director on the casting. Breaking down the elements in the screenplay to draw up a budget and schedule. Hiring and managing the crew, and of course managing the « talent » (i.e. the director, the screenwriter, the actors). Watching the rushes everyday to ensure that sufficient coverage of the material has been shot, and that the interpretation is adequate. Liaising and responding to the comments of the financiers throughout the process. Working with the Director and Editor as the material is edited together. And then overseeing the plans for press publicity, marketing and distribution.

On an independent movie, the Producer is also usually responsible for finding the finance from a number of sources for the film, whereas in the case of a studio film, the studio generally brings all the finance.

Not all functions are necessarily performed by one person, which is why one sees several types of producers listed in credits, all of whom generally bring a different form of expertise.

- The film adaptations of the J. K. Rowling books have been described as extremely literal. Who is responsible for the faithfulness of the adaptation ? How much of a constraint is it both legally and creatively speaking ?

The decision to adapt the *Harry Potter* books « faithfully » was quite logical given their popularity at the point when we went into production. It was clear from their success that J.K. Rowling's universe was beloved. One of the pleasures, particularly for the children's audience, was likely to be in reliving as much of it as possible on screen.

One of the hardest consequences of trying to realise as much of the book as possible was compressing the quantity of material into single films. This was less of a problem with the first two films, but as the books got longer, we inevitably had to be radical in our approach.

- Several lead roles are played by young non-professional actors. Can you describe their casting process ?

The children's casting was extensive and very open. Huge numbers of professional and non-professional children both represented by agents or theatre schools, and also just fans of the book were seen. They responded to adverts on the news and on children's programs like BBC's *Blue Peter*, announcing « open calls » were being held to give everyone a chance to audition. We had decided that we wanted 10-11 year olds, so that the children would have the same age as the characters of the book and might be able to play in all of the films and grow up with them. Of the three central child actors, only Daniel Radcliffe had any previous acting experience. Whereas nearly all the adults are established British actors – indeed one of the pleasures of making *Harry Potter* with an exclusive British cast has been being able to use the amazing pool of great British character actors in the films.

- What kind of responsibility do producers have and feel when employing child actors ?

Employing child actors is extremely regulated. The amount of time they can shoot is strictly limited by licensing hours which the law also requires us to ensure that they are schooled whilst filming. This means that children are only available for a small number of hours a day, which in the case of a film like *Harry Potter*, meant the production schedule was drawn out over 5-6 months. In a way, acting in *Harry Potter* for the young cast was not unlike being at school where the acting was only part of the day's work. In fact being a child actor on a *Harry Potter* might be much less problematical for a child than moving from one film to the other, constantly in a state of flux. Casting children is always a gamble. You cannot know how they are going to grow. We were very conscious in casting these kids that we were going to change their lives. Therefore they were cast with their ability to cope with the pressure becoming child stars in mind. We knew that if the films were successful, they would have to have the strength of character to cope with that fame. Fortunately they have all handled this amazingly well, largely thanks to their parents, all of whom have been very conscientious about their children's welfare.

Whilst finishing producing the fourth *Harry Potter*, which will come out worldwide next month, you decided to try your hand at independent cinema with the production of *My Summer of Love* through your own company Apocalypso Pictures.

- What decided you to do what seemed to be, at the least on the surface of things, a professional and cinematographic U-turn ?

I wanted to challenge myself to do the complete opposite of what I had been doing, because it is quite easy to become complacent when you repeat yourself. The success of *Harry Potter* had given me the confidence to try and fulfil what has been a long time ambition to work with director Pawel Pawlikowski, with whom I had created Apocalypso Pictures.

- *My Summer of Love* is also adapted from a novel by a British woman writer, Helen Cross, it has a British cast, it is set in Yorkshire and it was directed by a Polish born director. The film displays a great amount of idiosyncratic Britishness and yet it immediately rises above its particulars to reach an almost mythical quality. How ?

Pawel Pawlikowski has a very particular vision of England and Englishness which is informed by his own Polishness. He wanted to capture the quality of a lazy English summer - and was very particular about how to achieve this technically - but he underpinned the aesthetic with his interest in exploring what he called the 'possibility of love in a barren landscape' which is where I think that mythic quality comes from.

- The film adaptation of H. Cross' book is quite un-literal. Who is responsible for the « unfaithfulness » of the adaptation ? When you own the rights to the story, what kind of constraints are you under both legally and creatively speaking ?

Pawel had read a book which had two characters, Mona & Tamsin, whom he found interesting. He handpicked them, alongside a few other elements from the novel and introduced them into the mix of his own ideas about a story he was developing set against a summer of love.

Unlike *Harry Potter*, the film *My Summer of Love*, is very different from the book with the same title. Pawel was not interested in making a film version of the book. It was more of a jumping off point for his own preoccupations. Because the book was not a particularly famous work and because its author was happy for us to do what we wanted with it, we felt no obligation or indeed interest in trying to adapt it « faithfully ».

When you buy the rights to a book, you also buy the right to do what you want with it, unless the author specifies otherwise. Producers have to evaluate whether the book is in itself a commodity that will attract the audience (as in the case of *Harry Potter*) or whether it can remain a basis for inspiration.

I was interested in making a 'Pawel Pawlikowski film', as were the financiers (BBC Films, The Film Consortium and Baker Street Media Finance). So no one ever intended to make a straightforward film version of the novel *My Summer of Love*.

- The lead roles in *My Summer of Love* are played by debutante actresses. Can you describe their casting process ?

Casting is extremely important to Pawel, so much so that he wanted us to begin casting very early on in the development process, alongside establishing the basic story line for the film. One of the difficulties of this approach is that films are usually cast when there is a script in place, whereas we wanted the casting to inform the script in process. In doing so, we could create characters who would build on the strength of the actors who were playing.

We met Natalie Press (who plays passionate Mona) very early on in the development process. She contributed enormously to the creation of her character. Emily Blunt (who plays tantalising and toxic Tamsin) was brought on only weeks before filming so there was much less time to give her a chance to play with her part and we had to cast her much closer to type. She infused a chemistry and fire to the relationship with Mona, but missed out on being part of many of the early workshops that we had done with Natalie Press and Paddy Considine (who plays Mona's born-again Christian brother Phil).

- Could *My Summer of Love* have been produced in the USA by an American company ?

It is unlikely that they would have backed such a project given that we did not produce the film in a conventional manner and set out to make it with a cast of unknowns and a flexible shooting document, rather than a locked down script.

- How does the British film industry relate to the outside world ?

In terms of audiences, the British film industry tends to have its eyes set on success in the US, mostly because of the language issue. British film makers do think more of Hollywood than of continental Europe but without the support of the European film festivals, most of our artistic films would disappear without a trace.

Tanya Seghatchian.

POLITICS & SOCIETY

The poorest are always the weakest.

By Anne-Laure COZANNET

The fate of illegal immigrants smuggled into Britain.

In October 2005, Scotland Yard broke up one of the biggest smuggling networks in British history. 19 members of a human trafficking ring were arrested, accused of having extorted millions of pounds from candidates for immigration, in a network which included hundreds of handlers and thousands of people who were victims of the traffic.

Britain has experienced several smuggling affairs this year. Immigrants from Turkey, India, China, or Eastern Europe pay huge amounts of money to get illegally to the UK. Today people can be asked to pay from £ 3,000 to £ 9,000 for a journey they spend in secret compartments in lorries, in arranged flights or hidden in ships in which they risk their lives crossing the Channel. Some immigrants can even have a British marriage organised for £ 5,000.

Once landed on British soil, they receive false or stolen passports. The luckiest will be taken in charge by their families who are already living (often legally) in Great Britain, though knowing they can be imprisoned or deported if the police catch them. Others, to earn their living, will have to work as forced prostitutes (it is frequently the case of Eastern European girls), some will be employed in moonlighting work (underpaid and with no social protection) as caterers, builders, sewers, or cooks. Indeed these sectors are especially dependent on illegal immigrants, with their low wages and often good skills. Anyway, all of them can be deported : Britain sends them back home in special flights.

When caught by the police, smugglers (who are quite often legal immigrants) are sentenced to several years of jail (in one recent case a man received a 10 year sentence). Dismantling such networks is a lot of work: investigations are particularly long, as the networks are often composed of people from various countries and social backgrounds. The police can only arrest a fraction of the smugglers.

Immigration quotas which the Conservative Party wants to enforce (the issue has been and will be debated at length in the British Houses of Parliament) would most certainly fail to stop this smuggling trade. Great Britain is an attractive destination for illegal immigrants. Citizens of the UK are not required to carry identity cards, English is an international language, and illegal work is relatively easy to find. To combat against this problem Scotland Yard has created new police units and is working with agencies in France Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Holland as well as Europol (the European Union police) to break up these illegal immigration networks.¹

¹ "Huge Trafficking Operation Smashed as Yard Holds Suspected Ringleaders" *The Guardian* 12 October 2005.

"Decapitating the Snakeheads." *The Economist* 8 October 2005.

"Speedboat Smugglers Jailed" *BBC News* 11 February 2005.

"Two Jailed Over People Smuggling" *BBC News* May 26 2005.

"Woman Helped Smuggle 600 People" *BBC News* 20 October 2005.

POLITICS & SOCIETY

[The Pacific solution: how to make a problem disappear without actually solving it](#)

By Vincent MONDIOT

The immigration policy named “The Pacific solution” is approved by a majority of Australians, but condemned by pretty much everyone else.

On October 14, 2005 Australian Prime Minister John Howard proudly announced that the majority of asylum seekers kept in the Nauru detention centres would be removed in the next few days.

A short reminder: John Howard and his Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone had planned a long-shot project called “The Pacific Solution”, a project intended to solve the ever growing problem of immigration. This name of “Pacific solution”, was somewhat of a bad joke, because the project was everything but quiet, and led to the very first intervention of a national army against illegal immigrants. On September 5, 2001, the Palapa 1, a boat full of 434 Afghans, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans arrived in Australia. The boat was “welcomed” by the military. Mr. Howard’s initiative was strongly criticised by the international press and world opinion. However 78% of the Australian population backed Howard’s solution. His party gained five points of popularity.

But the problem was there to remain. Howard made a deal with New Zealand and Nauru (a small island state, of about 12000 inhabitants) to take the asylum seekers. Soon, the majority of asylum seekers in Australia were redirected to “waiting centres” in Nauru to await a hypothetical authorisation to enter Australian territory.

Four years later, everyone can see that Howard has few reasons to be proud: the Nauru centre seems to be an Australian version of Guantanamo Bay, with hunger strikes, mental health problems, prison-like living conditions and too many people for a too small place. The result was a new —though still minor —shift in Australian public opinion. It seems unlikely that Howard’s eventual decision to remove the asylum seekers from the Nauru detention centre (and from another centre on Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island) had less to do with his own policy desires, than with the fact that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regional representative Neill Wright began to worry about the affair.

However the Prime Minister did not hesitate to boast: “The Pacific solution has been an outstanding success”. In a cynical way, he is right: led by an ever growing anti-Muslim feeling, Australians re-elected Howard in the last general elections.

Right now, the “Australian Guantanamo” has closed its doors, putting an end to the “Pacific solution”, but the asylum seekers are still waiting for the government to decide their fate. According to minister Vanstone, only 12 asylum seekers are still in detention awaiting judicial decisions; all the rest have either been accepted in Australia or sent back to his or her native country.

Sources:

Sydney AFP, 14 October 2005.

“No Asylum, Just Neglect.” *Weekend Australian* 8 October 2005.

<http://www.danielpipes.org/article/50> (Daniel Pipes works for the *Harvard Magazine*, the *New York Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*...).

POLITICS & SOCIETY

Is India ready to fight?

By Sébastien DEMOUGEOT

A war has broken out between India and influenza. The battle is going to be tough. Both human and economic stakes are particularly high.

After several earthquakes and a tsunami, Asia has to face another threat : the Avian Influenza. This particular strain of bird flu was first spotted in South Korea in 2003 and spread quite quickly since then. There have been relatively few lethal human cases worldwide so far – 117 people have been infected and 60 have died since 1997. The WHO (World Health Organization) has been advising countries on how to prepare for such influenza epidemics for several years. The H5N1 virus being particularly pathogenic, it has become really urgent to counterstrike against the spread of the disease. India is one of WHO's biggest headaches, as it is one of the largest countries close to the cradle of the flu. In case of an outbreak amongst humans, India would face a tough task since 1,045,845,226 inhabitants live on 3,287,590 square kilometres¹. A major source of worry is that India is on the flight path of wild birds and harbours many animal sanctuaries. For instance, there are 1,200,000 birds in the bird sanctuary of Nal Sarovar, in the province of Gujarat (West of India) alone.² And 60% of these birds are migrant species. So, India must have an emergency plan should the disease spread to humans and the country was to be hit by the epidemic.

The first measure taken was to ban the import of poultry last September, in order to tackle the problem at its cause. India then started stockpiling Tamiflu (aka oseltamivir) – the most efficient drug against the H5N1 virus.³ Moreover, India is ready to produce its own medicine in case of a large outbreak. The WHO in India “welcomes the prospect of regional manufacture of oseltamivir in India and Thailand”.⁴ International pressures have led the Swiss firm Roche to agree to sub-licence the production of this vaccine to other manufacturers. Thus the pharmaceutical industry in the developed and developing world would cooperate in a coordinated defence against a world wide public health crisis. However, it would take four to six months to produce vaccines after an outbreak.⁵ In the meantime great vigilance is required, especially on the part of bird sanctuary workers.

Despite the huge size of its territory, India is trying its best to prepare for the struggle against the Avian Flu. “There are limited stocks of the antiviral Tamiflu maintained by the WHO in New Delhi, and we can bring in more if needed” says WHO's Director of Communicable Diseases in South-East Asia.⁶ The Indian government also needs to improve their risk communication in all its provinces.⁷ Proximity with animals is widespread in both rural and small town India. All Indians need to become aware of what is really at stake.

¹ The Indian Embassy in Washington DC's website.

² “Bird Flu: How Far and Fast Can It Spread?” *The Hindu* 18 October 2005.

³ WHO India press release 20 October 2005.

⁴ Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director of WHO in South-East Asia (New Delhi), WHO press release, 20 October 2005.

⁵ “In A Flap.” *The Economist* 20 October 2005.

⁶ Dr Jai P. Narain, Director of communicable diseases, WHO in South-East Asia (New Delhi), in *How Scared Should You Be ?* by Claudia Cornwall, WHO India's website, October 2005.

⁷ Recommendation posted on WHO India's website 20 October 2005.

POLITICS & SOCIETY

[AIDS in South Africa : local initiatives vs official inertia](#)

By Magali PASQUALINI

The Aids pandemic in South Africa is rampant. New initiatives to fight against the disease are more than welcome.

AIDS is still taboo in South Africa : most South Africans avoid using the medical term and prefer nicknames such as “slim”, and “the thinning disease”. Having Aids is still thought to be shameful.

About 6 out of 44 million South Africans are infected (a population the size of Switzerland's). Only a handful of celebrities have revealed that they are infected. Nelson Mandela declared on January 6th 2005 that his son died of AIDS, and Edwin Cameron, a gay judge in the Supreme Court of Appeal, went public in 1999. Cameron just published a book entitled *Witness to AIDS*, documenting his illness and the life-saving ARVs (anti-retroviral drugs) which enabled him to remain healthy.¹

These drugs are still controversial within government circles. Both President Mbeki and his Health Minister, Manto Tshabalala Msimong, refuse to stockpile and distribute anti-retroviral drugs. They argue these drugs are too costly and potentially harmful.

Activist groups such as the Treatment Action Campaign and High Court rulings have failed to make the government change its policy. Anti-retroviral drugs are still extremely difficult to obtain in South Africa. However official inertia is not the only problem aids patients face. The ARVs drugs need to be taken with potable water and regular meals in order to be effective. Both of which are not necessarily a mainstay in several parts of the country. Distributing and administering these drugs thus require a strong infrastructure which is currently deficient.²

In the light of government shortcomings, the fight against AIDS needs to be upheld in many different circles. A new initiative has been launched in some schools under the Health Promoting Schools program whereby members of the community help school teachers to promote anti-AIDS campaigns. Pupils then learn how to protect themselves against the virus and become role models for others. For instance pupils from the Pineview Primary School³ in Grabouw staged a short drama about the dangers of the disease, and performed it in a farming community in the Western Cape. In such a way pupils become responsible for promoting AIDS awareness amongst rural population.⁴

Such initiatives are more than welcome, but they do not make up for the lack of ARVs. Generic drugs are badly needed. The South African government is responsible for making them more easily available. Investing in medical infrastructures as well as in water distribution is a must if the pandemic is ever to be controlled.

¹ « South Africa » (Survey) *The Economist*, 21 July 2005

² « AIDS » (Survey) *The Economist* 21 February 2002

³ <http://www.kznhealth.gov.za/hps.htm>

⁴ « Pupils Use the Stage to Teach Others About HIV » *Sundaytimes*, 25 September 2005

POLITICS & SOCIETY NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On the worldwide spy pandemic, panda diplomacy, pensioner terrorist, Mr England and the importance of being modest.

Spy pandemic

The British Secret Intelligence Service, aka MI6, has launched a new website. With numerous references to James Bond as well as rather vague descriptions of the jobs on offer, the SIS hopes to recruit agents from a variety of backgrounds. A special post office box number is provided for those interested.

Source: <http://www.mi6.gov.uk/>; "Secret is Out" *The Times of India* 13 October 2005.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation is to be boosted with 500 extra agents and up to \$50 million in annual funding. At present, ASIO has fewer than 1000 agents - but it is still double the number servicing on September 11, 2001.

Source: "ASIO Doubles to Fight Home Terror Threat" *The Age* (Melbourne) 16 October 2005

A new National Clandestine Service was created at the CIA. It will serve to coordinate the increasing spying and covert activities conducted worldwide by the Pentagon and FBI, which have expanded dramatically since September 11, 2001.

Source: "CIA Spies Get a New Homebase" *The Washington Post* 14 October 2005.

Panda diplomacy

The panda cub born at the Washington National Zoo last July was named "Tai Shan" (i.e. Peaceful Mountain) on October 17, after a nationwide poll and Chinese official approval. Tai Shan's parents arrived at the zoo in December 2000 under a 10-year, \$10 million loan agreement with China. The zoo's first two pandas were a diplomatic gift from the Chinese government in 1972.

Source: "DC Zoo Panda Cub Gets a Name" *The Washington Post* 17 October 2005

Mr England

Jack Straw, British Foreign Secretary, visited Alabama on October 22-23 with Secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to promote democracy and understanding of the Anglo-American alliance. Alabaman officials appointed him Secretary of State to the Commonwealth of the United Kingdom, and variously called him Mr Shaw, Mr Snow or more appropriately Mr England.

Source: *Reuters* 24 October 2005.

When the Prevention of Terrorism Act gets out of hand

During the last Labour Party conference in Brighton, an 82-year old member was ejected from the conference hall for shouting "nonsense" during a speech on Iraq by Jack Straw. The police cited the new Prevention of Terrorism Act in justification, as cabinet ministers looked on impassively.

Source: "Conference Kick-Out" *The Economist* 1 October 2005.

ARTS & BOOKS

Lucy in the charts with diamonds

By Antoine PIETRI

Forty years after they plugged in their first electric guitar, 1960's rock stars are amazingly popular among today's teenagers.

"Eighteen till I die"

In the last few months the covers of most music magazines –if not all– have been monopolized, by the recent releases of "Chaos and Creation in the Backyard" and "A Bigger Bang", the newest albums by Paul McCartney (former bass player of the Beatles) and the Rolling Stones. As one could expect, the two CDs are already becoming best-sellers. How can the everlasting success of these artists be explained, almost half a century after they came up with the tunes that made them famous? As *The Economist* points out, one of the main reasons is the size of the baby-boom generation. They grew up listening to these revolutionary tunes, and they have no trouble affording the tickets to their stadium concerts today. Mid-life crisis might be a little easier to handle if the music you enjoyed as a teenager is still up and alive. A surprising fact is that alongside these 50 year old fans, new ones keep coming. The number of youngsters enjoying oldies is on the increase: 75% of attendees in Beatle-fans conventions are under 30, as the Beatles historian Martin Lewis points out.¹

"I believe in yesterday"

Jenny, 18 years old, remembers how excited she was when she went to her first Rolling Stones concert at the Sydney Superdome back in 2003. "Nothing else I had ever seen before has come close to this experience", says the young student. This new generation doesn't seem to mind listening to the same music as their parents, or even grand parents. Many of them actually discovered this music by going through their parents' vinyl records, or attended their idols' concerts with them.

So, where does that leave today's music?

"If you ask me, music died in the 70s", Thomas, a New York ninth-grader, asserts. "Anything that came out after that just sounds the same, it just doesn't interest me", states this 14 year old Hendrix fan. The only new bands that matter to him and his peers are the ones that sound more or less like the old rock standards – which explains the success of cover bands, or even remixes like Elvis' "A little less conversation" in 2002, which topped the charts for a while, 25 years after the King's death.²

"Money for nothing"

Not surprisingly, this seemingly inexhaustible source of income is exploited mercilessly by producers and assignees alike. And there are plenty cash cows to milk : old artists creating new albums are one species, but old songs in new packaging are even more lucrative. As long as there will oldies' fans, new exclusive Bob Marley and the Wailers best-of CDs wrapped up so as to look like brand new material will flourish. Neil Young was probably right when he sang, in one of his most famous songs, "Hey, hey, my my, rock and roll will never die".

¹ "The Times They Are A'changin'. Really." *The Economist* 29 September 2005.

"Kids Listen to Their Parent's... Music." *USA Today* 30 March 2004.

² All the interviews with young sixties fans were made by A. Pietri in October 2005.

ARTS & BOOKS

Hollywood gets lost in translation

By Christophe JAMOT

American cinema used to influence generations of movie directors round the world. Today Hollywood seeks scripts and ideas from abroad.

East Asian cinema has had huge international success in the last few years. Japanese, Korean and Chinese movies have been awarded countless prizes in European film festivals. It was not long before the Americans realized this new goldmine had to be reckoned with and exploited properly. Something had to be done to satisfy contemporary demand and taste, something radically new like...a remake.

Japanese horror movies have met with international success recently. In the United States, horror movies are close to being a native tradition: whether you are a horror movie freak or not, you must have heard about *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or about *Dawn of the Dead* (these two classics from the seventies were reshot in the last few years). However, the genre was running out of steam in America until these Japanese movies came out. Movies such as *Dark water* by Hideo Nakata (2002) or *The Grudge* by Yakashi Shimizu (2004) put new life into the genre. This "new wave" of Japanese was extremely innovative in many ways. These films really have an aesthetic of their own, never seen before. The main difference with the American horror films is that the Japanese ones are free of violence. Very little blood is being spilled and movies are less gory. The emphasis is put on the understated. What the Americans are usually eager to show, the Japanese will endeavour to hide, thus playing with the audience's imagination.

The Japanese hit *Ringu* directed by Hideo Nakata (1998) is a story about a cursed video that kills everyone who sees it exactly one week after viewing, was among the first of the numerous movies to be "americanized". *The Ring*, its American counterpart came out four years later and used the same plot with minor differences. For most movie freaks and admirers of the Japanese style, Hollywood's "remake" frenzy simply looks as sheer lack of inspiration. Yet, producers claim that this phenomenon is an attempt for some directors to try their hand at a new genre. This is the case for Walter Salles for instance, who directed the remake of *Dark Water* which came out a few weeks ago. Hollywood moguls believe adding special effects, famous directors and actors can produce better movies.

However, what the Americans tend to forget is that these Japanese movies often respond to specific social trends and cultural issues. When americanized, one realizes that these underlying themes disappear in the "remake" version, taking away most of the film's appeal and depth.

Sources: *The Midnight Eye Guide to New Japanese Film*, Hideo Nakata (Foreword), Tom Mes, Jasper Sharp (Stone Bridge Press, 2004).

Japanese Horror Cinema, Jay Mcroy (University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

<http://www.midnighteye.com/>; <http://www.imdb.com>

ARTS & BOOKS

American literary outlaws and mainstream film directors

By Radan JOVANOVIĆ

In the last few years, a string of American examples has demonstrated the fact that provocative prose makes good filmscript material.

Fight Club, *American Psycho*, *Requiem for a Dream*, or *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* are widely popular titles among young and not-so-young people alike. The films are now much better known than the books they were adapted from. Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* was first published in 1971 and adapted by Terry Gilliam in 1998. Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Requiem for a Dream* came out in 1978 and the movie shot by Darren Aronofsky in 2000. *American Psycho* was adapted by Mary Harron in that same year (2000) but the book by Bret Easton Ellis had been on library shelves since 1991. It did not take long for Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) to reach cult status when the film by David Fincher came out in 1999.

These writers did not emerge out of the blue: there is a long tradition of such "outlaw literature" in America. The Lost Generation with F. Scott Fitzgerald and E. Hemingway as its main heroes, was followed by the Beat Generation embodied by Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs. Small literary groups such as the *Hip Generation* and later the Generation X followed in their wake. Generation X's name comes from the title of Douglas Coupland's novel published in 1991. According to Emily Nussbaum, Coupland "captured the embarrassed spiritual yearning in his characters, the refugees of the new economy – rendering meaningful that least sympathetic of emotional breakdowns".¹

The current streak of literary rebels use literature as a means to protest against globalisation, corporate America, consumer culture, narrow mindedness etc. One could say they are « anti-everything ». When browsing through the anthology entitled *The Outlaw Bible of American Literature*,² one cannot fail but notice all they inherited from their predecessors.

Most of the films adapted from these books are high budget block-busters, which is somewhat paradoxical. But however mainstream the films are, the tales they tell still provide us with a provocative outlook on our everyday life. "We need our literary outlaws, if only for the vicarious glimpses they give us of life-on-the-edge experiences — just as they need our humdrum selves in order to have something to rebel against", says journalist Michael Upchurch.³ It seems we also need the films, even though it would be hard to describe them as « outlaws ».

¹ Emily Nussbaum, « 'Eleanor Rigby' :All the Lonely People. » *The New York Times* 2 January 2005.

² Barney Rosset, Alan Kaufmann, Neil Ortenberg, *The Outlaw Bible of American Literature* (Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004)

³ Michael Upchurch, « Literary Rebels Unite ! » *The Seattle Times* 6 March 2005.

ARTS & BOOKS

July All Year Round

By Charlotte MARCHALANT

Miranda July's break-through. Portrait of the American artist, darling of the underground scene turned international star.

Browsing through Miranda July's *résumé*, a question inevitably comes to mind: How can so much talent fit into one single person? In the last Cannes Film Festival, Miranda July presented *Me, You and Everyone We Know*, a movie she wrote, directed and starred in. This "Do It Yourself" adept collected four awards, including the much coveted "camera d'or". But the 31 year old is already used to success. Her offbeat take on the world eludes all definitions and has been earning her raving reviews for nearly ten years. Her work has been shown at prestigious venues such as the Guggenheim Museum or London's Institute of Contemporary Arts to name but a few. At ease with a wide range of media such as audio, video or even literature, her inexhaustible inspiration finds an outlet in creations that mirror her environment from an innovative angle. So much so that she was given a special award for "originality of vision" at Sundance,* the Mecca of independent cinema. *Me, You and Everyone We Know* is a modern tale on love, suburban boredom and paedophilia. While pin pointing society's shortcomings, it retains a cute, pleasing yet serious atmosphere.

But for all her uniqueness, Miranda July did not come out of the blue. She belongs to the bubbling scene of Portland, Oregon, whose ethos is summed up in a lyric by the local all-girl band Sleater-Kinney: "You're no (...) fun, like a piece of art that no one can touch".** The message is clear: art must be taken down from the pedestal on which former generations have placed it and returned to the people. "Culture is what you make it" Sleater-Kinney assert in another song. Miranda July's latest internet project is a perfect illustration of that desire to "democratize" art. *Learning To Love You More* (www.learningtoloveyoumore.com) is a forum where people can find assignments given out by the web mistress herself and share their experiences. This highly successful website testifies to a new attitude towards art and its protagonists. The internet, a recurring theme in July's work, helped break down barriers and foster new collaborations. Thus July's work-mates are musicians, jewel and fashion-designers, film-makers and writers, all brought together by the internet and a common taste for experimenting. Like a hyper-active kid, she fiddles with everything without any regard for limits and boundaries. In pretty much the same way as Warhol in the 50's (he too created quite a stir then) she digests the old to spit it out new, with her own stamp. Her idiosyncratic strange and poetic mood pervades all her work, and makes her a most interesting figure in today's artistic landscape. Entering Miranda July's mind is a startling but enriching experience, so different it is from the norm - a word I have got an inkling she doesn't use much.

*The Sundance Film Festival, the first event of its kind, was created by Robert Redford in 1985. Now a major structure, it promotes independent cinema.

** *All Hands On The Bad One* – Kill Rock Stars, 2000

ARTS & BOOKS NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On a naked and disabled statue, Nollywood, hyphenated museums, sexy safety devices and floating art

Public art and debate in Trafalgar square

The newly pedestrianised Trafalgar Square has been adorned with a controversial 13-tonne marble sculpture by Marc Quinn, depicting the disabled artist Alison Lapper naked, pregnant and proud. A statue of Nelson Mandela is due to be installed in the square shortly, but the mayors of London and Westminster are arguing as to where.

Source : "In Praise... of Public Art" *The Guardian* 3 October 2005

Nollywood

Nigeria has one of the fastest growing film industries in the world, churning out an average of 1000 films a year. Nollywood now ranks third behind Hollywood and Bollywood. It exports its productions all over Africa, particularly in neighbouring anglophone countries, but also has a great outlet in the USA thanks to the African-American market. Like its rivals, Nollywood also faces an increased trend to piracy as nine of every 10 CDs, VCDs, and DVDs circulating in Nigeria were pirated.

Sources : "Hooray for Nollywood" *Vanguard* 16 October 2005 ; « Nollywood Generates 200 Million Dollars » *Vanguard* 8 October 2005 ; « A Culture of Survival » *The Guardian* 5 March 2005.

The Arab American National Museum

This museum opened in May 2005 in Dearborn (Michigan) where some 30 % of the 100 000 residents identify themselves as Arab-Americans. Although few people agree on the exact figures, a Zogby poll suggests that there were as many as 3.5 million Arab-Americans in 2000, amongst which 66 % identified themselves as Christian and 24 % as Muslim.

Source : "A Mosaic of Arab culture at home in America" *The New York Times* 24 October 2005.

Safe design at MoMA

The exhibition "Safe: Design Takes On Risk" opened on October 16 at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It displays contemporary products and prototypes designed to protect body and mind. The show was originally conceived in early 2001 with a strong emphasis on rescue and emergency equipment. After September 11, the project was mothballed.

Sources : "if You're Going To Be Safe, May as Well Be Stylish." *The New York Times* 20 October 2005 ; <http://www.moma.org/>

Floating art: Smithsonian island

From September 17 to 25, a new feature was added to New York's geography. Robert Smithson's « Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island » was towed by a small tug boat from 8 am to 8 pm every day. Smithson died in a plane crash in 1973, aged 35, without having been able to realise his miniature replica of Central Park. The Whitney museum and Minetta Brook (a New York-based arts organisation) joined to build this 30-x-90-foot barge, landscaped with earth, rocks, and live trees and shrubs. While Smithson island was being towed art students attempted to board it in order to plant a small saffron gate, as a criticism of the 7 503 Gates put up by Christo & Jeanne-Claude in Central Park last February.

Sources : "Smithson's Floating Sculpture" *The New York Times* 17 September 2005 ; "A Miniature Gate in Hot Pursuit of a Miniature Central Park" *The New York Times* 24 September 2005 ; <http://whitney.org/exhibition/>

BUSINESS & MEDIA

[Poddism, a new stairway to heaven?](#)

By Peter NAIT CHABANE

iPods are a radically new medium, but watch out, these devices can be addictive for the better and possibly the worse.

iPods are immensely popular. Even George Bush has been spotted using one, to the dismay of Apple advertisers who branded the device as trendy and cutting edge.

With the spread of these hand-held devices, a new multi-media technology has emerged complete with a radically new terminology. Publishing audio files on the internet which listeners then download is now widely known as "Podcasting". Listeners can store the audio programs onto their computers and then transfer them on their iPods in order to listen to them later on. The latest iPod also enables you to download hours of video programs.

An extensive range of "Podcasts" are currently available: from exercise programs to full length sermons. People with a message to spread have immediately understood the various opportunities offered by this new medium. "Podcasts" are particularly popular among religious groups. Televangelists beware! there is strong competition coming. For instance Reverent Mark Batterson, uploads all his sermons on the National Community Church website. He calls this "Godcasting". His parishioners can then listen to him as many times as they want, when driving to the mall or going to the gym. A lot of them are true iPod converts, aka "Poddies". If too successful "Godcasting" might turn out to be a real threat for church attendance!

However, you don't need to be religious to become a iPod addict. "The iPod is the greatest piece of technology since the motor car," says music-lover Paul. He still remembers when the Walkman was launched in 1979 and people raved about it. "Now who cares about that crude stone age-like tool?" he asks.

So far iPods are still relatively expensive, thus limiting the amount of potential "podcast" listeners. What will happen when pretty much every one owns such a device remains to be seen.

Sources: « iPod's Halo » *The Washington Times* 5 May 2005.

"Missed Church? No Worries. Download It to Your iPod." *The New York Times* 5 October 2005.

"An iPod Worth Keeping an Eye On." *The New York Times* 18 October 2005.

BUSINESS & MEDIA

You've got mail

By Aure CAPLIEZ

Several U.S. bank customers have recently received emails “phishing” for information.

U.S. banks have been asked to solve the problem of logging security on their internet websites. User names and passwords have become too easy to steal and they are thinking about new ways of identifying users.¹

Banks have been required to do so because of a new type of virus: “phishing”. This new word comes from a mix of “fishing” and “phreaking” referring to the practice of luring unsuspecting internet users to a fake website using authentic-looking email complete with organization's logo, in attempt to steal passwords, financial or personal information, or introduce a virus attack.²

From 75 to 150 million phishing emails are sent everyday throughout the world.³ Most of the people who receive such emails are unaware of the fraud and simply click on the link to the fake website.

Phishing is just one more way to infiltrate your computer after viruses, worms and trojans. A 2004 study has shown that today we could find spyware on 4 out of 5 home computers.³

The first thing to do is to not answer that type of email. Last year, an American couple had \$1,800 stolen from their online bank account and a \$800 credit-card charge for escort services they had never ordered. It went on for several months before the bank could close their bank account.⁴

To fight against phishing, an association “The anti-phishing working group” reports rackets and maintains a website showing different “phishing emails”. It reported 13,776 attacks this August in the U.S.¹

But “phishing” does not only take place in the U.S.. Clients of the National Australian Bank's and The Australian and New Zealand Banking group have for example received such emails. The only countries not yet threatened by phishing are non-english speaking countries as the emails are only written in English ...for now.

The fraud incurs high costs to banks, retailers and consumers, which is why they are trying to reinforce the identification system. But the Internet is always one step ahead. It now provides information on how to be a good fraudster and offers software for download that can, for example, generate bank account numbers.

Credit card companies are developing more secure online transactions with a password entry through mouse clicks, so that you don't have to type your password and it can't be detected.

Fraudsters will always find a way to break any technology but the more careful we are the more difficult it will be for them...

¹ Brian Bergstein « Feds Want Banks to Strengthen Web Log-Ons » *The Washington Post* 17 October 2005.

² Webster's New Millennium™ Dictionary of English, Preview Edition (v 0.9.6)

³ « Avoid Online ID Theft » *The Washington Post* 24 July 2005

⁴ Brian Krebs « Phishing Schemes Scar Victims » *The Washington Post* 18 November 2004

BUSINESS & MEDIA

More than enough

By Caroline ADAM.

Most Australian TV shows are on the wane. A complete makeover is needed to restore the medium's popularity.

There are more and more TV shows broadcast each year in Australia. Countless sitcoms and reality shows are imported or churned out by local production houses. Yet the market has been slowing down: ratings keep on declining as the audience seems to be bored with most such programs. Despite a large buffet of reality television, these all-you-can-watch programs are often on yearly cycles. *Big Brother* is already on its 7th season on Australian TV !

The audience also seems to be tired of shows featuring not-so talented beginners. *The Australian Idol* fell to the 7th rank on the Top 10. Having said this, its American counterpart *The American Idol* is very popular. It might be that Americans are better singers than Australians ! Several TV shows have also become a subject of mockery amongst teenagers.

Both teenagers and adults tend to be looking for more constructive TV programs such as those emphasising the contestants' qualities and gifts: one of top performing shows at the moment is entitled *Extreme Makeover*. It is a one-hour US imported reality series that provides participants with the 'Cinderella' experience of a lifetime. It features two people, first in their "before" phase, then as they undergo their various transformations, and eventually, when they have reached the « after » phase. The show has been licensed to broadcasters all across Asia in Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Fiji. *Extreme Makeover* ranked top in the prime time programs of most of these countries for the 2004-2005 season. How long will this last ?

Most TV shows' popularity tends to wane after a while, in Australia as well as in most other countries. Constant innovation is required to maintain high audience ratings. Irony and parody might be a solution to renew the genre. The famous *Muppets* are said to be about to come back on both American and Australian TV sets with a brand new angle: as a mock television show...

Sources :

"Reality on wane." *The Australian* 10 October 2005.

"In Reality, Kermit's in His Prime." *The Australian* 27 October 2005.

"Martha and Paris TV flops signal end of reality shows." *The Independent* 16 October 2005.

"Watchdog group delivers TV list." *Los Angeles Times* 20 October 2005.

BUSINESS & MEDIA NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On Christie's in the Republic of China, fast food labels, businessmen turned patron of the arts and the good health of Dailies in India.

Auctions in the Republic of China

Christie's has signed an agreement with Forever, a newly formed Chinese auction house, in order to be allowed to hold auctions in Beijing. Art has long been a very lucrative market in China. Sotheby's has been holding sales in Hong Kong since 1973, and Christie's since 1986. As for mainland China, Sotheby's and Christie's opened prospection offices in Shanghai in 1994. Two years later, Christie's opened a branch in Beijing where Sotheby's has had a representative since 2004.

Source: "Christie's Going, Going to China to Hold Auctions." *The New York Times* 20 October 2005.

The mysterious world of Big Mac ingredients

As customers increasingly look for nutrition information about what they eat, McDonald's said it would start printing fat and sodium content as well as calorie figures on the packaging of most of its food items from 2006 onwards. Critics note that customers will get the information only once they have received the food.

Source: « McDonald's Plans to Print Nutrition Data on Food Boxes » *The Washington Post* 26 October 2005.

Former PoW donates riches to Queen's

When the Vienna-born Alfred Bader, aged 17, applied to go to Mc Gill university in 1941, he was turned down and told the year's Jewish quota was full. Having been interned in a prisoner-of-war camp for over a year, he did not give in. He went to Queen's University instead and then on to Harvard where he got a PhD in chemistry. Now a multi-millionaire industrialist and a great philanthropist, Mr Bader donated \$50 billion to Queen's in order to build an arts centre.

Source: "Former PoW Gives to His Alma Mater, Queen's, in Spades" *The Globe and Mail* 26 October 2005.

Dailies boom in India

English-language newspapers are flourishing in India where Dailies are being launched all year round. *DNA-Daily News & Analysis* is one of the latest of its kind. Based in Bombay, it competes with the *Times of India* and the new tabloid *Mumbai Mirror*. The *Hindustan Times*, originally based in New Delhi, recently launched a Bombay edition after the *Times* had entered the Delhi market. The *Telegraph* in Calcutta, and the *Hindu* in Madras are their main counterparts. Western newspaper owners look on with envy.

Source: "Popping Corks." *The Economist* 30 July 2005.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

[British scientific research endangered by animals rights activists turned terrorists](#)

By Bérangère MAILLET

British animal rights activists lead a fight verging between non-violence and terrorism which ultimately is a real threat to scientific research.

In the United Kingdom, there are more than two million scientific experiments conducted on animals each year and thousands of activists fight against such experiments. Many organisations, such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Animal Aid or Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty recruit more and more members. PETA is the world's biggest animal rights organisation with almost 40,000 member in Britain alone.

In the battle for animal rights, the organisations arm themselves with anything that could have an impact on the media. For instance Animal Aid runs the "mad science awards" every year, while PETA organizes campaigns where celebrities appear partially nude to express opposition to fur wearing. But when it comes to the battle against experimenting on animals, a handful of members disagree with the non-violent policy of their organisation and choose to follow their own path, without realizing that they are spreading a negative image of their cause. Hoaxes, hatemails, death threats, vandalism, sabotage and many other violent means of action are their weapons against laboratories, pharmaceutical companies or individuals.

John Hall, the ex-owner of a guinea pig breeding center, experienced the extreme measures of some animal rights activists. For fifteen years himself, his family and his business were the victims of violent protesters who used every means to close the guinea pigs center. He highlights that today "none of [his]daughters can live a normal life". Some activists even stole the body of Gladys Hammond, a relative of the Hall family, a theft which remains unsolved.¹ More recently, Leapfrog Nurseries has become the new target of animal liberation activists because they offer childcare vouchers to employees of the Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) company (which uses chemical testing on animals). Once again, the activists started a campaign of "warning letters" and death threats towards directors of Leapfrog Nurseries and continue the campaign against directors, employees and clients of the HLS.²

Such animal rights extremists are also a threat for scientific research and the economy of their country. Indeed, laboratories feel that their work can no longer be safe in the UK and some major pharmaceutical companies are moving to Europe, America or Asia. There the animals rights activists are not so active and legislation concerning the protection of abusive treatment of animals is weaker."The [...] result will be a loss of revenue for this country, the removal of access to new drugs for our hospital and the scientific isolation of UK doctors and researchers".³In this country, no one seems to know exactly why, but the defense of animal rights drive some people to excess forcing others to live in fear.

¹ Leader "The Wrongs of Animal Rights Zealots." *The Observer* 28 August 2005; "How Animal Rights Groups Destroyed My Family's Life." *The Observer* 28 August 2005.

² "Animal Rights Activists Target Chain of Children's Nurseries Linked to Lab." *The Guardian* 29 September 2005.

³ "One Issue, Many Campaigners." *The Guardian* 6 November 2001.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On military dolphins, online scientific publishing, the new marketplace for transplant organs, and NASA vehicles for human space travel.

Military dolphins at large

Amidst much criticism from animal rights groups, the US navy has been training dolphins to detect mines, patrol in harbours, protect stationary warships at sea, or spot spies underwater. Equipped with harnesses carrying toxic darts, the cetaceans can even shoot terrorists. When Katrina struck, a group of dolphins from a Mississippi commercial oceanarium was let loose. US navy scientists insisted on examining them, thus fuelling suspicion that the army dolphins had escaped. Up to 36 mammals could be at large in the Gulf of Mexico. Divers in wetsuits, beware.

Sources: "Armed and Dangerous – Filpper the Firing Dolphin Let Loose by Katrina" *The Observer*, September 25, 2005; « Dolphins go to war » *The Belfast Telegraph* 5 October 2005.

Online scientific publishing

The International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers says that there are more than 2,000 academic publishers worldwide, publishing more than 1.2m articles each year in some 16,000 journals. This market is estimated at \$7 to \$11 billion a year in America alone. According to the OECD some 75% of scholarly journals can now be found online, thus generating new business models and research practices. Findings are easier to comment, verify and replicate. As a result scientific research is gradually becoming more collaborative .

Source: "The Paperless Library" *The Economist* 22 September 2005.

Transplant organs on the web

Nearly 90 000 Americans are waiting for organ transplants. More and more of these patients are using the internet to look for willing donors. While increasing their chances of finding a compatible organ, they also jeopardise the traditional system of anonymous donations and prioritisation of the sickest patients in the allocation of organs. Although selling human organs is illegal, private matching paves the way for the creation of a lucrative market place.

Source: "Search for Transplant Organs Becomes a Web Free-for-All", *The Washington Post* 23 September 2005.

New vehicles to the moon

NASA has announced a major makeover of its plans for human spaceflight. In order to organise longer stays on the moon and possibly visits to Mars, NASA will develop a new spaceship and an exploration vehicle. It claims to be able to do so on its annual budget, probably at the expense of the remaining shuttle missions and thanks to the procurement of Russian-made equipment.

Sources: <http://www.nasa.gov/missions>; "NASA Aims for Moon by 2018, Unveils New Ship" *National Geographic News*, September 19, 2005; "Shooting for the Moon" *The Economist* 24 September 2005.

ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL

Three in one: treatment, savings and vacation

By Sugandhi NADARADJANE

India is competing with the other Asian countries in order to promote medical tourism.

India is widely known for its traditional methods of healing, such as ayur-vedic medicine, but now, India is attracting clients to its healthcare centres by providing high-quality medical treatments. More and more people are going to India to undergo such medical treatments as hip replacement, cardiotherapy, knee surgery, dental care or even plastic surgery. India is flourishing in the field of medical tourism, surpassing Thailand, Singapore and some other Asian countries. Why do foreigners rush to developing countries?

Medical tourism is a combination of leisure, relaxation, adventure and access to medical care. International patients are mostly from developed countries like the USA, Canada, the UK, Western Europe, the Middle-East and Australia. They are looking for good treatment at a lower price. India provides private hi-tech hospitals and insures high quality treatment. Moreover, medical expenses are only a fraction of those in the developed countries and 30% less than Thailand. For instance, heart surgery costing \$30,000 in the US, will only cost \$6,000 in India. The price of treatment in the US is equivalent to a vacation in India, medical care plus savings. So more and more people such as Non Resident Indians, British and uninsured Americans, are travelling abroad to receive their medical treatment.

Waiting lists are a thing of the past: some hospitals take care of their patients from the minute they arrive at the airport. Moreover they receive a VIP treatment: some hospitals are even equipped with reading rooms, gift shops or prayer rooms. Everything is modernized from the paint scheme on the walls to modern cafeterias and gastronomy menus. Every detail counts to ensure a good image of hospitals which are providing a world-class treatment.

Health care centres create many job opportunities and Indian doctors living abroad are returning home. One may wonder what will be the state of medical practice in developed countries in the future ?

Sources :

"Journey to Five-Star Bypass." *The Times of India*, 23 October 2005.

"Are We Ready for Medical Tourism?" *The Hindu* 17 October 2005.

"Health Care Outsourcing." *The Hindu* 05 April 2005.

ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL

[After “hard times”, “great expectations” for environmental issues in America?](#)

By Samir BENKHALFOUNE.

Pressure from nature to approve the Kyoto protocol.

Many scientists, researchers and politicians agree that the latest natural disasters in America might have a positive impact on US policies. Environmentalists all over the world live in hope.

Earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes: America has indeed been experiencing hard times in the last few months. The fact that oceanic temperatures are rising faster than atmospheric ones accounts for several of these phenomena. Most people agree that greenhouse gas emissions from exhaust pipes, power stations and factories rank pretty high on the culprit list... However talks about finding solutions to reduce these fume problems inevitably bring major disagreements to the surface. The refusal of the Bush administration to sign the Kyoto treaty in March 2001 was one such instance.

Not all Americans approved this move, far from it.

Last May, some US mayors started an initiative to get American cities to meet the Kyoto targets and cut greenhouse gas emissions. Individuals are also participating, sometimes unconsciously, to this effort. The recent surge in oil, gas, and petrol prices has induced many American consumers to change their attitude and adopt more environmentally friendly behaviors. More and more are doing their shopping over the internet instead of driving to the mall and thousands have rushed to buy wood-stoves in order to reduce their heating bills.

It is somewhat heart-warming to know that natural disasters can also have a few positive effects. But no one knows whether Katrina, Wilma and Rita will be convincing enough to influence American policies in a lasting way.

Sources: “US Cities Snub Bush and Sign Up to Kyoto.” *The Guardian* 17 May 2005.

« The High Price of Gasoline Sends Shoppers to the Web. » *The New York Times* 10 October 2005.

« Fearing Heat Costs, Many Take Preventive Action. » *The New York Times* 11 October 2005.

ENVIRONMENT & TRAVEL NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On crack-addicted squirrels, healthy grizzlies, a spa in the Himalayas, Malibu bacteria and stellar tourism

Crack-addicted squirrels

Brixton squirrels are said to have given up nuts for crack, or so the urban myth has it in South London. The police are not aware of the issue, but residents speak of rodents with blood-shot eyes desperately looking for small chunks of cocaine supposedly hidden in flower-beds by dealers and addicts.

Sources: "South London Squirrels after Different Kind of Stash" *The Guardian* 8 October 2005; "Squirrels Go Nuts on Crack" *The Sun* 26 October 2005.

Healthy grizzlies

Growing by 4-7% a year, the grizzly bear population in Yellowstone National Park (Montana) is now approximately 600, the healthiest it has been in the last 30 years. The Federal Fish and Wildlife Service intends to remove the bear from the list of threatened species, amidst widespread local criticism.

Source: "As Population of Yellowstone Grizzlies Grows, Further Protection Is Up for Debate » *The New York Times* 26 September 2005.

A luxury spa in the Himalayas

The Ananda health spa, 260 kilometres North of New Delhi, was voted the World's Number One Destination Spa in the Condé Nast Traveller 2005 Readers' Travel Awards held in London.

Source: "Chasing a Real Ananda" *The Hindu* 24 October 2005

L.A.'s bacteria bath

This summer, Los Angeles coastal waters contained the highest levels of harmful bacteria measured in the last five years, The blame lies in sewer spills, pet waste, fertilizers, oil and other pollution washed off lawns or pavements and ultimately into the sea.

Source: "L.A. County Beaches Were State's Most Unhealthful This Summer" *The L.A. Times* 27 October 2005.

A not-so-rough guide to stellar tourism

Eric Anderson, President and CEO of the world's only operating space travel agency, Space Adventures Ltd., will publish the first travel guide to the stars in November.

So far only three private citizens have become space travellers but Mr Anderson hopes his handbook will be of interest to future candidates and armchair astronauts alike.

Sources: AFP, "Guide out of this World" *The Washington Times* 17 October 2005; "A Millionaire Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" *USA Today* 13 October 2005.

SPORTS

[Of Brits, Swedes, football and hurt feelings](#)

By Mohammed Lamine BOUZERIDA

Swedish tabloids declare war on the British press after most papers campaigned for the dismissal of England's coach.

After England's narrow victory over Poland on October 13, Swedish newspapers did their best to defend England's coach Sven-Goran Eriksson from the criticism of the English media. With a leading headline: "They really have gone too far now. Don't touch our Svennis", the tabloid *Expressen* praised Eriksson's true genius and claimed it had not been properly appreciated by the English press. Reporter Tommy Schonstedt, who was demonstrating outside the British Embassy in Stockholm, wrote: "They do not understand that he has turned a bunch of bone breakers on muddy football pitches into a World Cup team". Embassy official Damion Potter declined to comment, but said: "They, like you, have the freedom to scrutinize whoever they please, even the Swedish England team manager". However the Swedish tabloid argued that the English should be thanking Eriksson and not mocking him. Schonstedt insisted "after the qualifiers we say: put that in your pipe and smoke it!".

According to a *Guardian* poll made on the eve of the final match, it turns out Eriksson irritates 49% of the English. Many English football fans confess feeling uncomfortable with the idea of a foreign coach for their national team, as they consider they have the best coaches in the world. Several claimed the Swedish coach had to be dismissed even though he had managed to get England qualified. They also blame Eriksson for the strategy he chose. For instance when David Beckham was suspended, Eriksson tried out a few options which happened to be successful. He was criticised for not having carried out these changes earlier on.

If "supporters" were not very supportive, the professional staff was not too helpful either. The whole context smacked of distrust, jingoism, and hyper-inflated egos. Some players made rather unpleasant comments and it was odd to hear Michael Owen, a mature player, suggest that the English team is at its best against "proper teams" such as Brazil, Argentina, Germany and France. These dismissive comments confirm the impression of "the unreal world in which England's young footballers exist", as Richard Williams puts it .

The English team nearly got disqualified but in the end, it did win the match against Poland. The Swedish coach managed to get the team to the final stages of three major tournaments in a row. He himself said that only unsatisfactory results would push him to resign. Irate fans and tabloids will have to wait a little longer.

Sources:

Richard Williams, "England emerge in credit but Poland show their true worth." *The Guardian* 13 October 2005.

Paul Wilson, "Untouchable Beckham loses lustre." *The Guardian* 16 October 2005.

SPORTS

[The Hornets' curse](#)

By Jérôme VASSILIEF

Sex, death and homelessness : the New Orleans basketball team will need more than luck to turn the tables.

At the end of the last basketball season, the New Orleans Hornets were one of the worst teams in America, finishing last but one of the NBA (National Basketball Association). Just before the new season begins, hurricane Katrina has completely destroyed their stadium. This could be a mere coincidence, if it were not for the Hornets...

Although sports-wise the team has enjoyed a rather normal existence since it was founded in 1988, fate has not been very kind to the Hornets. Indeed, no basketball team in the world has gone through so much trouble. They have had countless injured players. And when a Hornets player is injured, more often than not it lasts 2 years rather than a couple of days...

Havoc really started in 1999. After a 4 month players' lockout, which was already rather unusual, the Hornets' owner, George Shinn, was accused of sexual abuse. Consequently many players, including top ones such as Glen Rice, decided to leave the team. This was only the beginning of the Hornets' curse. In 2000, Bobby Phillips, one of the most popular players, died in a car accident. Before his untimely death, he had claimed in an interview that he was enjoying the best season of his career...

This was not the end of the curse. In 2002, the Hornets, who were based in Charlotte at the time, had to move because of financial worries and a tainted reputation. By then the team's owner had become a pariah, and fans refused to support the Charlotte Hornets anylonger.

So they moved to... New Orleans where the curse followed them. Their last season was a disaster: the best player fled to the Golden State Warriors, the Hornets played in a pathetic way and, ironically they ranked 29 th out of 30 teams, behind the debutant Bobcats, the new team in... Charlotte!

Then hurricane Katrina struck. Luckily no player was physically injured but the stadium suffered considerable damage. During the 2005-2006 season, the Hornets will therefore have to play 35 games in Oklahoma City and 6 in Baton Rouge. So 3 years after they moved, they will hit the road again. Rumours say they might have to stay in Oklahoma City... So far the Hornets have played 6 games and lost 5. These are indeed pretty hard times.

Sources : www.nba.com

« After Katrina, Hornets Try to Make Oklahoma Home. » *The Associated Press* 30 October 2005.

SPORTS NEWS BRIEFS

By Pauline LAVAGNE D'ORTIGUE

On how to dress like a boxing legend, and how sports can prove dangerous for Jehovah's witnesses and convicts alike.

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" sweatshirts

Aged 63, the legendary king of boxing Muhammad Ali has put his name to a new range of Adidas leisurewear.

Source: "Muhammad Ali: He May Be 63, but He's Still in Fashion" *The Independent* 19 October 2005.

A most painful sport : dancing in heels when a Jehovah's witness

The Artist Formerly Known As Prince (as he himself insists on being referred to) has aching joints at the tender age of 47. Daily exercise in high-heel boots have taken a toll on the performer. Only a full hip replacement would alleviate the pain and ensure he can keep on dancing. However, he is thought to be against having surgery because as a Jehovah's Witness, he is not allowed to have blood transfusions. Anti inflammatory drugs will have to do for the time being.

Source: « Prince, the hip op star » *The Daily Mail* 14 October 2005.

A most dangerous passion: basketball when a convict

Mr Torpy was convicted to 30 years in prison for robbery and shooting with intent to kill. Unsatisfied with such a light sentence, he asked the judge to add on three more years to match the number on basketball star Larry Bird's jersey (number 33).

Sources: Jérôme Vassilief; "Man Requests Prison Term to Match Larry Bird's Jersey » *USA Today*, October 21, 2005 ; "Linking Bird's Jersey, Jail time" *The Boston Herald* 20 October 2005.