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Wrapping up 'Get Into Reading'

In its third installment the Get Into Reading program has provided the opportunity for students to delve into the book "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time," a story about an autistic boy who is attempting to solve a mystery. Last week marked the end of this semester's program and the West Campus library provided a free screening

of "Rain Man" to further explore what an autistic person's life can be like. The Get Into Reading program began in Fall 2007, with Khaled Hosseini's highly regarded "The Kite Runner." Students participated in the programs second installment in spring 2008 by reading Harper Lee's classic novel: "To Kill a Mocking Bird."

Hip writer encourages thought from East Campus students

By Louie Rodriguez
Valencia Voice

ORLANDO, Fla. - Chuck Klosterman the author of "Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs," said that after having been paid \$7,000 he decided to pay Valencia a little visit.

For those of you who do not know who Klosterman is, he is an American Journalist.

He was a senior writer for Spin Magazine and has also contributed to Esquire, GQ, The New York Times, The Believer, and The Washington Post.

If there was anything Klosterman emphasized throughout the entire discussion it was that "The best decisions in your life will be made totally arbitrarily."

The majority of the discussion was based upon hypothetical questions that are in his book Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs.

For example here is one of the hypothetical questions that was discussed: Let us assume you met a rudimentary magician.

Let us assume he can do five simple tricks.

He can pull a rabbit out of his hat, he can make a coin disappear, he can turn the ace of spades into the Joker card, and two others in a similar vein.

These are his only tricks and he can't learn any more; he can only do these five. However, it turns out he's doing these five tricks with real magic.

Continued on Page 4



President-elect Barack Obama with and Vice President-elect Joe Biden introduced members of their economic team on Monday.

Obama announces top members for White House economic team

By Steven Thomma and David Lightman
McClatchy Newspapers

CHICAGO — President-elect Barack Obama worked to send a message of confidence to jittery markets and consumers Monday, unveiling an economic team tested in crises past and present and promising a massive stimulus package big enough to send a "jolt" through the economy.

Obama vowed quick action, ordering his team to produce a plan in coming weeks. He said he hoped they could send the blueprint to the new Congress in January, even before he's sworn in.

The goals of that plan, Obama said at a news conference, include stabilizing the financial system while "addressing our growing foreclosure crisis, helping our struggling auto industry and creating and saving 2.5 million jobs."

Continued on Page 4

Good flights come to those who waited

CHICAGO — For the first time in memory, airfares are falling rather than rising as the holiday travel season approaches.

The phenomenon, a byproduct of the deteriorating economy, means many procrastinators are paying about \$90 less per trip than early birds who locked in pricey tickets months ago when airfares seemed certain to rise in advance of the holidays, as they typically do.

It provided an early Christmas gift for Chicagoans Carly Cannell and husband Jorge Orozco-Cordero. They had decided to skip their annual yuletide family gathering in Albany, N.Y., when fares appeared to be stuck beyond their budget in the \$350 round-trip range.

That was a month ago. The couple kept checking airfares and last week landed tickets that were \$75 cheaper.

"Jorge had told his mom we weren't coming," said Cannell, president of Weetu, a commercial and hospitality design firm. "That same day, he found something (at a reasonable price)."

The spate of holiday bargains comes after financially strapped airlines shrank U.S. operations by about 10 percent this fall, the equivalent of grounding a major airline. Analysts predicted the capacity cuts would keep planes full and prices sky-high for year-end travel.

But carriers are suddenly struggling to fill seats as consumers spooked by market and economic turmoil trim their spending on everything from Christmas gifts to vacations. Analysts say the steep falloff in travel over the past six weeks caught carriers, hotels and car-rental companies off guard.

Airlines are responding with deep discounts. Southwest Airlines last week extended a three-day sale through Dec. 8, with some tickets priced for a mere \$90 round trip. United and American Airlines also un-

Continued on Page 4

Students caught in college crunch

Economic crisis forces some to put plans, futures on hold

By Harriet Johnson Brackey
Sun Sentinel

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Joe Perri had big college dreams.

He wanted to pursue a degree in photography from an arts school.

He and his family saved, hunted for scholarships and applied for financial aid, but they eventually realized they simply couldn't find enough help to offset the \$40,000-a-year cost for his first choice schools — the California Institute of the Arts, and Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Fla..

"It was a big bummer, but I understand," said Perri, 18. "You get accepted to this big school, and you get so excited, but then your parents start throwing reality at you. We don't have that much money."

So Perri changed course. He's now a freshman at Broward College (formerly Broward Community College). He plans to spend two years there, saving money that he

earns through a photography business he started on the side.

Getting into college is tough enough, but students now have to face a tough economy. About one out of six students have put their search for a college on hold, according to a survey conducted by MeritAid, a scholarship Web site. Another 57 percent said they're looking for a less expensive, lesser-known school, just as Perri did.

Here's what they face:

- The most difficult competition ever: A record number of high school seniors are applying to college now.

- Tough new economic hurdles: More restrictive lending requirements, driven by the national credit crunch, has led to a decline in the availability of private student loans. According to Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org, a Web site devoted to financial aid, 37 of 60 private lenders are not offering student loans this year. Federal student loans remain available.

- Savings have taken a hit: The sinking stock market that has slashed college savings accounts for many families and declining home values have also made it difficult for families to borrow against their houses to finance an education.

- Rising costs: Public college costs have doubled in the last decade.

With his own retirement nearing and college costs coming at the same time, Perri's dad says it'd be very difficult to pay big tuition bills without taking on student loans.

"For most parents, with the economy being the way it is, the last thing you want to do is sink yourself into debt," Mike Perri said. "I said 'Joseph, your dream is still there, but sometimes we have to take side roads. The point is, you're going forward.'"

That cherished family and financial goal of sending the kids to college is under serious pressure.

"You can hear about the economy a million times in school, but when it really hits home, the students realize what's needed," says Pam Kirtman, a college advisor at Nova High School in Davie, Fla.. "A college education is very important to them, but they may be losing their houses, their parents are losing their jobs, and even professionals aren't working."

A sign of the crush: A record number of applications were received by the University of Florida last year and a near-record number by Florida State University. Those records may crumble when the current crop of applications is counted. At the University



Nicholas R. Von Staden, Sun-Sentinel / MCT Campus

Broward College student Joe Perri, 18, shoots the West Palm Beach band, "Back to the Party," left to right, Wayne Massey, Joey Lusk, Nil Cardoso, Pat McKewnzie and Adrian Rivers, in a studio he set up in his parents' home. Perri's father, Mike, told him, "Sometimes you have to take side roads, but your dream is still there. The point is, you're still going forward."

of Central Florida, 8,900 applications have been received from prospective freshman so far, up from 7,200 last year.

The reason? "We wonder if many more students will be staying closer to home," said FSU admissions director Janice Finney. FSU had two years of near-record applications.

Another possibility is cost. Florida schools are regularly touted as "Best Buys" in education. Not only are in-state tuition levels comparatively low, but Florida's Bright Futures program makes it possible for students with high grade point averages to earn

of the credit crisis. Two-thirds of all undergraduates borrow some amount.

"I don't want to do student loans," says Sarah Cochran, a senior at Pembroke Pines Charter High School, echoing the concerns of other students. "All those people are still paying them off while they're paying bills when they're older."

Cochran wanted to go to UCF to study hospitality, with the goal of eventually working for Disney. Instead, she said she's going to go to Broward College and hunt for scholarships and financial aid.

The loans that parents take out for students — "Plus Loans" — also are showing signs of distress. Plus Loan denial rates have jumped 26.5 percent over last year,

Two-thirds of all undergraduates borrow some amount of

scholarships.

Community colleges are gaining, too. At Palm Beach Community College, enrollment — 28,600 students currently — is 11 percent higher than last fall. At Broward College, current enrollment is up 6 percent over last year at 33,600. The number of applications from high school students jumped by 20 percent.

For some students, a community college is a good place to beef up skills to increase their marketability in a tough job market, said Grace Truman, director of college relations and marketing at Palm Beach Community College. For others, it's the cost savings that drives them to community colleges. "The real savings is being able to live at home for the first two years," she said.

One issue all schools have to face is private student loans, which have become both essential and very difficult to find because

through June.

"It's a contagion effect," Kantrowitz said.

It began with the surge in subprime mortgages going into default, he said. Mortgages are bundled into securities and sold to investors. So are student loans.

"The lack of oversight of these irresponsible people has left us with this situation," said Nova High Senior Lauren Barriere, who has decided to go to college in state if she doesn't make it into an Ivy League school. "If it's to pay a total over 120 grand for four years of college just to have a little bit better education, probably it isn't going to be worth it."

(Sun Sentinel staff writer Jennifer Jhon contributed to this article.)

— MCT Campus



Nicholas R. Von Staden, Sun-Sentinel / MCT Campus

Photographer Joe Perri, 18 adjusts one of his photo lights in a studio he has set up in his parents' living room for a photo session with a local band. Perri, a freshman at Broward College, earns and saves money from a photography business he started on the side.

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...TO BE A NURSE?



More holiday job seekers, fewer spots on sales floor

By Ylan Q. Mui and V. Dion Haynes
The Washington Post

This is the time of year when retail jobs are supposed to be as plentiful as holiday cheer, when stores gear up for the Christmas rush by filling their sales floors with college students, moonlighters and anyone else looking to shore up their income.

But no one is feeling very jolly this year.

Faced with plummeting sales and spooked shoppers, retailers have cut back on holiday hiring at a time when their pool of applicants is swelling with those who have been laid off from other industries. About 272,000 retail jobs were open at the end of September, according to government data released last week, down 24 percent from the same month last year. Those numbers are expected to drop further as retailers cut back on opening new stores and close

the Washington region say they not only are reducing staff through attrition, but they are also cutting hours. Some servers say they are getting fewer tips because fewer people are dining out and those who do have become more stingy.

For Rick and Nina Ivey, owners of 15 Virginia Barbeque restaurants, the contracting economy means a halt in hiring even though a flurry of people in their 30s and 40s have asked about entry-level jobs. For 18-year-old Megan Waters of Annapolis, it means applying at 14 stores before landing a job at California Tortilla. And for a national retailer like Best Buy, it means nearly 1 million applicants for no more than 20,000 seasonal jobs, a 20 percent increase in applicants over previous years.

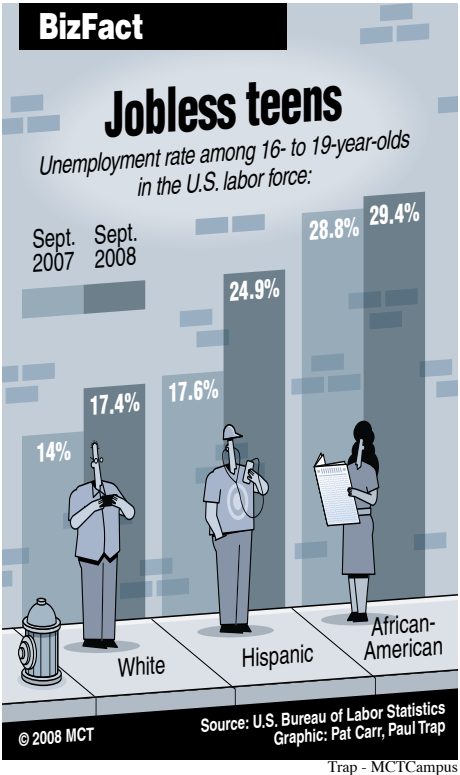
The national unemployment rate reached 6.5 percent in October, according to government data, and some analysts are projecting that it will climb to 7.3 percent next year after hovering between 4 and 5 percent for about three years. There were 1,330 mass layoffs during the third quarter that affected nearly 220,000 workers, spurred largely by slowing demand for consumer goods — and leaving many of those affected to turn to the retail and restaurant sector as they scramble to make ends meet this holiday season.

“Typically in a down economy, there are definitely more applicants,” said Dan Butler, vice president of merchandising and retail operations at the National Retail Federation, a trade group. “For retailers, it’s good to have more applicants because you can be sure that you’re getting the best possible candidate. But they’re not going to hire more.”

Toys R Us said the applicant pool for its 35,000 seasonal positions is larger and more qualified than in previous years. Outdoor retailer Bass Pro Shops said roughly 3,500 people applied for 300 jobs at a store that will open in Alabama this week. It has seen increased interest in its 1,500 holiday jobs. Best Buy store manager Robert Delissio said this year many applicants have shown up at his D.C. store with professional resumes in hand.

“I’m a little bit more selective now than I would normally have to be,” he said.

The Container Store began its holiday recruitment and hiring late last month, and applications are up about 5 to 10 percent from last year, said John Thraikill, vice president of stores. Typically, each store adds 15 to 20 employees to its average staff of 60 during the holiday season. But as sales slow this year, it is planning to hire just an additional 12 to 15 workers.



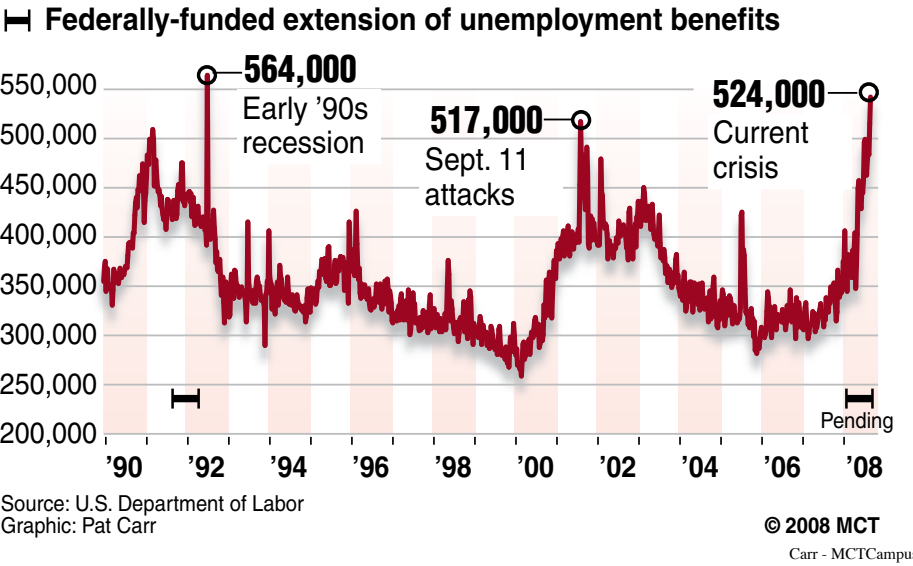
those that don’t perform well.

“It’s bleak on both sides,” said K.C. Blonski, director of travel, leisure and retail markets for consulting firm AchieveGlobal. “Retailers are looking at the cost of adding to their labor pool. The jobs are little and far between.”

Even those who have jobs are not unscathed. Managers at restaurants throughout

Out of work

The number of U.S. workers applying for unemployment benefits last week rose to its highest level in 16 years. Jobless claims weekly:



2008 Jobless claims

“It definitely makes it a little more competitive environment,” he said.

Thraikill said he noticed many applicants this year had full-time careers but are not working now. That can be a boon for retailers seeking experienced employees, and the flexibility of retail jobs allows the employees to continue their job search while making money. But Thraikill said the company asks seasonal hires to commit through January.

“What you don’t want to have happen is you hire this great person, and then they find their dream job,” Thraikill said. “We want to make sure they give us some chance to still work with us.”

Xina Eiland, president of Spa O and a public relations firm in D.C., said she interviewed about 10 people over the summer for a \$300-a-week entry-level assistant position but got few takers.

“They wanted more hours and didn’t like the job description,” said Eiland, who ultimately hired a college graduate who had lost her job at a magazine.

But over the past few weeks, Eiland said, about five people who rebuffed her during the summer have called back about the job.

They said, “My job got downsized. Are you still looking for an assistant?” “she said. “I told them I’m using somebody now, but if anything

opens up I’d let them know.”

The retail sector added about 65,900 jobs last month, 19 percent below last year and the smallest October figure since 1991, according to outplacement consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Chief executive John Challenger said he doubted November would produce a significant gain.

“This could end up being one of the weakest holiday hiring seasons in nearly two decades,” he said.

Dan Russell, vice president at Aon Consulting, which works with several big-box and specialty retailers, said retailers also have traditionally been wary of job seekers from outside the industry.

Butler said pay expectations also may not jibe with reality. The average retail wage was \$11.79 per hour with an annual salary of \$24,530 in 2007, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The national average for all occupations was a \$19.56 hourly wage and \$40,690 annual salary.

And many professionals, accustomed to sitting in ergonomic desk chairs, don’t realize the physical stamina required to stay on their feet eight hours a day.

“A lot of people underestimate that it is a lot of work,” Butler said.

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President Elect prepares to deal with economic crises

Continued from cover

tion, which he'd criticized repeatedly as a candidate.

He said he'd spoken with President George W. Bush earlier Monday, as well as with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, and would honor all public commitments that Bush made to fight the economic crisis.

That's a sharp change from a similar and oft-cited precedent in 1932, when Democrat Franklin Roosevelt refused to work with outgoing Republican President Herbert Hoover, preferring a clean break as the best sign of a fresh start.

"With our economy in distress, we cannot hesitate and we cannot delay," Obama said as he emerged from two weeks of near seclusion. "Our families can't afford to keep on waiting and hoping for a solution."

The president-elect, who's announced his White House staff picks via written statements, appeared in person to unveil his first Cabinet appointment and his economic team:

— Timothy Geithner as the secretary of the treasury. As the president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, Geithner already is deeply involved in the federal rescue of Wall Street and will spearhead Obama's plan for the overall economy.

— Lawrence Summers as the director of the National Economic Council. A former secretary of the treasury under Bill Clinton, Summers helped manage financial crises in Mexico, Asia and Russia. He'll coordinate Obama's administration-wide economic policies from inside the White House, with an eye on making sure that the poor and the middle class do better.

— Christina Romer as the director of the Council of Economic Advisers. An economics professor at the University of California-Berkeley, Romer also has worked with the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Federal Reserve.

— Melody Barnes as the director of the Domestic Policy Council. Barnes is a former aide to Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and a vice president of the Center for American Progress, a liberal research center in Washington headed by Obama transition co-chairman John Podesta. She'll help develop a health-care overhaul — providing coverage to the uninsured and reducing costs for those with insurance — an issue that Obama calls key to economic recovery.

"We know this won't be easy, and it won't happen overnight. We'll need to bring together the best minds in America to guide us, and that is what I've sought to do in assembling my economic team," Obama said, as the four stood behind him.

In dispatching them to write a new plan for rescuing the economy, he signaled a willingness to be pragmatic, even

about some of his own campaign promises.

Obama is likely to propose a stimulus plan with a price tag that will dwarf the \$175 billion he proposed as a candidate. Though he refused to say Monday how much he'd propose, congressional Democrats say it could cost \$500 billion to \$700 billion.

He said that "we'll have to scour our federal budget line by line, and make meaningful cuts and sacrifices." He warned, however, that next year's federal budget deficit could be jarring, given his new proposals atop the extraordinary measures already approved, such as the \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street.

"It's going to be costly," Obama said. "Even if we did nothing further for the remainder of this year . . . we're going to see a substantial deficit next year, bigger than we've seen in a very long time."

Obama stressed that there's a rare consensus among conservative and liberal economists that a massive federal stimulus is necessary to revive the economy even if it swells the federal budget deficit temporarily.

He also said he was open to delaying his proposed tax increase on those who make more than \$250,000 a year but that they eventually would have to do more to help pay the bills.

He said he'd wait to hear whether his economic team recommended repealing the Bush tax cuts next year for top earners or keeping them intact and letting them expire as scheduled at the end of 2010.

The president-elect also discussed aid to the ailing American auto industry. He said it was essential but that Washington couldn't simply write a "blank check" for the Big Three Detroit automakers.

He said Congress was correct in telling Detroit executives last week to draft a plan on how taxpayers' money would be used to retool their companies to make them competitive and efficient. He said he was "surprised that they did not have a better-thought-out proposal when they arrived in Congress."

Rep. John Boehner of Ohio, the Republican leader in the House of Representatives, urged Obama to craft an agenda that includes eliminating the capital gains tax, overhauling energy, stopping unnecessary lawsuits and cutting taxes.

That suggested areas of possible bipartisan negotiation and agreement, particularly on energy and tax reductions. Obama, too, proposed broad tax cuts and changes in energy use and production as keys to supporting long-term economic growth.

— MCT Campus



Photo by Terrence Antonio James / Chicago Tribune / MCT Campus
President-elect Barack Obama introduces members of his economic team during a press conference in Chicago, Illinois, on Monday, November 24, 2008.

Patience prevails for holiday air travelers

Continued from cover

veiled sales for travel in December and into the new year.

"Obviously, about the only thing they can do is cut the price for days where they aren't particularly full," said syndicated travel columnist Ed Perkins. "It's the old law of supply and demand working pretty quickly and obviously."

There are some exceptions, however. Airfares remain high to some destinations, including New York, and may have increased during peak travel days: Nov. 30, Dec. 20 and Dec. 26-28, according to BestFares.com.

But airlines also may have alienated passengers by ratcheting up rates and pushing

through a host of new fees for services that previously were offered free of charge. During the first seven months of the year, carriers attempted 22 price hikes, 15 of which were successful, according to FareCompare.com.

"The airlines made no friends with anybody this summer," said Tom Parsons, chief executive and founder of BestFares.com. "I think a lot of consumers are just frustrated. . . . They're going, 'Guess what? Why don't we just drive?'"

Jason and Maria Maxham, Forest Park, Ill., residents with two small children, said they would rather brave an 18-hour road

trip than fly to central Maine to visit family members in December. They still have vivid memories of a nightmarish, 16-hour plane trip home from Boston that the family endured last summer.

"We're trying to decide what's the lesser of two evils: driving or being stuck in an airport or on a runway with no food or water," Jason Maxham said.

Carriers hiked holiday fares in September and early October, thinking their capacity cuts would spur a shortage of airplane seats for Thanksgiving and Christmas, Parsons said. But the move backfired: They priced themselves out of the market for many regular customers.

Elmhurst, Ill., resident Kelly Marzano,

who visits siblings in the Carolinas each Christmas, is among the multitude who simply made other plans in September, when holiday fares were well out of her price range.

Instead of planning a Christmas gathering, she visited her family over Halloween, when fares were cheaper. But she was dismayed to see prices for December travel tumble the week after she returned home.

Now, Marzano finds herself "flying solo" for the holidays and rooting for fares to fall even further.

"We've got more than a month to Christmas," she said. "Something could miraculously come through."

— MCT Campus

Pop culture writer challenges conventional thought

Continued from cover

It's not an illusion; he can actually conjure the bunny out of the ether and he can move the coin through space.

He's legitimately magical, but extremely limited in scope and influence.

Would this person be more impressive than Albert Einstein?

Countless amounts of people argued that Albert Einstein would indeed be more impressive.

Some said his life was diligently spent slaving over work and complex issues.

One lady argued that the magician could end world hunger by simply pulling rabbits out of his hat.

There indeed was only one right answer to this question and the majority of the audience was wrong by agreeing Albert Einstein hypothetically would be more impressive.

After a pretty serious and intense debate Klosterman informed us that everything Albert Einstein discovered would be insignificant and mindless with someone hav-

ing the ability to conjure real magic. Most people started applauding him after that was said.

Klosterman is the author of five books.

His newest, *Downtown Owl* is his first publication comprised of all fictional writing. He said he is working on a new book that he hopes to finish within the next two years as well.

Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs one of his most notable publications took him about four to five months of non stop writing. He said he would usually wake up around noon and work on the book till about three in the morning, often times throwing in some Chinese food. He explained that he wasn't necessarily rich but basically he could sit around all day and just write if he wanted to.

Klosterman engaged the audience afterwards and did not shy away from fans and curious listeners. After the event he did a lot of book signings and even took pictures with a few.

In his book *Sex, Drugs, and Cocoa Puffs* the very first sentence of his first chapter reads "No woman will ever satisfy me." Throughout his presentation, Klosterman stated that just this Halloween he proposed to his girlfriend. When asked if that statement still holds to be true he kind of just smiled and said "I don't know, at least not completely." His book still proves very prescient, at one point stating, "If I become marginally famous, I will undoubtedly be interviewed by someone in the media, and the interviewer will ask - Now that you've been married.. are those words still true?"

"The best decisions in your life will be made totally arbitrarily."

— Chuck Klosterman



Iron Man is signed up for another run in 2010.

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Cap is slated to hit the silver screen in the spring of 2011 with Joe Johnston directing at the helm. Captain America will act as a prelude to the highly-anticipated Avengers film, also slated in 2011 later in the summer with Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man) and Don Cheadle (James “Rhodey” Rhodes aka War Machine) already signed on.



Leonard Ortiz / Orange County Register

Comics are back

Superheroes reign supreme in entertainment business

By Tirdad Derakhshani
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Our world is hurtling into the abyss, propelled by wars, genocide, terrorism, environmental disaster, and the global financial meltdown ...

... But never fear, the superhero is here!

Not since Captain America and Superman were socking it to the Nazis (Pow! Splat! Thoom!) in the '40s has American culture been so inundated with tales of caped men and masked women with superhuman powers.

The comics explosion has even reached academe: The University of Pennsylvania has mounted a massive year-long celebration of comics, including exhibits of comic art at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.

But most of all, superheroes are a boon for Hollywood: No other genre so consistently produces megahits, including the new Batman series, “Spider-Man” 1-3 and “The Incredible Hulk.”

Director Jon Favreau’s adaptation of “Iron Man,” by comic legend Stan Lee, is no exception. The film, recently released on DVD, stars Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark, a smarter-than-God weapons manufacturer who does his hero thing in a super-duper, electronic-age metal aqualung.

The movie grossed \$318 million theatrically, making it the 21st highest grossing American film of all time.

It’s not so hard to account for our yearning for superheroes, says British comics guru Alan Moore, the iconoclastic author of “Watchmen,” “V for Vendetta” and “From Hell.”

“There’s a side of American culture that’s very uncomfortable with confrontation unless it has ... superior power” over its enemy, “say, help from a man who rocketed here from Krypton,” says Moore, who is the subject of director DeZ Vylenz’s magisterial documentary, “The Mindscape of Alan Moore.”

“Iron Man” screenwriters Mark Fergus and Hawk Ostby agree. “The fight used to be so clear in World War II. ... There were good guys and bad guys,” says Fergus. “Look around now, and we don’t know who is what.”

What divides Moore from Lee, who has helped adapt a number of his comics for film, including the Spider-Man series, X-Men, Fantastic Four, and Hulk, is that Lee embraces this nostalgia while Moore rejects it as a distraction from real problems.

Moore, who spoke on the phone from his native Northampton, northwest of London, says the industry is too quick to market palaver as serious art.

“I think a big misconception of the 1980s was that comics were growing up. ... Instead, it was the culture (which) was being infantilized,” he said.

Moore has repudiated every film adapted from his work, including “From Hell,” “League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,” “Constantine” and “V for Vendetta.” He is wary of “300” director Zack Snyder’s adaptation of his most-celebrated piece, “Watchmen,” due in March. (Vylenz said Moore has refused to accept payment for “Watchmen.”)

Lee, by contrast, says he loves to see his

work on the silver screen. “There will always be high-concept (superhero) films. People love that sort of thing,” said Lee, who turns 86 in December.

“Iron Man” is set in Afghanistan, where the U.S. military’s mission is compromised by international terrorists. Even though the film touches on hot-button issues such as the military-industrial complex and the war on terror, the filmmakers avoid politicking. It’s a hallmark of the blockbuster, which must not upset a single person in the world, lest it lose money.

“John (Favreau) told us he didn’t want a movie that would make a statement,” says Ostby. “Everyone knows war is bad,” he said.

For Moore, this is what’s wrong with the entertainment industry.

“My feeling is that my audience probably needs waking up or reconnecting to a more authentic appreciation of the world,” said Moore.

“We have experience fed to us now by the media in pretty much the same manner a mother bird will feed regurgitated worms to the babies. The babies just have to open their beaks and do nothing,” Moore said.

He maintains that like traditional myths, most comics reaffirm the status quo. If that’s the case, then Moore’s comics subvert the accepted world-view and challenge us to think differently.

Moore’s method uses the conventions of the superhero story to deconstruct the genre. His heroes are revolutionaries who have no superhuman abilities —and sometimes no virtues.

V, the hero of “V,” is a “Romantic anarchist adventurer” who fights the Orwellian government ruling over a fictional England in the name of individual freedom. Published between 1982 and 1988, “V” was prescient: The government controls the public by installing surveillance cameras on every street in the nation. And indeed, a massive system of such cameras has been installed in British cities since 1997.

“I thought the idea ... was a chilling vision of fascism. Now I’m actually living in that world,” said Moore.

“Watchmen” is a mind-blowing, layered story set in an America on the brink of nuclear war. It follows six superheroes as they investigate the death of one of their own. Moore says the comic is an investigation of the use and misuse of power, a theme evident from its title, which Moore took from the Roman satirist Juvenal: “But who watches the watchmen?”

The comic asks that we watch the watchmen we’ve allowed to rule us, whether they be government, police, or the educational system.

Moore said he still marvels at the prevalence of superheroes in American comics.

“It strikes me that it might be largely an expression of a culture of impunity ... of being untouchable,” theorizes Moore, who said the superhero helps us to avoid facing the effects of Sept. 11.

“Instead of repairing a battered self-image,” Americans have become fixated “on the idea of superhuman invincibility ... and I think it might be this concept that is leading to so many problems around the world.”

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‘Quantam’ needs more Bond, less ‘Solace’



Alex Barrett
Valeica Voice

007 does it again; but this time, he has his work cut out for him. In Quantum of Solace, an ailing James Bond is struck between exacting revenge on those who have hurt him from Casino Royale, and saving a country’s water supply from a greedy environmentalist. While this seems like a good plot, it skews what makes Bond movies great. We can all admit that 007 has never really been a box-office favorite, but the movies are always fun to watch with their amazing gadgets and explosions, beautiful women and impossible situations.

The explosions and women are here in Solace, but the others are gone. No more crazy contraptions, not even an appearance by a “Q” of any sort to give Bond cool things to tinker with. There’s about 5 minutes of James’ Aston Martin speeding around, and that as well is pretty sad. The movie had an overbearing feel to it, and a darkness that was felt through the flick, which is great, but I miss my old Bond.

Director Mark Forster obviously wanted this movie to be a hit with critics, and strayed away from the closet humor used in previous movies, and went with more periods of speaking between off characters that made the movie not only drag, but make little sense at some junctures as well. As far as acting goes, Daniel Craig (Bond) did a great job yet again; He’s no Sean Connery, but he is probably the best since then, and his intensity and charm are a good fit for Bond’s overwhelming persona. M is again played by Judi Dench, and I don’t really think it should be otherwise, she has done a fantastic job in her roles as the leader of MI6 to this point.

Overall, it was a good showing, but I expected more. If Forster can somehow combine this movie and Casino Royale for the next installment, it will be a blockbuster, But for now, the lack of historical Bond elements combined with shoddy acting by those other than who is listed above, and the loss of an upbeat, happy and funny action movie has made me somewhat disappointed. I may watch it again, but I would be happier popping in just about any other movie just as much. I give it a 6 out of a possible 10. It is worth a view at the theaters simply for the explosions and overall feel, but unless you’re a Bond maniac, saving this one for a rainy day at home will make for a much better showing.

Latest edition of Bond saga features Daniel Craig as James Bond (lower right) and Bonds beautiful girlfriend, Olga Kurylenko, in an un-traditional take on the Bond formula. MGM Studios





At Butterball, turkey experts never wing it

Prepare your big meal with help from hotline

By Bonnie S. Benwick
The Washington Post

You'd think that with all the expert advice floating around on food blogs, Web chats and turkey text messaging, the operators at the Butterball Turkey Talk-Line (1-800-Butterball) might not be fielding the number of calls they once did.

You'd be wrong.

A staff of six opened the Illinois-based Turkey Talk-Line in November 1981, taking 11,000 calls that season. This year, a 55-member staff plus three online bloggers will answer 12,000 calls per day in either English or Spanish during Thanksgiving week.

The operators of 2008 are a loyal crew, with an average tenure of 10 years; most have home economics degrees, and some are registered dietitians. Before crunch time, every one of them had to "re-up" by taking a two-day Butterball University course that included a take-home turkey test. Grilling experience has become a key asset.



Courtesy of Butterball

Marty Van Ness

We recently spoke with Marty Van Ness, a Naperville, Ill., resident who describes her age as "mature" and has been an unfailingly cheerful presence

on the line for 15 years.

Q: Are people getting smarter or dumber about turkey?

A: Much smarter. The word is out. But 95 percent of the questions are still related to the bird.

Q: Who is calling — new cooks? Young or old?

A: We get all ages. I will take calls from kids in college: Roommates get us on speaker phone with a situation. We also have women who have cooked for a long time. Just today, someone who said she was 70 called because she had never cooked a big, 19-pound turkey before.

Q: What is the most common screw-up?

A: "The turkey isn't done." We hear that on Thanksgiving morning or afternoon, four hours after the bird has been in the oven. So we investigate.

Q: And the solution?

A: Every time you cover the turkey with foil you slow down the cooking, so you want to leave it uncovered. Crank up the heat. If the turkey is not getting done, you can take it out and cut it up. Your guests could start eating the breast meat if its temperature registers 170 degrees, while you put the drumsticks and thighs back in until they hit 180. Or you could even microwave them.

Q: What keeps you coming back?

A: Thanksgiving is our day! People are nervous, and we calm them. They call us back to thank us.

It's very rewarding.

Q: Who's cooking at your house on Thursday?

A: My husband has the turkey thing down pat. (He'll be 63 this month.) My shift ends at 6 p.m. I come home and take a little nap. He does a sweet potato casserole and a family Jell-O thing. But the gravy's my job.

— LATWP News Service

The Judy Bird: It's the secret everyone loves

By Russ Parsons
Los Angeles Times

After more than 20 years of writing Thanksgiving turkey recipes, I thought I had seen it all. And then came the "Judy Bird."

Inspired by the chicken-cooking technique of my friend Judy Rodgers, chef and owner at San Francisco's Zuni Cafe, it couldn't be simpler: You just salt the turkey a few days in advance, give it a brisk massage every so often to redistribute the salt, and then roast it.

The results are phenomenal. Without the fuss and mess of wet-brining, you still get the deep, well-seasoned flavor. And while wet-brining can sometimes lead to a slightly spongy texture, with dry-brining, the bird stays firm and meaty.

It has become a holiday staple for many of our readers, so we're reprising it again this year.

To find out just how well it would work, the Los Angeles Times Test Kitchen tested this method two years ago against three other turkey recipes we'd used successfully in the past: steam-roasting (cooking in an old-fashioned covered roaster), high-heat roasting (cooking the bird as you would a chicken, from start to finish at 400 degrees), and the aforementioned wet-brining (soaking the turkey in a salt-water solution for several days before roasting).

I wish everyone who had ever told me that "turkey is turkey" could have been there for the judging. These were remarkably different birds, and the clear winner was the dry-salted Judy Bird.

Our readers clearly agreed. The first week the recipe ran, I received more than 200 e-mails about it, many of them saying it was the best bird they'd ever cooked. Already this holiday season, I've gotten more than 30 e-mails from readers who saw the recipe online. This turkey technique has legs too: Several major food magazines have since done their own versions.

What makes this turkey so great? It's pretty simple: The salt draws moisture from the meat, but then the meat reabsorbs the liquid. So in effect, you're brining the turkey in its own juices.

There have been some questions about the process.

- No, the turkey is not salty. In the first place, you season it only lightly, about a tablespoon of salt for every 5 pounds of turkey -- that's only a little more than if you were seasoning it normally. Then the saltiness is further reduced because the seasoning is absorbed through the meat rather than remaining on the surface as it normally would. This is also why you don't need to rinse or brush the salt from the skin before roasting -- there shouldn't be any there.

- Yes, you can shorten the salting period. The technique is best if you



Carlos Chavez, Los Angeles Times / LATWP News Service

In dry-brining, salt is rubbed into the skin of the fresh turkey. The results? Phenomenal.

allow three days for salting and then half a day of air-drying outside the bag in the refrigerator. That half-day is mainly to thoroughly dry the skin so it browns and crisps nicely during roasting. If you're pressed for time, you can simply pat the skin dry with a towel. If absolutely necessary, you can even shorten the salting period to two days, although the seasoning won't be quite as effective.

- If you normally stuff your turkey, you can continue to do that, just salt the stuffing a little less than you normally would. (This is a major difference from wet-brining, which does make stuffing too salty.) Be aware, though, that food safety experts recommend cooking stuffing to a temperature of 160 degrees in the center, at which point the breast meat will probably be around 180 degrees and starting to dry out. But if that hasn't bothered you in the past, this recipe will be no different.

- By the same token, neither are the

pan drippings so salty that you can't make gravy from them. But you will want to add salt just to taste and only at the very end.

- You don't need to do anything different during the cooking; this technique changes only the seasoning.

- If the turkey isn't quite as brown as you'd like it, you can return the oven temperature to 450 degrees for the last 20 minutes of roasting for better color. Don't brown for too long or the breast meat will dry out.

- You can adapt this technique to a turkey breast, using the same proportion of salt to weight and roasting the breast as you normally would.

- The one issue still unresolved is whether you can use this technique if you're starting with a frozen bird. Theoretically, the answer is yes. But since we still haven't tried that variation in the Test Kitchen, our recommendation is to start with a fresh turkey.

— LATWP News Service

What was on menu at 1st Thanksgiving?

By Valerie Strauss
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — You may have heard this popular story about the first Thanksgiving holiday:

In 1621, Pilgrims held a feast in Plymouth Colony to celebrate their first harvest. They invited Wampanoag Indians, and everyone gobbled down turkey and pumpkin pie.

It turns out that only some of that is true, according to historians at Plimoth Plantation, a museum in Plymouth, Mass.

Historians now know that there was such a feast that year with Indians (who communicated with the colonists through Squanto, an Indian who had learned English).

But the menu didn't look like today's typical Thanksgiving meal.

Deer and fowl were served, but nobody knows if turkey was included. Pumpkin was available, but it is unlikely the colonists turned it into a pie. Sweet potatoes were not known to the colonists, and cranberries may have been served but not as a sauce or relish.

As for the feast being the first Thanksgiving, nobody at the time thought of it as the start of a new tradition. There was another feast in the colony in 1623 — but it was held in the summer. In later years, different colonies celebrated their own days of thanksgiving during the year, but these holidays were quiet, and people often fasted (meaning they didn't eat).

Americans started eating turkey for Thanksgiving in the mid-1800s.

— LATWP News Service

Opinion

What are you thankful for?

By Joan Verdon
The Record (Hackensack N.J.)

Temporarily homeless teenagers huddled against the cold in cardboard huts on the grounds of Paramus Catholic High School on Nov. 16. The 55 teens were homeless by choice to show support for those who have no choice but to be homeless.

The outdoor sleepover is intended to increase the students' empathy for the less fortunate. But participants said the economy is already doing that, by making them realize how quickly someone's fortunes can change from good to bad.

"There's a lot of people who didn't think they'd ever be homeless, but if you lose your job on Wall Street it could be you out there, too," said Matt Sartori, 18, of Lodi, N.J., a Paramus (N.J.) High School graduate. You don't have to look hard to see growing numbers of homeless, said Sartori, a freshman at Seton Hall University. "I can walk two blocks off campus and see homeless people at the Dunkin' Donuts."

Students at Valencia Community College were more than happy to look at what had in life and share what they are thankful for in this holiday season



"Life, I'm just thankful for my life."
—Kwame Walker



"I'm most thankful for my best friend."
—Veronica Aries



"I am thankful for the way God is working in my life."
—Tim Swantrom



"I'm most thankful for oxygen."
— Kayla Reeves



"I'm most thankful for my family"
—Victor Rodriguez

Jordan Keyes, Valencia Voice

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Fashion still passion for some Iranians

By Hannah Allam
Knight Rider Newspapers

TEHRAN, Iran — Honey Badloo sa-shays through the streets of her beloved Tehran determined to find opportunity where Westerners see oppression.

True, the aspiring model and designer strolled the catwalk only once before Iranian authorities banned fashion shows. And, no, her first magazine cover never made it past government censors.

But Persian style stretches back thousands of years, Badloo says with pride, and not even the austere regime of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can separate Iranians from their Gucci.

“Our Mr. President doesn’t like us to work on fashion,” said Badloo, 21, pouting her carefully painted lips. “But anyone you put in a cage wants to know what it’s like outside. Who’s Paris Hilton? Who’s Brad Pitt? What are the styles outside of Iran?”

These are rough times for Tehran’s fashionistas, but style-conscious young Iranians are turning to satellite channels, clandestine trunk shows and smuggled copies of Vogue to keep up with haute couture outside the conservative Islamic republic.

Even as Ahmadinejad’s hard-line government warns of a new crackdown on dress code violations; women must cover their heads, legs and arms; the capital’s fashion mavens keep testing the limits with headscarves that inch back a little farther every season. This winter, Badloo seriously pondered whether knee-high vinyl boots counted as covering her legs.

“All the foreigners think we’re stuck in chadors out in a desert, but we have everything here,” Badloo said, referring to the traditional cloak worn by Muslim women. She flashed a pearly smile and added: “Even Christian Dior.”

Fendi bags, Prada shoes and Chanel dresses flood into Iran from Dubai, the Persian Gulf’s shopping paradise. Brightly patterned headscarves come from Turkey, sequined tunics from Syria.

Under Iran’s previous reform-minded government, there was a small opening for



a fashion industry. The acclaimed designer Mahla Zamani staged five runway shows, women’s-only events that celebrated the colorful history of Iranian dress. She also started a magazine called Lotus, touted as the first Persian fashion journal, and published five issues, each government-approved before it went to press.

Badloo was one of her top models. Zamani and her models were invited to participate in a fashion show in Italy.

Then came Ahmadinejad’s stunning upset in last year’s elections, and rumors

abounded that his new government would immediately restore the 1979 Islamic revolution era’s strict dress code of billowing black chadors and somber colors.

The new government shut down Lotus magazine. Badloo said she was denied permission to attend the fashion show in Italy. The government renewed efforts to keep Western influences out. Google searches for “fashion” or “glamour” result in a red pop-up notice that reads: “Stop. Access to the page has been denied.”

“We’re definitely more restricted now,

but it’s hard to stop girls who want to dress up and show off,” said Markiz Nekrouh, 17, clutching a gold lame hobo bag that she bought at a local mall after seeing similar metallic accessories on Internet fashion sites.

A few months ago, Badloo hired a professional photographer to take portraits for her ever-expanding portfolio. With a guilty giggle, she called them “my un-Islamic pictures.” Some photos show her sprawled across a couch with a come-hither look. Others are sultry shots of her in skimpy outfits, her long hair exposed and fluttering in a breeze. Badloo examines them with the eye of a veteran fashion editor.

Badloo knows she stands little chance of ever having the photos published in Iran, so she designs wallpaper, bathroom tiles, lampshades and other household decor while her modeling career is on hold.

She calls Angelina Jolie her fashion icon, but her first inspiration comes from home. The garments she designs jingle with antique coins from the Shah’s era, shine with ancient Turkmen buckles and move like the skirts of whirling dervishes.

“If you look at these clothes, you see the geography of Iran,” Badloo said, pointing to one of her Kurdish-inspired skirts. “Northern Iran is full of colors, and they use every single one in their designs. We are starting to change here in Tehran. We’re going from the grays and browns to sharp colors. Happy colors.”

Badloo’s parents invested in painting classes, textile design school and a private English tutor to prepare her for a career in international fashion. They are skeptical now that the Iranian government will ever appreciate their daughter’s vibrant inventions and photogenic face.

Badloo knows her time will come.

“One day, I’ll have a factory that produces all my own designs, and every single label is going to say ‘Honey Badloo,’ not ‘Valentino,’” she said. “I’m going to show the world that we have fashion. In fact, we’ve been in style for 3,000 years.”

—MCT Campus

Winter Park designer mixes fashion and art

a barrel, or 6.3 percent, to \$69.85, the first time it’s settled under \$70 since August 2007. Oil prices

By Olivia Pullinger and Ebony Chance
Valencia Voice

“Oh my God, I LOVE those shoes! Did you make those?” an enthusiastic passerby gushed over Luby Cancel’s colorful array of shoes that had been brought along for her interview with us. There are many designers that can say they have “one of a kind creations,” but after sitting down with Cancel, designer of Meditative State clothing and shoe line, she provided us a look at why she is so decisive in her choice of colors and textiles that make her designs stand out from others.

“Oh God,” Cancel laughed when asked her favorite designer. “I don’t really pay attention to the other designers, and I think that’s part of what makes my designs unique. Although I love Coco Chanel. I think she had alot of guts, and that’s what it takes to succeed in this industry.”

Gutsy is just one of the words that could be used to describe Cancel. After recently graduating from the International Academy of Design and Technology, Cancel’s line was featured in Fashion Week at Millenia Mall, and she participated in Park Avenue Fashion Week, showing her popular shoe line in a trunk show.

“What I’m about is making people look the best that they can,” Cancel said. “I love making people look good from head to toe.”

Her innovative outlook has earned her shoes a spot at Shouture Boutique in Winter Park, where they are currently being featured and sold.

“When I create, I usually just go off of how I’m feeling at the moment,” Luby stated, holding up a majorly blue Converse All-Star that seemed to reflect tranquility in its designs.

When sitting down with her, you can’t help but notice how calm the young designer is; she knows what she wants and is keen on proving that her work is indeed one of a kind.

When asked what she thought about fashion and what it is today, she stated: “everyone claims to have one of a kind designs and styles but in reality they are all a bit of the same, every designer has the same cuts, the only difference is the designer name on the tag.”

Luby’s view on fashion is one of a kind, and she is very laid back in her approach to design. She stated that the name of her current clothing line originated from the fact that she felt “meditative” as she was working.

Cancel can be reached at www.myspace.com/LubyC for more information.

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