Second window of the semester breaks at MTCC

By Joe Kaiser

On Sunday, September 28th, a window in the MTCC shattered in front of the campus bookstore. This is in addition to the window that shattered in the Pritzker Club earlier this year.

A witness said that nothing in particular happened to cause the window to break, it just shattered without warning. While it maintained its form for at least one hour following the breakage, it soon afterward collapsed, spreading safety glass all over the floor in front of the bookstore. A student on the scene, making an impromptu analysis, suggested that the glazing on the window was imperfect, and the subtle rumblings that regularly permeate through the building every time a train passes through the CTA noise-dispersion tube atop the MTCC slowly weaken the structure of the glass until it eventually becomes cracked.

A student employee was posted outside the shattered window until it was boarded up a few hours later.
By Talon the Hawk

I was distraught by the blasphemy of the erroneous words bleeding from the pages in last week’s ridiculous article “School Spirit Gone Bad...” and to all turns of vocabulary that I embark on this quest to tell the real story of school spirit in the heartland of IIT.

No one ever said school spirit would be easy, they said it would be hard... hard enough to make the opposing team cry. It is a constant battle, a battle for glory. As a great man once said, “This is Sparta!” I think in those words, he was crying upon the enemy.

It’s erroneous, erroneous I say, to claim that “you don’t go to win a game for your team.” The power of words is a power that graces the success of the human race. It is too powerful to let rest amongst us while our team fights for glory, so powerful that Ralph Waldo Emerson would gladly stand beside me and launch the napalm of destructive poetry upon the enemy.

The views of the writer in last week’s article were erroneous and far from a global and historical perspective of the true meaning of school spirit. If we can’t learn from the great examples of the past as to what true school spirit is, then we have failed in the evolution of humanity. I plead for the great examples of the past as to what true school spirit is, of the true meaning of school spirit. If we can’t learn from upon the enemy. I think in those words, he was crying upon the enemy.

It is a constant battle, a battle for glory. As a great man once said, “This is Sparta!” I think in those words, he was crying upon the enemy.

“School Spirit gone Bad: erroneous!”

By Abhishek Gunduguri

For all the technology fans at IIT, didn’t you ever wonder why there are no Mac labs at IIT? I mean, we are a technology school and should be on the cutting edge of things – be it a Windows-based, or a Macintosh-based, or a Linux-based system. Shouldn’t we have a medium or small sized lab with specialized (Mac) for IIT students?

Why do IIT students need a Mac lab? IIT’s diverse student groups and organizations have various needs dealing with computing capabilities. For example, the Snapshots club might be interested in using the high performance photo editing software available with the Mac OS and the Formulas lab team might use the Mac platform to work on various publicity and scholarship packages. Union Board might use the Mac for high impact publicity and various event-related projects. Students working on research and research presentations might also be very interested in using the Mac software like After Effects.

Why a Mac? The Mac Pro has a Quad-Core Intel Xeon processor, a processing bandwidth of 25.6GB per second sometimes, running at 3.2GHz of speed and delivers amazing performance. This is what the Apple Corp claims on their website: the Mac with a 20-inch or 24-inch screen, a Core 2 Duo processor running at 3.06GHz of speed, and 512MB of dedicated video memory. All this, how much does it cost? $3500 for two iMacs – one a 20-inch and another a 24-inch with enough performance to meet the requirements of the various groups and more. A small medium sized lab of 12 iMacs would be $32,000. I don’t know how much the present labs cost or how much they cost to run, but according to my estimates, the 24-PC E1 lab could cost around $31,750 (approx), not adding in the operating costs. Since it is a numbers game, $32,000 is $5750 (approx) after verifying the fact that the Mac usually performs a little better than a Microsoft-based PC. Usually, a Mac is thought to be more dependable than a PC. Mac software also crashes sometimes. PC has an advantage in terms of all the software packages that are available and will run on the Windows-based platform. Some software packages do not have a Mac version, thereby limiting the usability capabilities of a Macintosh-based platform. Another digital advantage of an Mac is the feature of inbuilt cameras for various artistic purposes.

Editors in all, I think IIT students would be a more than suitable user group for a Macintosh-based computer lab that operates from a Windows-based operating system. This opinion article is aimed to gauge the interest of the computer literate student. And aren’t you bored of PCs anyways?
Altruism really exists?

By Emily Moore

Altruism is widely defined as an unselfish regard for and devotion to the welfare of others; it is the duty of all good citizens. There is an argument that altruism does not exist because humans are born “selfish,” concerned only for themselves until society teaches them to care for the good of others. This is shown in how a mother tells a young child to share with another child “so someone can have a drink of water.”

However, contrary to this is the fact that altruism is still possible even at moments of immense danger. Perhaps this is the body’s way of developing to a higher, less basic state of existence. Enlightenment, if you will. People protest corrupted governments and fight global wars with the disheartening likelihood of life imprisonment, torture, or death. They do this for themselves and their families but also for the good of their societies and the world as a whole. They believe in good lives for all no matter what they must sacrifice, proving altruism especially if the threat is not directly on themselves. Mothers, Therese, Gandhi, and the people who put in volunteer hours when they will receive little or no recognition.

Altruism is at play when the feeling of happiness is gained, but is it altruism if the true motivation of doing it is simply for the better lives of others, or isn’t it altruism at all?

Not all volunteer acts are without risk, such as the aid helicopter carrying supplies for Darfur’s recent events. Altruism was at play by those inside. They truly did it for others at risk to themselves. Selfish acts may be done rather than sacrificing time, energy, and lives on acts for others. It is possible to do acts simply to make the entire world a better place rather than improve just one person’s world. This is altruism.

It exists in the hearts of those who are not jaded and believe that they can make a difference—after all, isn’t the difference in the world made piece-by-piece, person-by-person?

Due applause

By Donald Spears

Last year I wrote a nasty article outlining a large list of logical flaws in housing policy. Namely, those involved in the keeping of too many cooking appliances were my biggest concern. Living in an SSJ apartment with a full kitchen, including range, made a coffeepot so that our cookers were not allowed. After publishing the article I then went with the department of housing to discuss this and other problems I had with how things were being run. This year I was rather pleasantly surprised that an exception was made for housing units that included a kitchen.

I would like everyone to take a moment to recognize a very huge step forward for an IIT department. “Almost every IIT department is known for policy making with very little to no priority on student needs.” Thank you Housing for bearing one of the few ears that listen to student needs. Since my association with this institute began 6 years ago this is the first time I have seen student input translate directly into policy change. This is a very exciting step forward for IIT policy makers and would love to see other departments follow suit. Thanks, Housing!

Correction

In last week’s edition, photos by Sarah Bowes were incorrectly identified as photos by Chris Chock and Bernat Oliveres Kunzi.

In addition, the Week 4 NFL predictions were printed instead of the correct Week 5 NFL predictions.

Finally, the article “Don’t Dodge St. Jude’s!” was incorrectly attributed to Celeste Wegryn. The article should have been attributed to Sara Sustic.

TechNews regrets the errors.
I stood over the sink, cupping water into my mouth from the handfuls of ice that were on the counter. Water dripping down my chin, I circled the bathroom a few times before finding the exit. The Aragon’s bathroom is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

‘But we’re going to have more vacation than we ever have before...’

I wish I hadn’t spent the last two hours completely black out, the audience’s focus was. Sometimes I didn’t understand what they were doing and feeling. I was no longer in the pit, but by the bar and cold, so layers are key, attire-wise.

As a college student, it’s next to impossible to try to keep up with television shows but there comes a show every once in a while that is so decidedly good that you have to make an exception. I know this is a strange statement, but a very respectable development and finish; we can start but a very respectable development and finish; we can

The Aragon’s bathroom is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

The night of Thursday, October 2nd, unified a diverse audience through a conscious choice to take part in one of the best concerts ever, combining musical ingenuity and innovation. MGMT, whose popularity is growing, opened for Beck, world renowned musical mastermind.

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Next time, I’m hiding the contraband in my knee-high socks.

The Beer Garden is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

The Aragon’s bathroom is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

Overall, it was a very mediocre start to the new season. The Aragon’s bathroom is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

The Beer Garden is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

The Aragon’s bathroom is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

It is a pretty upbeat and groovable tune.

The Beer Garden is a giant, luxurious rat maze.

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Elizabeth Costello and criticism

By Udayan Das

I finished reading J.M. Coetzee’s Elizabeth Costello three weeks ago. Since then I have been wondering how to write about it. There is simply so much to write about, so many things that I could focus on. Finally, I have decided to write this which discusses both the book and its critical reaction to it, because that is what I have found baffling.

The book is described as post-modernist literature (pomo lit), which it is and essentially that is not a bad thing. True, experimentation can go haywire now and then (it often does), but in some cases when it comes off I don’t see a reason for complaint. The question is: is this thing (the pomo spin, if you like) being done only as a gimmick? I don’t think it is in this case. Far from it.

In any case, isn’t there also the question of who is doing the experimenting? Hasn’t Coetzee, who won the Nobel Prize in 2003 earned that right? I think he has because the rest of his illustrious career should indicate that he hasn’t been doing things for the fun of it.

Since winning the Nobel Prize in fact, Coetzee has in his three novels (Elizabeth Costello is the first) been consistently pushing the envelope (his last book Diary of a Bad Year is actually a remarkable Fiction! Non-Fiction blend, with each page literally being divided into three sections demanding the reader’s attention independently). I don’t find it surprising that he has been doing this. Imagine being in Coetzee’s shoes, when you have reached the ultimate milestone (at least since the prestigious prize was instituted) what do you do next? Some might retire. Some might go on, business as usual. Some, like Coetzee, might think it’s time to really test the boundaries of what is possible (and hence the boundaries of one’s imagination). No, I don’t find it surprising that Coetzee has taken this route. What is surprising however is how well he had been doing it.

I have to admit, that insofar (and there are a number of books by Coetzee that I haven’t read) this is my favorite novel of his (including pre- and post-Nobel works). I like it better than the more celebrated Disgrace for example. This may be in part, because a lot of his older books have been set in South Africa in one or another, and now he seems to be expanding his scope. But it is also because here in a fairly short novel (and for me, a fairly fast and easy read) he gives me so much that this is something which will remain close to my heart for years and years to come.

Elizabeth Costello is trademark Coetzee in its allegorical nature and inherent dialogic. As ever, it is hard to pin down what the author really believes – is the most important meaning, really the intended meaning? Now, this sort of thing is something that many people will not like. But I do, because in a sense, this sort of writing makes a novel live in my consciousness well beyond the time that I have finished reading it. Notice that this is different from having a memory of the novel (its images), which would be a case of the novel living in memory of me. The thing that happens is that the long after I have finished reading it, I keep thinking about it and it continues to grow in my mind (and in my estimation). Some people prefer a straight-forward narrative that goes visibly from Point A to Point B and there is nothing wrong with that. The question is who dictates what a novel is or what is supposed to be?

The novel as a form was invented to describe those pieces of work in a canon that could be described as anything else. Coetzee is a novelist in the very sense of the word. Some critic writes that Coetzee is a very good novelist and will never become a great one. I find this distinction very strange. For one, who can say for sure how long Coetzee and his influence as a novelist will last, and secondly what does this distinction even mean?

Keep your mp3 player well-fed

By Karl Rybaltowski

This week I’m going to take a look at two bands that have made serious efforts to refine or evolve their sound from previous releases, and the outcome of their efforts.

Islands, born from the ashes of the Unicorns, flat-out surprised me on this album, and I’m still not sure if that’s a good thing or not. Their debut, Return To The Sea, was an assortment of simple-sounding, sunny songs with some morbid subject matter. This undercurrent of death, when paired with the bizarre pop arrangements of the album, made it a really pleasant album. The technical simplicity of it, however, was the key. Islands would rarely have put out another album of sunny, off-kilter indie pop and I would probably have been satisfied. If a little inked that they hadn’t evolved much, but the direction they took here was completely different.

Arm’s Way resumes the thematic dominance of death and violence, but kicks it up several notches. Car crashes and feral dog attacks pervade “J’aime Vous Voire Quitter,” while “Creeper” describes death at the hands of a home invader. Simultaneously, the lyrical content has grown blunter, the bombastic and the epic arrangements on Arm’s Way, while certainly bigger and louder, provide for a great deal more nuance and subtlety, though it’s not always used in a successful way. Almost metal-esque guitar riffs give songs like “The Arm” a certain grittiness, even while strings give the music a soft accentuation. It’s grand, it’s epic, and it’s dark a lot of lyrics on Return To The Sea. Though it’s admirable that Islands have tried to become more serious in their music, but one of the things that made their debut so successful was the mere fact that it was kind of wacky, and a lot of fun to listen to. I can’t say the same for this album. A lot of the songs, taken individually, are at least decent, but after a few play-throughs, the ones that scale back the complex arrangements are the songs that really shine through. “Creep” has genuinely unsettlingly lyrics, but set to a new-wave danceable guitar line, is almost a throwback to their previous album. “Life In Jail,” a downbeat, melancholy tale has an extremely restrained first half, and the vocals, the strings, and the varied instrumentation flow best there. But the fact is that almost every song has a kernel of profound quality in it, if one takes the time to give it a few good listen. Even if it can be disappointing at times, the fact remains this is still Islands, and they still have a pretty good idea of how to craft a pop song, even if it is starting to sound a bit more conventional.

Now we come to Ladysmith’s fourth release, Velocipede. For a band that’s been around for seven years and evolving every step of the way, Ladysmith have been surprisingly capable at carrying the same sound and identity, which gives the signature sound goes. From the wall-of-sound electric guitar of Light & Magic, they’ve woven a good amount of diverse influences into their music, becoming more than just a simple electro-pop band. This latest release continues that trend, while asserting itself as a pretty decent album in the process.

I had to write any thoughts on this album down, because the sinister melancholy brooding that underpins almost everything Ladysmith make just isn’t what I was expecting. It’s definitely more appropriate for the descent into winter that’s going on right now, with its songs of loss and rigor mortis. Singers Helen Marnie and Mira Aroyo take distinctly ordinary lyrics and give them some extra depth, the former through a sort of emotionless sing-song vocal quality, and the latter through a cold, flat effect; rather than make the lyrics irritating, the repetition present throughout the album lends them a little weight as well. Supplementing the lyrics are rich, layered synths, guitars and drums (both live, loud enough on the master to be distorted at times, and drum machines). The whole album just doesn’t feel expansive, without feeling too high-minded for its own good. It’s also much more suited to dark, colder weather than much of their previous effort was, making it much easier to get into in the first place.

The aforementioned evolution of the band’s sound is easy to track if you have a copy of their previous work, and I had to listen to at least a down to a tune on this album, especially shining on songs like “They Give You A Name,” a really suited to the迫切 pop number, while the album opener, “Black Cat,” features Aroyo’s flat delivery, singing in Bulgarian, over a hypnotic arrangement, with abrasive percussion, plenty of levels of dark-sounding synths spanning huge swathes of the range of sound, and a menacing guitar line. Finally, the first single off of the album, “Ghost,” is a strange beast (but good nonetheless).

The musical arrangements are only be described as pounding, between the driving bass, a simple drum machine, and ominous guitar riffs thrown on top. Incidentally, this is also possibly Helen Marnie’s best vocal work on the album.

Fans of their previous work, and even new listeners, may find the album a little too restrained or reserved at first, but there’s a wealth of content for anyone who searches under the surface. Keep it on your mp3 player for: 2-3 weeks if you’re impatient. Give it another week if it starts to grow on you.

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Information Session, Thursday, October 14, 2008 5:00pm-7:00pm 
HH Alumni Lounge
(416) 979-4000, Ext. 2310
Dealing with Dandiya delusions!

By Shefali Umrania

Yes, the posters have been put up all around campus. Tickets are already on sale and it is touted as one of the biggest events that happens on campus with an unmatched grandeur, year after year. But, pray, someone please tell us what is with this “Dandiya Night” supposed to be?

Dandiya is a form of an Indian folk dance, which makes use of wooden sticks that are about a foot long and are held one in each hand. This dance, combined with another popular folk dance called the Garba, form a quintessential part of the Indian celebrations. The sound of the two sticks hitting each other is in tandem with the beats. In Dandiya, which is usually danced in pairs, the music, rhythmically in a circular manner, with claps assisting the beats of the music. In Dandiya, the demon are set up in temples and other places. These idols are regarded as an auspicious and religious time for starting new enterprises among Hindus. In Eastern parts of India, exquisitely crafted dolls are set up and worshipping the Golu, which depicts the various forms of the divine Goddess. In Eastern parts of India, it is celebrated by setting up the demon and the idols are worshipped during the festival and immersed in the river on the last day. In Western India, Navratri is celebrated with the Famous Dandiya and Garba dances as a form of revelry and merriment for the Goddess. This year, the first day of Navratri fell on the 30th of September and the festival will last till the 8th of October. Nights of Dandiya usually start by offering respects to the Goddess, with hearts full of gratitude towards the female divinity. Following this are rounds of Garba, where people dance around the deity rhythmically in a circular manner, with claps assisting the beats of the music.

So now that you know what exactly the “Dandiya Night” is all about, go amaze your friends with your knowledge and experience the sheer magnificence of the “Dandiya Night” by attending it!

IIT Service Week

By Elizabeth Moss

Are you looking to participate in a service event, but don’t know what to do? You have plenty of opportunities this week – IIT’s first Service Week! Be sure to check out these events sponsored by student organizations:

1. Amnesty International is celebrating community service with a BBQ. Join them Wednesday, October 8th near the volleyball courts outside the MTCC.
2. Similar to the Student Organization Fair, student groups will be advertising their service and philanthropic endeavors Thursday, October 9th during lunch on the MTCC Bridge. If your organization would like to be a part of this event, please email goslider@iit.edu.
3. Catholic Campus Ministry and Service Learning will be taking a trip to the Greater Chicago Food Depository. We will meet between the MTCC and MSV at 8:15 am on Saturday, October 11th. We should return by 12:30 pm.
4. Cheer on the Marathon runners with senior citizens! On October 12th, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship will be volunteering at the Amour Square Senior Housing center at 315th and Wentworth. Cheerers are welcome any time between 8:00 am and 2:00 pm.
Seventh Annual Intercollegiate

Coming Out Ball

at the Illinois Institute of Technology
October 10 2008
7pm-12am
Herman Union Building
3300 South Federal Street
Chicago, IL 60616

Performances by:
Tajma Hall
Dj Laura B
Ball Dancers
Go Go Dancers
Techtonics
Krisdelarash

Tickets: Non-IIT students-$8
IIT students-$5

Food, Music, Dancing, Karaoke@11pm, and Fun

How to get here: Take Red Line south to
35th/Sox Park get off at the North exit
(33rd Street) walk one block east.

Free Parking  Handicap Accessible

ComingOutBall@gmail.com
Lory Mishra, Editor

Santorog was, hands down, the worst live music I have ever experienced. In case that doesn’t mean much to you, let me put it another way: her music made me want to punch both ears.

You see, I didn’t go to this Santogol concert to see Santogol. I went to see an opener for her, Mates of State. I love the Mates; they are a ridiculously cute husband and wife band that make happy, energetic pop music. Watching them on stage is like watching cartoons evolve, coming to life. I can’t wait to see them in concert again; however, my love of them is not the subject of this article. The subject of this article is to warn you, the readers, to stay away from Santogol at all costs.

Before the concert, I had only ever heard one Santogol song, and I had hated it. I have a radio show on WITF and my co-host, Lory Mishra, played a song of hers called “S.E. Artists.” I went on-air after it played, discussing my dislike of the song. Lory was adamant in her endorsement of the song, though, so I tried to stay positive and blame it on the fact that it was a remix. My optimistic attitude was unwarranted, as I would soon find out.

I attended this concert with a friend and co-host of Mates of State. She hadn’t heard anything by Santogol before, so I told her that I was planning on attending the show waiting patiently (and a bit nervously) while the house music played and the stage was set up behind the music. We were at the back of the house music. I think it was as soon as we passed the confetti-cannons, floating orbs, and the stage was set; however, it was the moment when the noises I heard last night as “songs” I don’t know what I am listening to anymore. I had so physically walked out of the House of Blues after two of her songs. For your sake, dear readers, I want to you to know the Myspace site as it was writing this review and listening to her music again. In all honesty, what I am listening to isn’t all that bad. I can finally distinguish between the songs. My favorite song was “Somebody”, which I thought was “song” but it didn’t make me want to punch the air.

In short, listen to Santogol if you want to. If you like her music, I won’t hold it against you. I may never see her live again, even after reading this article.

By Adam Kadzan

Santorog Ros: aural ecstacy

I’ve been trying to write this concert review for over a hour now, yet somehow I just can’t come up with the right words to describe what it’s like to see Santogol. I thought about ranting about how awesome and intense it was. Between the amazing stage show and the layered, seamless sound, it was by far the best concert I’ve ever been to. But since most of you probably haven’t ever heard their music, it would have sounded like I was raving lunatic.

I thought about trying to be clever, and quoting Henry Wadsworth Longfellow — “Music is the universal language of mankind.” This is incredibly appropriate because Sigur Ros is from Iceland, and after putting out five full length CDs, they only have one song with lyrics in English. Most of them are in Icelandic, but they have an entire CD plus several more songs, all of the “vocals” are just made up sounds, complete gibberish. Even though I probably would never understand what the lead singer, Jonsi, is singing about, the music is just so touching, so beautiful, that I don’t even care.

I thought about trying to describe not what I heard that night, but what I saw; however, somewhere in the four paragraph describing confettis, floating orbs, Jonsi’s blood bath in playing his guitar too hard (yes, he uses a bow on his guitar), and the camera on stage that was fed onto the back of the audience. It was amazing. In short, it was a musical experience. It was so far out of the ordinary that it is impossible to not have your views encroach into your work. To what extent that happens if and when the politics come and go, they are not that noticeable (although at some point you’ll notice and realize that you think about the questions raised). Besides, when the musical quality is so good, half the time you simply do not notice. They walk a tight rope but they walk it well.

In songs like “Timekeeper” this balancing act works wonderfully (as in does in “Green”) but for me, it doesn’t work that well in, say “Fishing” and “Empty Me”. The only complaint I have therefore is that I do have an occasional impulse to skip a song, whereas they had enough material and ability here to make it work as a whole. The thing is that it doesn’t work, it’s not because I disagree (I eat meat for example, stand by it) but because it disappoints you when you know from the rest of the album what the Congress of Starlings are capable of.

Having said that though, no work can ever be perfect and this album is an exciting first effort and the Congress of Starlings can only get better in the future.

By Udayan Das

Albedo: an exciting first effort from Congress of Starlings

I first saw Congress of Starlings at the Old Town School of Music’s Folk Festival in July of this year. Theirs was a half an hour performance on the afternoon of the second day. It had been a pretty good series of events until then, but their show seemed to me to cut above the rest. I was taken aback by the sheer quality of the live performance. Their voices soared and the harmonizing, along with the acoustic guitars and piano, added to an already atmospheric, approaching the ethereal, people passing paused and a crowd gathered around the small staff stage tent. It wasn’t surprising then that they were allowed to perform two extra songs by the MC.

I wouldn’t also be a surprise then that in August, I found myself entering a North Side bar (Big Chicken) to catch them again. I was playing as I was writing this review and listened to her music. “Can’t Touch This” just as much as the next guy, but that description is NOT a compliment. Santogol was dressed along the same lines: early ’90s gone wrong. Borderline paraphanic pants, the weird white striped blouse, and obviously large glasses love them (all the frames, nothing in them). And her music was just “music.” If I had to use one word to summate it, I would pick “annoying.” Her voice was high pitched and shrill, and her music was so loud that everything came out as this garbled high pitched noise that probably would have made my ears bleed if I hadn’t physically walked out of the House of Blues after two of her songs. For your sake, dear readers, I want to you to know the Myspace site as it was writing this review and listening to her music again. In all honesty, what I am listening to isn’t all that bad. I can finally distinguish between the songs.

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Big Computation, Bigger Olympism and the Modern Survival of Ancient Values, talks by R. S. Cohen (4:00 pm).

When: October 11th, 2008.

Lori Basso, owner of Monster Island Toys

By Udayan Das

Chicago Country Music Festival

The 2008 Chicago Country Music Festival will take place the weekend of October 11th (Saturday) and 12th (Sunday) at Soldier Field. Among the artists featured this year are Gretchen Wilson, Taylor Swift, The Eli Young Band and Chicago locals Sunnyside Up.

There will be a special preview on October 8th (Wednesday) at the Daley Plaza, featuring a performance by Devon & The Shadyside.

When: October 11th and 12th, 2008 – 11 am to 9.30 pm.

Where: Soldier Field. (Free admission).

More Information: www.chicagocountrymusicfestival.us

Upcoming events around Chicago

By Erik Johnson

Nothing has inspired fear in the hearts of many like Godzilla, the giant green dinosaur with worldwide appeal. He first appeared on the Earth for 50 years, across 28 films, and has managed to retain his relevance in an age of heartless big budget summer blockbusters directed by Michael Bay. I’ll recall that the first time I saw the original film at the Music Box Theatre – the special effects were superb, particularly for a film of its age. The story told both and appealed to a monster movie of a scope that can never quite be repeated.

Though Godzilla’s stateside appeal has diminished in recent years (particularly after a disastrous American remake in 1998), his fans remain dedicated to their favorite scaly beast. Lori Basso, owner of Monster Island Toys, is one such fan. Monster Island Toys stocks a vast amount of Japanese imported Godzilla figurines (and plenty of figurines from various other film and comic franchises). I visited him in his shop to talk to him about Godzilla and collecting.

TechNews: What can a customer expect to find when they walk into your store?

Basso: They can find the only store in Illinois that sells Japanese imported toys from the characters of Godzilla and Ultraman.

TechNews: How long have you been in the area? Basso: Two years.

TechNews: Are you a figurine collector?

Basso: Yes and no, I mean, a lot of the customers that come here have an extensive collection of figurines, like, some of them will fill up the store. I have a small figurine collection. Most of the items that I’m interested in is anything on Batman or Godzilla.

TechNews: When you buy a figurine, do you keep it in its package or do you take it out and enjoy it?

Basso: Some I take out, and some I don’t.

TechNews: If someone wanted to get into Godzilla films and figurines where would they start?

Basso: They would start by coming here (laughs) because we carry all 28 Godzilla movies made on DVD.

TechNews: What is your favorite Godzilla movie?


TechNews: Are they still using costumes and miniatures?

Basso: The last movie was shot in 2005 and they’re still using the full suited costume.


Basso: I thought it was a terrible movie. And I would like to expand on that – and the reason for that is everybody knows that Godzilla evolved from the US dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. And the story is that there was one dinosaur left on Hiroshima and that the radiation from the nuclear bomb mutated this dinosaur and that’s how it grew larger and grew the fins and became radioactive and became Godzilla. The TriStar film completely changed that – where they did it so radiation mutated an iguana. Totally different. Godzilla is not an iguana, it’s a dinosaur.

TechNews: Of course in the American movie Godzilla was also a girl, which was kind of strange.

Basso: Right, it just didn’t… the only thing that they kept the same was the name. What TriStar did was they paid Toho 30 million to have the Godzilla name and put all the monster cable they have a Godzilla fest. The kids see ‘em and they’re immediately hooked – and I’m the store that’s selling the figures. The dad used to be in it, now the kids are in it, little girls are in it – I’m really surprised that little girls would be in it. I wouldn’t expect that.

TechNews: Would you say collecting is an expensive hobby?

Basso: Yes and no. I mean, it can get expensive if you buy the older figures. The Godzilla toys that are made in Japan that I have here, you could pay 15-20 dollars, which some people may think is expensive. People that know the knowledge about these toys know that that’s a fair retail price for the figure. And these figures, in 3-5 years, will more than double or triple in price, because they’re Japanese imports. They hold their value very well. Every one of the figures made in Japan goes up in price.

TechNews: What do you find most appealing about Godzilla?

Basso: Well, I was always fascinated with him since I was a kid, I grew up watching Japanese sci-fi films. The problem was that there were never any Godzilla toys in the United States. The TriStar film changed that. What I really like about the original movies is that they had a good mix of adventure and tragedy into a monster movie of a scope that can never quite be repeated.

TechNews: What kind of customers do you get?

Basso: Most of my customers are from ages 18 – 55. And these, the people that have children that are my age or older that used to watch Godzilla, you know, and they have kids and they throw in a Godzilla movie or sometimes on cable they have a Godzilla fest. The kids see ‘em and they’re immediately hooked – and I’m the store that’s selling the figures. The dad used to be in it, now the kids are in it, little girls are in it – I’m really surprised that little girls would be in it. I wouldn’t expect that.

TechNews: What can a customer expect to find when they are in your store one day, and you heard the roar of Godzilla, what would you do?

Basso: I’d be excited. I’d run out there with my digital camera and take a picture. (laughs) I wouldn’t run away from him, I’d run towards him.

Monster Island Toys is really an impressive establishment, and Lori is friendly and helpful. While we spoke a customer asked him to hold a Kill Bill action figure behind the counter as he did more shopping – truly figurine collecting as a hobby is still alive and well, and as long as fans like Lori is spreading the fandom, Godzilla will be around for years to come. Monster Island Toys is fairly easy to walk to from IT, it is located at: 3407 S. Halsted St., Chicago, IL 60608. 773-247-5733.

Upcoming events around Chicago

By Erik Johnson

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Chicago Humanities Festival

More information: http://www.chfestival.org

Photo by Joe Kaiser
The sudoku that does sudoku during class instead of paying attention

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Sony Vaio AW190: bringing colors to life

By Kamakshi Palakodety

I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a backup of all the data that you have on your computer. This job is made much easier now with the advent of external hard drives in the market. The latest one to hit the gadget shelves is the My Book Mirror Edition of the disk space storage area in My Book is One Terabyte (1024 GB). It combines two hard drives of 500 GB each, but even if your computer fails, and one of your hard drives also fails, your data is still protected by the second hard drive.

Havoc can strike out the distinction between various shades of same colors in your photographs. It is intended for professionals, the aesthetics are also pleasing to the eye. Without being overwhelming, the overall look and feel of the new Vaio is stylish yet sleek. It weighs around 6.75x4x6 inches. It only measures around one of the drives ensures that your data still remains intact. Also, a failure or malfunction in one of the drives does not decrease the performance of the other drive.

My Book Mirror: Say NO to data loss!

By Kamakshi Palakodety

The My Book Edition will sit pretty in any corner as it only measures around 6.75x4.66 inches. It is a small black box which comes with a power button, an adapter jack and USB port to connect to the computer. As soon as you plug in the hard drive power to it, the LEDs in the front spur to life. By installing the WD drive manager software, you can even figure out how much space is left in the drive with the help of an indicator located on the front side.

The My Book Edition follows the RAID technology which stands for Redundant Array of Inexpensive/Independent Disks. This technology employs the simultaneous use of two or more hard disk drives to achieve higher performance, reliability and larger storage space. The default mode in the My Book Edition is set to RAID 1, which means you get a total of 1TB space with both the mini hard drives combined. But the truth is, each of these mini hard drives has a storage capacity of 1TB, making the combined available memory of 2TB. However, this combined storage space is achieved when you reset the RAID mode to RAID 1. This can be done through the WD RAID manager. You might think here that two is better than one and the obvious choice would be to reset the device to RAID 0 and get the 2TB of storage space. However, this is not recommended at all. Here’s why: In the RAID 0 mode, also called the striped disks mode, the data you store is distributed across several disks. While this improves speed and capacity, it does not guarantee the security because if one of the two disks fails, the entire data is lost. In contrast, in the RAID 1 mode or the mirrored disks mode, the data you store is stored in the exact same way in both the disks. So the hard disk will have duplicate data but the failure of one does not affect the performance of the other drive.

One would think that storing the same data twice would compromise speed and performance. This is not the case as the My Book Edition is pretty fast at storing large amounts of data within a matter of seconds. The WD RAID Manager which is included with the package is a good tool to have around. It gives you an updated health report of your drive. It tells you if the drive is functioning properly or if a failure has occurred and how the drive is recovering from the failure. Also, as mentioned earlier, it also tells you how much space you have already utilized and how much is left.

The My Book Edition box comes packed with ventilance holes on all the three sides, but is still a silent performer as it does not have cooling fans. It only consumes about 15 watts of power. The My Book Edition is priced at $22,660. Honda is planning to roll out four new gas-electric hybrid models between 2008-2012 as part of a global strategy. It is estimating and targeting sales of hybrid units to be 500,000 by 2012 – about 10% of its annual worldwide sales.

The new Honda Insight joined the Honda Civic Hybrid sedan, which has only been able to perform mediocre in terms of sales in the US market. The cost versus the gasoline savings were not favorable enough to convince people to buy the Civic Hybrid. The new Insight is also a major leap from the original, which claimed to have a mileage of 70mpg but was a two-seater subcompact. It is much more roomy; a futuristic looking car, yet acceptable an fashionable accessory. The styling cues from the FCX Clarity fuel-cell car. The car features a new Honda Integrated Motor Assist (IMA)- hybrid technology that reduces cost of production. The IMA technology comes with a function to assist drivers in achieving more fuel-efficient driving habits. Also reducing the cost of production is reductions in weight and size of key components in the Insight. Many more technical details are yet to be released by Honda Motors Co.

All in all, the Toyota Prius’ days of being the only eco-conscious, gas-sipping hybrid available are numbered. If Honda achieves marketing itself in a way that is completely in line with people’s demands, it can be said with certainty that they will sell more than their global target of 200,000 vehicles per year.
NFL week 6 predictions

By Shanon Ludden

1:00 Chicago @ Atlanta

Chicago has really been improving through the season and is looking strong, whereas Atlanta started off strong, but is beginning to falter. Chicago also has much more experience on both sides of the ball. Look for Forte to have a great game against the weak Atlanta run defense, and look for rookie QB Matt Ryan to go through the air because of New York’s weak secondary. Kyle Orton is starting to look more confident, and the Bears are starting to make less crucial mistakes late in the game. The Bears will continue their winning road trip, 24-13.

Miami @ Houston

This will be a good game for both teams to really establish themselves as decent teams. Miami has struggled but had a great game against the Patriots in Week 4. With a win over Houston, they can show that victory was not a fluke. Houston has had a rocky start as well, but nearly beat a good Jacksonville team, losing in a tight game in overtime by a field goal. Also, look for Steelers to have great receiving and running game. They are just itching for a win, and if not against Indy, they will get a win against Miami and reverse their slow start, beating Miami 30-23.

Indianapolis @ Jaguars

Indy is not having a great season, despite having one of the best quarterbacks in the league (Peyton Manning) — a great example of how a team’s success is not dependent on just one player. Baltimore is having a decent season, beating two struggling teams but losing to a good Pittsburgh team. The Ravens have the 2nd worst passing yardage but the 3rd best rushing yardages, showing how one-sided this offense is. But, even with this and additionally because Indy’s Bob Sanders will be out, Baltimore will win 17-13.

Minnesota @ Minnesota

Minnesota will finally have a break from their really tough schedule and will try to get their year back on track. RB Adrian Peterson is not putting up the huge numbers he was last year, and the defense is not as strong as last year’s. But Frenette is starting to look like he did back in Denver, and will have a huge day against a pathetic Patriots secondary. Kiffin has been having a mediocre year, but has been able to compensate for Dorsett’s poor defense. Minnesota will win, 30-13.

Oakland @ New Orleans

New Orleans has shown that they will be a formidable NFC contender with their offensive game. Between Reggie Bush and Drew Brees, they have put up points on offense and special teams, and lost two tough games. But their defense is ranked in the lower third and will give up some points. Oakland is a total mess right now, the only thing they’ve got going is a strong run offense. However, they had a bye and things are starting to settle down in the upper management. New Orleans wins 25-16.

Cincinnati @ New York (J)

The Jets and Favre are having a great season, and Cincinnati has the league’s worst offense and will not put many points on the board at the Meadowlands, especially with Carson Palmer not in the lineup. Buffalo has the 2nd worst passing game, but the 3rd best rushing game, and will have another great game. Cleveland is probably an average team, with new QB O’ Sullivan having on and off days, and a steadily decent Frank Gore at running back. San Francisco will probably win, only because they’re at home, 17-14.

Green Bay @ Seattle

This NFC game will be a good day for the Seahawks as they will have WRs Branch and Engram and will face a now poor Green Bay secondary. QB Hasselback has always been good, but with targets is very good, despite now lacking a running game. Green Bay is now wishing they still had Favre, as he puts up record numbers and Rogers hurts his shoulder. Ryan Grant is not having a bad year and will help the Packers, but they will still lose to the Seahawks, 24-20.

8:15 Patriots @ San Diego

This will be a great test for both teams, as it is a game between two teams, neither of which is sure whether or not they are playoff contenders. The Patriots are still trying to figure out their offense without Brady and how their defense can avoid mistakes made in Miami. San Diego has a great offense with QB Rivers and both RBs LT and Sprawls. Their defense is without Merriman and has not been that good against good offenses. Cassel and the Patriots really would have to step it up to win here, the second game in their West Coast trip. San Diego wins because of home field advantage, 21-20.

Monday, 8:30 New York (J) @ Cleveland

The Monday night games are usually very good matchups, but this week’s will probably not be. New York is undefeated, having a great season, and will have another great game. Cleveland is the opposite, a save over the awful Bengals. Even if the Browns have a great game, it would only make it a close one. Brunell will be off his suspension and Edwards is not doing well this season. The Giants win, 27-9.

1 am a Patriots fan from New England, and played football in high school. If you have any questions or comments feel free to email me at sludden@iit.edu.

Disclaimer: These were written before the week. 5 games due to submission constraints, and as was learned in week 1, the entire NFL can change in a single play.

After beating the best possible Superbowl contender and a division rival, confidence in Washington has got to be sky high. Look for them to only look better against possibly the only team to challenge the “76 Brus in going winless. Both teams are balanced offensively that they are about equally good on both sides of the ball, it’s just that the Eagles are much better. Skins win 27-6

Jacksonville @ Denver

This will be a good test for Denver to see if their defense has improved or not. A loss would not be too bad, but a win would show improvement. The game will be dependent on how many points Denver allows. They have proven that they can put points on the boards, a lot of them, but also that their defense has a lot of holes. Jacksonville has been playing well, only being defeated by two of the currently undefeated teams. QB Gurnard should have a great game against Denver, but will be outscored, and Denver will win 30-27.

Dallas @ Arizona

Dallas is still probably the strongest team in the NFC and will prove it again this week against a good Warner-led Arizona Cardinals team. Dallas is having a great year, despite a loss to the Skins and TO’s wild antics, which can be expected. But this may lead to more coverage on TO and even more frustration (if he doesn’t get the ball more because of it. Kurt Warner is starting to look unbelievable and showing why he was once part of “the greatest show on turf”. Dallas, however, has beaten tougher opponents and will win again this week in a good game, 27-24.

Philadelphia @ San Francisco

Both teams will be coming off tough games, Washington and New England, respectively, and will be beat up. Philadelphia has had a really tough schedule with no breaks and the team is feeling it, with Westbrook out and McNabb injured. San Francisco is probably an average team, with new QB O’ Sullivan having on and off days, and a steadily decent Frank Gore at running back. San Francisco will probably win, only because they’re at home, 17-14.

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