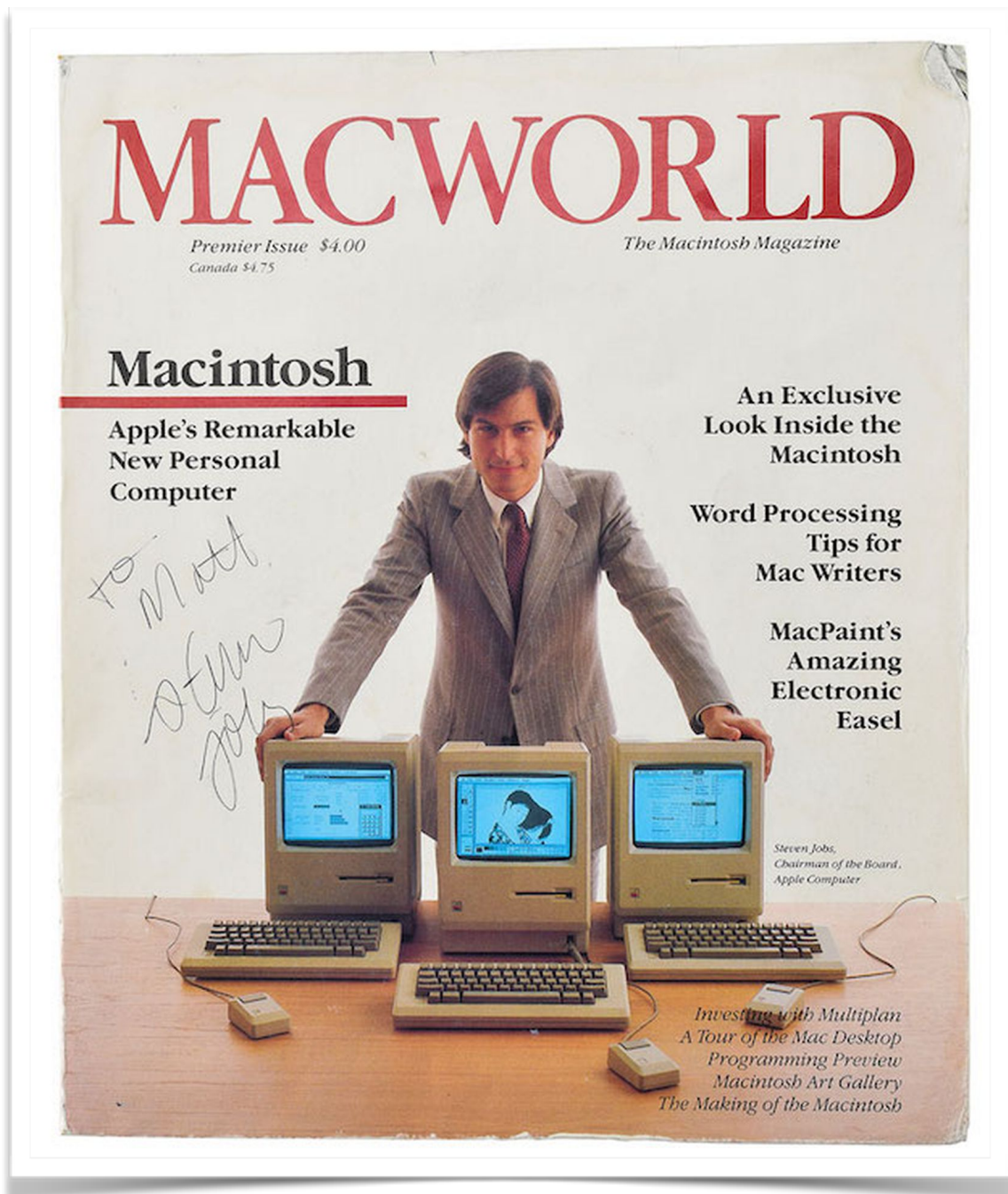




Tuesday, January 3rd, 2006

Stevie J in a suit, on the cover of Macworld magazine's premier issue!



My first computer was a Mac Plus with a single floppy drive, no hard disk, a black and white 9" screen, and 128 K of RAM. I used to have some kind of peculiar PC before I got my Mac in 1990 but it just sat there for a whole year as I could not get past the C:/ prompt. When the Mac Plus arrived, my entire life changed. I fell in love and discovered a whole new world.

For any Pakistani Apple groupies out there, Steve Jobs will address the faithful at Macworld San Francisco on January 10th 2006 at 9 pm Pakistan Standard Time. He shall not be wearing a suit. Hopefully there will be a live webcast, and in addition, several Apple-centric websites will be blogging the event as it happens. Stay tuned and keep the faith.

Peace and Love!

[sabizak said...](#)

Wow! he's beautiful.

[11:12 PM _](#)

[Zakintosh said...](#)

What a switch! Then: a suited Jobs and 'hip' life-changing computer ... Now: A hip looking Jobs and a suit-wearing computer (OK, so it's a infinitely nicer suit!) that only makes life seem easier because 'the other one' makes it so-o-o difficult. (I won't bring in the design aesthetics, coz the other guys don't even know what it means).

Apple may lead the way in technological innovation but is, sadly, despite Steve's chutzpah, dragged way down by the weight of the overall slow progress of the personal computer. 1984 was a quantum leap ... nothing has happened since then that's made me swoon.

[7:44 AM _](#)

[BeanZ said...](#)

Yup! Nothing ground breaking has happened in computing since 1984. Computers are still way too hard to use and Apple's priorities have shifted. The company should not even be called Apple Computer Inc. any longer, but that's a whole different story that will involve lawsuits with the Beatles.

In big business today, there's way too much focus on making money and satisfying Wall Street - nothing is ever enough. This hyper capitalistic model leaves no time for innovation and risk. We need another uber nerd like Steve Wozniak and a nut like Steve Jobs for the next revolution in computing - folks who care very deeply about human beings, experience, interaction, and who also have deep pockets or access to the deep pockets of others.

Where are the radicals, the crazies, the people who dare to dream?

Friday, January 6th, 2006

I had been waiting patiently for almost a year to go and see “Jewel in the Crown - Karachi Under the Raj” at the Mohatta Palace. This was because I wanted to go

with my Mamoo, who was due to visit Pakistan in December. Today was the big day! The Museum opens at 11:00 am so we excitedly got there at 11:05 am. There was a Rangers van parked outside and the guard shooed us off saying there was a “guest” in there and that we should come back after “a while”. I wanted to get off and wallop him. After demanding to know what “a while” meant, he said, “come back in 30 minutes”. So, we wandered around aimlessly and returned after about 40 minutes. We were “allowed” to enter then but I was still livid and wanted to know who the VIP was. Learned that it was Master Musharraf - His Royal Bilalness.

It's absolutely ludicrous that visitors to the museum should have to find other things to do while the President's son checks out the exhibition. I realize that there are security concerns but then the Mohatta Palace staff should inconvenience itself not us, by opening an hour early or closing an hour late or asking the guy to visit on a Monday when they are officially closed.

I have heard that this guy Bilal is very humble and decent and shareef and tameezdar and all that crap. Does he know that people were turned away because of him? We planned our day really carefully, took time off from work, organized meetings accordingly and an hour's delay screwed things up. I would really be interested in hearing his views on this matter. We, the people, are supposed to be the beneficiaries of his father's enlightened policies. It's bad enough that each time a lowly bloody minister emerges from his house, traffic grinds to a halt and no one can budge until these misbegotten fools get to wherever they have to ... now, even the kids pull rank over the people. And this guy doesn't even live in Pakistan!!!!!!!!!!!!

This is so unacceptable. If I didn't have visitors with me, as well as my 81 year old grandmother, I would have created a scene. I think Nasreen Askari and the President's Son owe us an apology. If anyone who reads this blog has access to Bilal Musharraf, please forward this post to him and solicit his views. Am genuinely interested in knowing what makes these people tick.

Monday, January 30th, 2006

In an earlier post, I had ranted about the horrendous “[Rock Karachi Rock](#)” non-event, but “hope springs eternal in the human breast” and I bought a ticket for the Bryan Adams concert, desperate to relive memories of the glorious 80s and 90s.

So much was at stake for our city and I was nervous as hell. On the morning after the night before, I am now totally coherent, awake, and devoid of any hyperbole - Karachi has vindicated itself on all counts.

The first security checkpoint was just after the Steel Mill entrance and a polite fellow checked our tickets. The second point required all of us to get out of the car for it to be checked out. This was done quickly and efficiently and resulted in a "security cleared" sticker. A number of small but meaningful details had been taken into account, in total contrast to my previous experience at the Arabian Sea Country Club:

- The parking area was mercifully illuminated
- There was a seating area for folks who either weren't going inside or had to wait around
- The woman checking handbags was not power drunk and obnoxious
- The volunteers swiping cards were extremely polite and efficient
- Food and drinks were available inside the venue
- Clearly labelled restrooms were easily accessible
- There was no one bellowing on the mike saying, "once you're in, you can't get out"

What staggered me was the fact that the concert started at 8:00 pm. Nothing in Karachi starts at 8:00 pm, let alone a musical extravaganza of this scale. No amount of kudos are enough for whoever made this happen. Shehzad Roy kicked off the night with his infamous "Saali" number, followed by a cover of "It's Only Words". He sang another couple of songs and was done by about 8:30 pm. Sound checks and what not followed and by 9:00 pm, the decks were cleared for BRYAN.

He belted out one hit after another in his signature, non-confrontational style and the crowd loved him. I am not so fond of his newer, mushy tracks but was thrilled with Run to You, Cuts Like a Knife, It's Only Love, I Need Somebody, Heaven, Kids Wanna Rock, Straight from the Heart, and of course, Summer of 69. He came back 3 times, by popular demand, and behaved like a real star. We Love You, Bryan. At one point, he announced that he was going to sing the opening lines of one of his songs and whoever recognized it, should raise their hands. Thousands of people had their arms in the air and he called upon a lucky, young lady to come up on stage and sing with him. Hats off to her - she did a great job, earning herself a big hug from Mr. Adams, and massive cheers from the crowd.

He asked her a few questions about herself and promised t-shirts to all her friends, who of course, went totally nuts.

Bryan Adams said wonderful things about Shehzad Roy and Karachi, reminding us that none of this would have been possible without the efforts of our own countrymen. He told us that we sing very well (?) and that music really has the power to bring people together. He also said he had no idea why they hadn't come before and he hoped this concert would pave the way for many more. The crowd was very responsive and well-behaved and there were no phaddas and bayhoodgees. Thank you, 25,000 Karachivaalas, for not screwing this up. We have proved to the world that we can have a good time as well as behave ourselves and hopefully, more class acts will come to our city, if we continue to act like civilized folk.

It was a great, great show BUT, it was marred by poor sound quality. The concert just wasn't loud enough and the balance was out. Sound makes or breaks a rock concert - this is very elementary and hopefully, someone important noticed and will strive for higher standards next time.

A huge round of applause for Zindagi Trust, Shehzad Roy, Nokia, ARY Digital, and all the other sponsors and organizers.

Bryan Adams, THANK YOU for coming to Karachi despite negative travel advisories and plenty of bad press. Cheesy as this may sound, it truly was "a night to remember"

Monday, March 6th, 2006

I am told that everyone does it and that there's nothing wrong with it. Apparently, "dropping" a CV in response to an ad or just for the heck of it is totally acceptable despite the fact that you are employed elsewhere. Hmmm - either you get it or you don't and I guess this is one of those things that I just don't or rather, won't get.

If CV dropping is acceptable, why is it always done on the sly? How come the people who will be most affected by someone's departure are always the last to know? Why can't people come clean and say, "I am looking around because need

more money, or I am bored here, or whatever? Because, they want to keep their options open!

I was informed recently, by a “trusted” employee, that he, like everyone else, has been sending his CV all over the place and has even gone to interviews, but NOT because he wanted to leave. Pray, why then? “Oh, just to see where I stand”. Right! Self-esteem booster potion, at other people’s expense. What crap. And what of the poor HR sod who has to sift through all these CVs, many belonging to people who are just checking out the scene and want to know what they are worth? Is his time and effort worth nothing? We all know how difficult it is to find the right people. So, when people who are happily employed go on these CV dropping trysts, just to gauge what someone else might pay them, an HR team is shortlisting candidates, conducting interviews, evaluating potential, discussing remuneration packages, etc. for losers who aren’t even interested. And what about other potential candidates who may lose out? Is this decent, ethical behaviour?

Oh, and what of the “I respect you immensely and would never do anything to hurt you; you’ve always been like family” types? The ones who decide to move on (which is A-OK!), but don’t tell you that they are planning some major changes until the day everything’s done? Values, ethics, and business principles have been reduced to trite forms of nonsense that are found in annual reports and corporate corridors. Perhaps 1 in 6 million people “live” the values that they supposedly prescribe to.

I guess I will be accused of being too sensitive and will be told “yay to hota hai”. Haan, haan, of course hota hai bhai, I’ve been working since I was 15 and have encountered and dealt with every kind of wannabe, sleazeball, dumbass, and, it must be said, a bunch of absolutely stellar and wonderful people too. And I am in no way suggesting that people should not look for “better opportunities” but I do believe, with intensity, that there is a way to go about these activities. I guess this deceit-ridden world isn’t for me, and like Microsoft Windows, I feel it should never have come out of beta testing.

Tuesday, March 7th, 2006

In an unprecedented act of kindness, Google has released a Blogger widget for Mac OS X. This is a non-post to test whether this thing actually works!

Update: It works

Wednesday, March 15th, 2006

Talk about language evolution! Just got this by e-mail ... ;-)

hey hru n hwos life

sorry for mailing u like that

i got ur id frm forwarded mail so thaught to mail u hp u dnt mind im "*name withheld by beanz*" wt do u do?

Thursday, March 16th, 2006

*Reading an interview of Billy Bragg in the April issue of [Utne](#), I came across the perfect word to describe 21st century society: **POST-IDEOLOGICAL**.*

Now I can live/die in peace knowing that there exists a single, pithy word to describe the depraved wasteland we call life.

Utne is an independent media company and totally rocks. Their mission: We believe that personal evolution is the key to social change. Our mission is to seek out and illuminate the essential information, people, and trends that will inspire our audience to take action to make the world kinder and greener.

Peace Out!

Sunday, March 19th, 2006

Big business strikes again! I am too shocked to be angry and too agonized to be coherent.

Anita Roddick, has sold the Body Shop to cosmetics giant L'Oreal for £650 million. The Body Shop was the standard-bearer for ethics and values in business,

and campaigned endlessly for an end to the testing of cosmetics on animals. The company's fundamental values of 'No Animal Testing', 'Support Community Trade', 'Protect the Environment', 'Protect Human Rights' will supposedly remain the same despite the takeover/sellout.

Meeting Anita Roddick two years ago at the Edinburgh Book Festival was a dream come true. What a woman! For years, she has provided hope and inspiration to small, alternative, non-mainstream businesses. She made us believe in the true power of one, gave us the strength to plug along, and fight for what we believe in. I think she was the only activist who truly "got it". A keen business sense, serious smarts, heart, soul, and no ordinary amount of passion - the lady is a legend. Hmmm, nothing like hyperbole to numb the senses. For a moment there, I forgot about the subject of this post.

Anita claims nothing will change. She says she is truly flattered that L'Oreal wants to alter the way they do business and wants Anita / Body Shop to show them the way. In response to campaigners, employees, franchisees and all the millions who are horrified to hear the news, she says, "the campaigning, the being maverick, changing the rules of business, it's all there, protected. And it's not going to change. That's part of our DNA." And I think with all the franchisees and clients, they know me. They know I'm a maverick. They know I'm loud-mouthed on certain issues. They know I challenge The Body Shop in many ways. I am not and Gordon (her husband) is not going to do this relationship, this deal, if we didn't think and believe from our real heart that this was the best next stage for The Body Shop.

Anita, you're too smart to throw it all away but seriously, why couldn't you have taught L'Oreal about animal testing, fair trade, and ethics, without selling them the Body Shop? If they care that much about all this "stuff", why didn't they just hire you as a consultant? Why did it have to be an all or nothing deal?

I don't want to be a cynic or pass judgement without giving this deal a chance - but really, mega corporations do not give a flying fuck about anything other than Wall Street and winning. Will L'Oreal risk the "numbers" when Dame Anita tells them to stop testing on animals and to incorporate "fair trade" into their strategy? Companies don't become corporate giants by being nice and fair and just. This is just sickening.

Shattered

UPDATE: Go to "*A Day In The Life Of ... Dame Anita Roddick*" on Google

Friday, April 28th, 2006

I have finally switched to *WordPress* but I will always love *Blogger*. The blogging revolution was ignited by the good folk who founded Pyra Labs in 1999 - *Blogger* was subsequently bought by *Google*. In totally random news, one of the founders of Pyra Labs, Meg Hourihan, recently got married to über blogger, Jason Kottke. Sweeeeet!

In other switching news, I have started using *MarsEdit* to edit, and manage my blog. Written by one of the studliest Mac programmers ever, Brent Simmons, this is a lean, clean application that does exactly what it's meant to and nothing more. Just the way it should be. Manufacturers of hideous bloatware, especially Adobe and Microsoft, could learn a lot from indie Mac developers. Another good blog editor is *Ecto*, and Windows users may wish to give it a spin. I think it has too many options and lacks *Cocoa* goodness. Still, as I am new to the world of desktop blogging apps, I will continue to check it out until I settle down with an editor.

I wish there was a pill I could pop to be more regular with my posts.

Wednesday, May 3rd, 2006

The weekend was fantabulous. My LaCie 250 GB Hard Drive arrived from Singapore, followed by a pair of gorgeous Harman Kardon SoundSticks. Tomorrow promises three books from Amazon. Wheeeee!

The bright red, lego brick hard drive has a super-fast USB 2.0 interface and I am using it as a backup drive for my mother and me. LaCie ships the drive with a nifty backup utility called SilverKeeper which, so far, is pretty cool. As it does automated, incremental backups, there is simply no excuse now to not keep stuff safe and duplicated.

The SoundSticks look delicious and sound great. So far, I have listened to Zucherro / Miles Davis performing Dune Mosse, and Simon & Garfunkel's Concert in Central Park.

The SoundSticks have belted out some iPod guilty pleasure as well but am not naming names. At least it wasn't James Blunt - our generation's equivalent of

Michael Bolton. Or was Michael Bolton my generation? Shit, I am going to be 32 in a little over a month.

Thursday, May 25th, 2006

I am proud of myself - for having the courage - to say no!

To celebrate, I want to share a "poem" with my blogger friends who may not be familiar with Apple's Think Different campaign:

Here's to the crazy ones.

The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently.

They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo.

You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them.

About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things.

They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward.

Maybe they have to be crazy.

How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels?

We make tools for these kinds of people.

While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.

Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.

Wednesday, June 21st, 2006

Destination: Colombo

Dates: 15th June - 18th June, 2006

Agenda: Drik Partnership Meeting

Day 1

My flight to Colombo was at 11:45 pm on the night of the 14th. I was knackered well before departure as I'd had painfully long, manic, and intense days at the office for the last several days. The flight was rather uncomfortable as the seats

wouldn't budge and we had to sit at a 90 degree angle throughout. They wouldn't even let us off the plane to breathe in any Indian air during our 2.5 hour stop-over in Mumbai. However, the crew was phenomenally efficient and polite and the wine was great. The other amazing thing about Sri Lankan Airlines is that they don't say we're delighted to have you on board in 18 different languages. They also don't tell you where the emergency exits are and how to fasten your seatbelt in 18 different languages. And, and, they do not tell you, in any language, that we will be flying at an altitude of 32,000 feet!

We landed in Colombo at 7:00 am instead of the scheduled arrival time of 5:45 am and we were zonked. The taxi driver was relentless in his desire to get us to the hotel in 45 minutes and honked and zoomed his way through countless little alleyways caring little for anything that might get in the way. We were too exhausted to care. After checking in, we had 30 minutes to shower and grab a bite. The meeting was to start at 9:00 am and we'd been up for 28 hours straight.

The Drik Partnership brings together media organizations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka and is funded by the Norwegian organization, *Fredskorpset*. The Partnership aims to create a strong media presence in the South, develop professionalism within the industry, and work towards building transparency and accountability within society. Through the exchange of professionals for a period of 10 months, the Partnership creates mutual learning opportunities and helps build capacity and sustainability of the participating organizations.

Whew - what a mouthful! So, *b.i.t.s.* is the Pakistani partner and that's why I was in Colombo, along with our accountant, Mashood Ali.

Checked in by 8:00 am, dumped stuff, ate breakfast, showered, and was in the conference room by 9:00 am for the first day of the meeting. After the usual round of greetings and exchange of gifts, we got down to work. The meeting was organized by our Sri Lankan partners, *TVEAP* (Television for Education, Asia Pacific) and their CEO, Nalaka Gunawardene, spoke for a bit. Activist and producer/director, and all-round great guy! Anyway, the meeting went on and on and on and finally ended at 5:30 pm. We then got into a big bus and headed off for the TVEAP office. The trees and greenery in Colombo are astounding. Some of the trees were so beautiful they made me cry. I was also rather pained at nature's inequitable distribution of environmental resources. The TVEAP office was lovely. A year ago, they bought a run-down house and re-did it, with each team member getting a space to plan, build, and decorate.

For about 45 minutes, we watched some of TVEAP's recent productions including *Children of the Tsunami* and *Digits4Change*. Then we went to the swanky Water's Edge for a divine meal. I tried 5 starters, 6 items for the main course, and 10 desserts. Divine! Yes, I am now on a diet. Chatted incessantly with Nalaka about politics, blogging, media, and religion. Also had a great time talking to the Fredksorpset representatives from Bangkok, Cherry and Serena, about education, conflict resolution, and changing the world. I finally went to bed at 11:00 pm having been up for 41 hours.

Day 2

The meeting started again at 9:00 am and went on till 7:30 pm. Exhausting! Through the day, über photographer/activist/hero *Shahidul Alam's* heart protested at what it is put through on a daily basis and he had to keep going off to the hospital for all manner of tests. We were worried sick but Shahidul was not even vaguely concerned and was bothered only about his impending trip to Dar es Salam and the lack of a visa. After much harassment and bullying, he cancelled his trip and decided to go straight home to Dhaka for an angiogram. Having had my fill of rice and curry, I decided I was going off to the Gallery Cafe on Paradise Road for dinner. Nalaka, Manori (TVEAP), Shahidul, Chulie (World Bank) and I took off and we had a divine meal.

The Gallery Cafe used to be Geoffrey Bawa's (Sri Lanka's most prolific and influential architect) office and has been converted into a gorgeous studio, bar and cafe. Full of urns, stones, and trees, the place has the most wonderful energy and vibe. It's contemporary and modern but so close to nature that it makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside. I had crumbed oyster mushrooms followed by lemongrass and ginger chicken. I can't describe the food without being hyperbolic. Insert all GenX/GenY awesome type words here.

Got back to the hotel and Chulie and I helped Shahidul pack. I got lots of schwag from Shahidul's various conferences, including a red beret and a t-shirt that says, "Take Control, Edit Naked". We chatted non-stop and saw him off at 11:30 pm. Straight to bed.

Day 3

I had great plans to go to the *Barefoot Gallery* and *Odel* on the third day as the meeting was to conclude the previous day. However, it didn't. Shahidul had left at

night so had to help Drik India and Bangladesh with their content editing, as well as compile the partnership agreement for Round 2 of the Exchange Programme. Desperate to escape from the hotel, Mashood and I ran off to the Gallery Cafe for lunch where we had superb ravioli with black olives and feta, to die for chocolate fondue with orange ice cream and amazing frozen strawberry margaritas. WOW, WOW, WOW.

Came back to the meeting in no mood to work but had tons to do and finally finished at 5:30 pm. Nalaka had set up a meeting for me with a Sri Lankan web design firm's CEO so I had to meet him at 6:30 pm while the rest of the group went off to the beach. Got done with that at 7:30 pm and was at a loose end. Guess where I ended up? Gallery Cafe! Ordered onion rings as a starter and between the time I ordered them and they came, I thought, how stupid I am, why waste money on stuff that's available at home. Hmmm - when they arrived and I sank my teeth into the first one, I realized that there are onion rings and then there are ONION RINGS. Ooooooh! Had a chilled gazpacho soup and char-grilled vegetable salad for dinner and took back a lemon meringue pie for dessert. Lovely! Got to the hotel, sent for a spoon, and watched *The Untouchables* after 15 years and savored each bite of the delicious pie.

Day 4

Got up at 7:00 am, showered, and ran out of Renuka hotel. Went to the *Galle Face*, an ancient colonial hotel, for breakfast and had croissants, three types of cheese, danish pastries, fresh pineapple, a cheese omelette, sausages, avocado juice, and strong espresso. *Yes, I already said I was on a diet.* Walked on the beach, watched children and dogs playing in the sand, took pictures, and generally had a leisurely time doing nothing in particular - am not used to anything less than a frenetic pace so it was a very novel experience.

Got to Odel at 10:00 am - bought a few things and just marvelled at how even the Sri Lankans "get it". Will elaborate some other time. Those who "get it" know what I mean. After Odel, I went off to the Barefoot Gallery which was started by Barbara Sansoni in the mid 1960's. It is a lovely space that showcases the work of local artists and sells gorgeously bright, cheerful, and funky coloured stuff. Sat under the trees and had a coffee milkshake, while it poured with rain. Bought a friendship band because I was missing my friend Yasmin who used to make fabulous bands for us at school.

Came back to the hotel and started reading "*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*" by Mark Haddon. The narrator of this story is an autistic 15 year old who relaxes by groaning and doing math problems in his head. He eats red but not yellow or brown foods and screams when he is touched. When his neighbour's poodle is murdered, he is falsely accused and decides that he will do some "detecting" and get to the bottom of the mystery, Sherlock Holmes style. Finished the book on the plane. A truly unique tale and a must-read. After finishing the book, I felt as if I'd lost my best friend so turned to my iPod for solace. Am really enjoying "Crazy" by Gnarl's Barkley these days, in addition to "Storm Warning" by Bob James & Hilary James. Guilty pleasure: "You Had a Bad Day".

All round great trip even though 3 out of 4 days were spent locked inside the Renuka Hotel Conference Room. The next meeting is in Oslo, Norway.

Peace!

Saturday, June 24th, 2006

Schon Circle gets weirder by the day. What on earth is this hideousity?

Does our City Nazim get a bonus each time a new monstrosity is unveiled?

Monday, June 26th, 2006

Image A: My Nani, aged 30, at a fancy dress party in Dhaka.

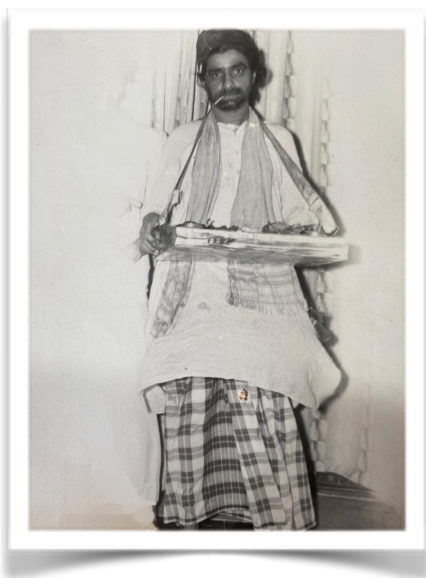


Image B: My Nani, aged 30, a week later, at a regular party in Dhaka.

(Can't find this picture anywhere. If anyone has it please post it to Mahenaz - Zak)

Nani used some of my mother's hair for her mustache and beard for the *paan vaala* costume. She won the first prize at the fancy dress party.

Tuesday, June 27th, 2006

The Answer is 42

Yesterday, I was invited to an IT industry dinner to meet professionals from across South Asia and South East Asia. The visitors were part of an Asia-Oceania Association that represents companies collectively worth 200 billion dollars, or something like that.

Nasreen Jalil, our "Honourable" City Naib Nazim, addressed the group.

Highlights from her speech:

1. Karachi is a progressive, modern city and a haven for investors.
2. Several new underpasses and overpasses are being built.
3. 400 new cars join the humming flow of traffic each day.
4. A state-of-the-art IT Tower is being constructed. Its claim to fame: tallest building in the region.
5. Although bombs explode every so often, such as the one in Nishtar Park, the citizens of Karachi are amazing and pick up bodies and take them to the hospital without burning buses along the way.
6. The Sindh IT Minister is an IT Buff.
7. Karachi is virgin territory so the CEOs of these companies worth 200 billion dollars should come and do stuff here.

Point 7 provoked the Head of the Association to remark that this Virgin territory could do with ConDoms that would result in Productivity. Con = Confidence and Dom = Domination.

Ewww! Whatever ...

I am a thoroughbred Karachiite and couldn't survive for a second in any other city of Pakistan. I was born here, grew up here, and totally love the throb and the vibe of Karachi. However, I am not delusional. Our city of "lights" is filthy, smelly, and ugly. It is controlled by mafias of every size, shape, and agenda. It is full of potholes and ditches and is growing wildly in every direction, without any urban planning. The IT and Business revolutions are being powered by generators and diesel, not KESC supplied electricity that we pay for. Read: extortion. Every day, 40 cars and 29 cellphones are stolen. Et-cetera.

I care deeply about this city, not because I am patriotic or nationalistic, but simply because I live here and so do 15 million other people. I find it unbearable that our smug politicians and business people deem progress to be the building of another fucking IT Tower that will be taller than any other in the region. HOW IS THIS IMPORTANT OR RELEVANT? I am thrilled that Wateen Telecom is building a nationwide WiMax network. That's progress. They are a private firm.

The fucking Government, instead of printing full-page ads in the newspaper about General Musharraf's fantastic reign of power, needs to give us clean water, electricity, and the assurance that we will not have our brains blown out by bombs whenever we step out of our homes. KESC: if you can't give us any electricity because WAPDA cuts off supplies, and because you can't control the zillion illegal connections, and because hi-tension lines snap every 30 seconds, then don't charge us until you can get your act together. And give us a goddamn plan. What exactly is wrong and when exactly will you fix it? And spare us the PR bullshit.

None of this is new and I sound like a broken record. I will be accused of complaining and not doing anything about all this. I have stuck it out in this city for 32 years - i.e. all my life.

When I wanted to run away, Dr. Eqbal Ahmed said, don't go. This place needs people who care and who will change things. So I stayed. And tried. Every damn day, every waking moment. And now, the lifeblood is leaking out of me. Yes, "Impossible is Nothing" but really, it is now Impossible to make any real difference when you are a total misfit.

I am tortured by two things: the Government and Big Business - and of course, both are inextricably linked. Now I am rambling ... and I have a headache because there is no electricity and I have deadlines.

More later ...

Wednesday, July 12th, 2006

If you're a blogger, or read blogs, you've probably heard of MySpace - the ultra hip, trendy, social networking site for young people between the ages of 14 and 34. MySpace launched in January 2004 and its popularity has exploded in recent months, outnumbering other online hangouts like Facebook, Orkut, and Friendster by millions. The site is ad-supported and membership is growing by 5 million a month!! It now has 80 million users. According to MediaMetrix, MySpace is the 18th most-visited site on the Web and in terms of page views, came in ahead of eBay and Google (November 2005).

Rupert Murdoch was paying attention. In June 2005, he bought MySpace for US\$ 580 million, in a bid to leverage the awesome potential of the Internet.

On June 19th, 2006, a 14 year old Texas girl and her mother filed a US\$ 30 million lawsuit against MySpace and its owner News Corporation for failing to protect young users. The girl claims that a 19 year old boy, posing as a high-school footballer, lured her to an apartment building's parking lot and sexually assaulted her. This, along with other reports of sexual predators lurking on MySpace, have raised concerns about the site's open-door policies.

My question: Should MySpace be blamed, or have to take responsibility for the baser instincts of the human(?) race? Do the 14 year old, who obviously has permission to go out on her own, and her mother, who is obligated to safeguard her child's interests, have no responsibilities? Should MySpace be prosecuted, or should the 19 year old have his ass hauled into court for a well-deserved prison sentence?

The Internet provides easier and faster access to pornography and gives predators a host of exploitation opportunities. However, sexual crimes and violations are committed offline.

Instead of ramping up on vigilance methods and tech/social culture savviness, misguided parents and governments want to regulate and censor the first and only truly free medium on Planet Earth. People always find ways to do what they want to do. NetNanny and other idiotic forms of censorship are not going to prevent or protect kids from the real world. What *will* protect them is information, awareness, and open discussions on values, safety, and survival.

Sunday, July 30th, 2006

Chapter 199 from “the curious incident of the dog in the night-time” narrated by an autistic 15 year old english boy. The chapter numbers are prime numbers and the boy calms himself by groaning and doing math problems in his head.

On God and Evolution:

People believe in God because the world is very complicated and they think it is very unlikely that anything as complicated as a flying squirrel or the human eye or a brain could happen by chance. But they should think logically and if they thought logically they would see that they can only ask this question because it has already happened and they exist. And there are billions of planets where there is no life, but there is no one on those planets with brains to notice. And it is like if everyone in the world was tossing coins eventually someone would get 5,698 heads in a row and they would think they were very special. But they wouldn't be because there would be millions of people who didn't get 5,698 heads.

And there is life on earth because of an accident. But it is a very special kind of accident. And for this accident to happen in this special way, there have to be 3 *conditions*. And these are:

1. Things have to make copies of themselves (this is called **Replication**)
2. They have to make small mistakes when they do this (this is called **Mutation**)
3. These mistakes have to be the same in their copies (this is called **Heritability**)

And these conditions are very rare, but they are possible, and they cause life. And it just happens. But it doesn't have to end up with rhinoceroses and human beings and whales. It could end up with anything.

And, for example, some people say how can an eye happen by accident? Because an eye has to evolve from something else very like an eye and it doesn't just happen because of a genetic mistake, and what is the use of half an eye? But half an eye is very useful because half an eye means that an animal can see half of an animal that wants to eat it and get out of the way, and it will eat the animal that only has a third of an eye or 49% of an eye instead because it hasn't got out of the way quick enough, and the animal that is eaten won't have babies because it is dead. And 1% of an eye is better than no eye.

And people who believe in God think God has put human beings on Earth because they think human beings are the best animal, but human beings are just an animal and they will evolve into another animal, and that animal will be cleverer and will put human beings into a zoo, like we put chimpanzees and gorillas into a zoo. Or human beings will all catch a disease and die out or they will make too much pollution and kill themselves, and then there will be only insects in the world and they will be the best animal.

Monday, September 4th, 2006

There are movies, and then, there are life-altering experiences.

"Judgement at Nuremberg" placed 4 Nazi judges on trial before a panel of 3 American judges, for war crimes, and made me question seemingly simple notions of right and wrong till I felt sick to the bone.

"Quo Vadis" brought to life the time of Nero in the most spectacular fashion.

"Luther" coldly illustrated the unbelievable selling and branding machine that is religion.

"12 Angry Men" tore the infallible American judicial process to shreds.

"Cinema Paradiso" - at the risk of being labeled an inarticulate Gen X idiot - was simply awesome.

I was a trifle apprehensive before watching Cinema Paradiso. I was exhausted after weeks of all-nighters at work, the film was in Italian with English sub-titles, and I'd heard so much about it being such a wonderful film, that I feared I might end up hating it.

However ...

For over 2 hours, I sat mesmerized by one of the finest films ever made. Told mostly through flashbacks, Cinema Paradiso is about one man's love affair with films, and his special friendship with a projectionist. That may not sound particularly exciting but I don't want to give away the story. It was all about the small touches and details - the stunning direction, the gorgeous cinematography, adorable little Toto, Alfredo - the real hero, the priest whom you can't help but like, the lilt of Italian dialogue (am so glad it wasn't in English), the smoothness with which numerous other stories were told alongside the main plot without hype and confusion, the evolution of a little village, and of course, the myriad glimpses into the golden age of movies.

This is not a movie that you like or don't like. It's just too special to be conveniently boxed into a category or superficially commented on. Cinema Paradiso is a multi-sensory feast, and a movie made with heart, mind, and soul.

In awe!

P.S. Zak, thank you for waiting patiently. One has to experience a little bit of what life has to offer (and take away) before watching Cinema Paradiso to truly appreciate it. And I do intend to watch it again, and again, so that I can focus on different aspects each time.

Thursday, September 7th, 2006

I was standing in line at the departure gate at Karachi's Jinnah Terminal, waiting to board a flight to London on Qatar Airways. Suddenly, I heard my name on the public announcement system, asking me to report to the boarding desk. I nearly died. I was only *thinking* blasphemous thoughts.

With trepidation, I approached the Qatar Airways desk and let them know I was Ms. Sabeen Mahmud. One of the chaps took my boarding card, handed me another, and dismissed me. I was like, huh? I asked what was up and he said,

“Oh, we’ve upgraded you to Business Class.” I was flummoxed and weakly asked, “Why?” He said, “Dil chah raha tha!!” Rather perturbed, I again asked why. So he said, “Well if you don’t want it, give it back.” and swapped the cards. I snatched the Business Class boarding pass right back and said, “Of course I want it.” No reasons were forthcoming so I said Thank You (I hope), and got back in line.

I have no idea what this upgrade was about but it was a treat and a half. The seats were to die for, the espresso was bitter and strong, and the cheese omelette, while not exactly fluffy, was pretty darn decent for an airline egg. Tragically, the upgrade was only for the Karachi-Doha sector which is merely a two hour flight. I am now sitting amongst the teeming masses, back where I belong, in Economy Class, on my 7 hour flight to London. I almost wish I hadn’t had a whiff of Business Class. BTW, the 15 inch PowerBook/MacBook Pro is a horrifically tight squeeze in Economy, so anyone who travels a lot and is planning to buy a Mac and doesn’t need the speed of a Pro machine, get a 13 inch MacBook. At least you won’t die of shoulder cramps, while computing.

More from Oslo ...

Update: The gentleman I was sitting next to on the flight from Doha to London informed me that they upgraded some people because they were overbooked in Economy. So it wasn’t my charisma after all.

In entirely unrelated news, the above-mentioned gentleman supplies Electro-Magnetic Interference prevention/reduction technology to Apple Computer Inc. for the Airport cards in the Mac Minis. Wonder if that “Interface Robustness” option in the Airport menu is a dud as interference issues are handled by rubber tube type thinggies not software.

Whatever ...

Sunday, September 10th, 2006

A few months ago, I learnt that I’d be coming to Oslo in September to participate in a forum organized by Fredskorpset. FK originally used to be the Norwegian Peace Corps and is now a development organization that focuses on “bringing

people together”. FK’s focus is conflict resolution, peace building, sustainable development and human resource capacity building.

With only two days in Oslo, I realized there wouldn’t be much I could do on my own, especially since the FK program was packed with a zillion activities.

However, I was curious to know what sort of art, music, and theatre fare the city of Edvard Munch and Henrik Ibsen had to offer. A Google search revealed plenty of activity. However, a single word, amidst scores of events, blew me away.

My eyes popped out of their sockets. *Hair*? The American Tribal Love/Rock Musical? In Oslo? During my trip? I proceeded to fall off the couch I was sprawled on. It was indeed, *THAT Hair*!

I’d never seen a stage performance of the 60s cult classic and decided I was going to go, even though the musical was in Norwegian. Having watched the movie 69 billion times, and being in sync with every nuance of the soundtrack, I figured that language was hardly an issue.

A bit of background on *Hair* ...

Hair is synonymous with the peace, drugs, anti-draft, free love, and music culture of the 1960s. The show tells the stories of a “tribe” of young, larger than life, politically conscious hippies who take on the establishment, fight being drafted into the Vietnam War, and know how to have a rocking good time. *Hair* premiered off-Broadway in the late 60s and features a Grammy award winning score.



In 1979, the movie version of *Hair* was released and was directed by Miloš Forman. The soundtrack defies description. Songs like Aquarius, Flesh Failures/Let the Sunshine In, Easy To Be Hard, Good Morning Starshine, Hair, Ain't Got No, I Got Life, Manchester England, Colored Spade, and Where Do I Go, actually all the songs, are musically superb and lyrically profound and challenging.

After arriving in Oslo, with a very special envelope containing 50 dollars for the *Hair* ticket, I called the Det Norske Teatret. To my total horror, I was informed that the show was all sold out and there were zero chances of getting a ticket. I cried a little. Anyway, after listening to three Nobel Peace Laureates at Oslo City Hall, I felt somewhat inspired (more on them later) and decided to take a chance.

I ran out of City Hall at 4:00 pm in search of the theatre. That day's show was scheduled to start at 5:00 pm. Inside the theatre, the box office folks said, "We're terribly sorry, but the show has been booked by a company and it's a closed performance, and you cannot get a ticket".

Slightly shattered, but undeterred, I went in search of the Posten (the Norwegian Postal Service) reception desk. They were celebrating 50 years, or maybe 100, and had organized a grand event, with flowing wine, dinner, and of course, *Hair*.

With knots in my stomach, I approached a Posten representative who looked like she was in charge. The words stuck in my throat - she reminded me of a school headmistress - and for what seemed like an eternity, I froze. Anyway, I explained that I was visiting from Pakistan, that *Hair* was not merely a musical with mind-blowing song and dance sequences, but was an ideology/philosophy/the real meaning of life type thing for me, that I didn't understand a word of Norwegian but was still desperate to see the show, that I'd stand in the back inconspicuously, pay any amount of money, etc.

Basically, I begged, pleaded, and groveled for 30 seconds. She looked at me as if I was nuts. Well, I am nuts but that's a post for another day. She then went off to speak to a higher authority, and time stood still. She came back and said, "OK, we shall let you in." I hugged her and went to the bathroom to cry my eyes out.

Britt, the wonderful lady, actually not even remotely like a school headmistress, was the bee's knees. She handed me a real ticket at around 5:00 pm, so I finally had proof that it wasn't a dream. Every now and then, she'd walk over to where I

was anxiously sitting to say that I'd have to wait a little longer and to assure me that she'd come get me.

At 6:00 pm, Britt came round and said, "Come with me". I followed her into the theatre like a kid who has just been handed a 6 scoop ice-cream cone. I couldn't quite believe what was happening because she led me to the middle of the first row and said, "Please be seated," - like, 2 feet away from the stage. Woooooot!!!!!!

Oh, I wasn't charged any money for the ticket.

The show began with a hair-raising(ly) rousing rendition of Aquarius. I was so close to the stage that I could have touched the performers. Immediately and dramatically striking was the contemporary design of sets and costumes and the ultra modern interpretation. There was a lot of technology and animation and it didn't feel at all like a 60s show. Claude Bukowski, dressed like an H&M model even had a video camera. The modern-ness didn't detract at all and in fact, it's wonderful that a new generation of artistes are still inspired enough by *Hair* to re-invent it and weave the original story into new settings and circumstances. It was powerful, intense, brilliantly performed, and the music ... Ohhhhhh - to die for.

All the singers had stunning voices but particularly impressive was the rendition of Easy To Be Hard. I happily sang along in English throughout, laughed, cried, and generally had the time of my life. After the show, I went backstage and met Hudd (stage name), the hot African American, and he told me that the directors, choreographers, actors and dancers decided they wanted to re-interpret *Hair* and did not want, in any way, to be influenced by the original versions. They came up with something totally unique in 8 weeks. Unbelievable. Kudos!

Britt, you rock. Thank you ever so much for making the impossible, possible. I have been walking on sunshine since the 7th of September.

Sunday, September 17th, 2006

Mac users are often accused of being rabid about everything to do with their favorite fruity company. We sit up all night to listen to SteveNotes, we follow the rumor boards like our lives depend on knowing exactly when revamped iPod Nanos will hit store shelves, we know when new versions of the OS are seeded to developers for testing, we fret about Jonathan Ive jumping ship to another

company (he designed the iPod, the iMac, the Mac Mini, and the G5), we endlessly debate the move to Intel chips, and we ‘evangelize’ non-stop. Mostly, we are fanatical supporters of a company that consistently hits the high notes of innovation, mouth-watering industrial design, and unparalleled user experience.

However, we are also Apple’s harshest critics, contrary to popular belief. The subject of my gripe today are the so-called Geniuses at Apple’s Retail Stores across the US, Europe, and Japan. I haven’t encountered too many as I am a power user and the only reason I’d go anywhere near a Genius would be for hardware support. The very concept of a Genius is disgusting. These are just folks who know more about Apple hardware and software than the average user. So? Big bloody deal. They’re paid to know more.

Macs have always been touted as “computers for the rest of us”. They’re good to go out of the box, the user manuals are written in English not geekspeak, the OS and most applications conform to Apple’s Human Interface Guidelines so everything is consistent and easy to use, and really, Macs just work. Nevertheless, scores of people feel insecure around technology and genuinely believe that they aren’t good with computers. Why underscore this anxiety by branding glorified tech support staff as Geniuses, furthering the divide between an average user and the “super powers”?

Yesterday, at the Apple Store in London, I was sitting around checking mail and generally feeling happy being amidst “family”. I was discussing the new iPods with a couple of folk and this harried girl came up to me, practically in tears, and asked if I knew a lot about Macs. I said I did and, most apologetically, she asked if I could help her out with a couple of things. A Genius at the Genius Bar told her that her iBook was displaying a flashing question mark at startup because she needed a new hard drive, and her computer couldn’t connect to the Internet because the Store was offline. Bullshit on both counts. The flashing question mark issue was solved in 4 seconds, simply by selecting her hard drive as the Startup Disk, as opposed to a Network Disk. The Internet at the Store had possibly not been working for a few moments but when I launched Safari, her start page loaded instantly and she was up and running. In her traumatized state, she thought that her computer had huge problems that were preventing her from going online. The Genius had not even bothered to check and had dismissed her contemptuously, probably thinking she wasn’t worthy of his time.

Absolutely appalling.

After a while, I had a question about a DVI to Video connector and approached the Genius Bar with trepidation. I asked if there was a queue and this bastard Genius said, "Well, if it's a quick and silly question, I can answer it now". Why didn't I didn't blast him out of the universe?

A Genius is one who has exceptional intellectual or creative power. The only thing these guys have is exceptional bad ass attitude, and Apple would do well to re-think their approach to technical support. In an attempt to make a Help Desk sexy, Apple is alienating customers with this idiotic, decidedly unGenius concept and I wish they'd train their people to be less heavy-handed and condescending.

Tuesday, October 10th, 2006

I recently spoke with a friend who has been using a relatively ancient G3 Powerbook for several years. She says it provides everything she needs to get her work done and doesn't see any reason to upgrade. On the rare occasion that she has a problem, or needs tech support, the Geniuses at the Genius Bar are on-call - friendly, helpful, responsive, and very capable. The Apple Store she frequents is in Chicago.

Of note is the fact that this particular customer was obviously not in the market for a new Mac and wasn't remotely interested in add-ons or accessories. The Genius Bar is meant to solve problems and provide support to users of Apple products - and that's what they do, at least in Chicago, irrespective of the possibility of new business. I must also acknowledge that the Chicago Geniuses were very kind to me a few years ago - they replaced the two missing "feet" on my Powerbook, free of cost. Super savings, considering that Corporate America bills by the second. My friend also mentioned that the Geniuses were consistent in their attitude to all types of customers - ranging from novices to prosumers, and an abundance of adolescents with iPods.

I maintain that I have issues with the whole Genius branding bit but just wanted to highlight another customer's positive experiences with the bartenders.

Tuesday, October 10th, 2006

All my friends are now married and most of them have kids, whilst my list of “requirements” continues to grow. The institution of marriage holds little appeal, but if I must, one thing I won’t do is “settle” ...

Despairing of my lack of interest in the matrimonial department, a friend who truly gets what makes me tick, wrote a personals ad, which I just found whilst looking through old mail:

Wanted

Sensitive, intelligent reformer and activist interested in world peace and good jazz. Peaceniks and nuclear non proliferators may be favored over other applicants though good looks will be given special preference in judging among equally qualified applicants. Gentle eyes and sexy butts are especially appreciated. Non Apple Mac enthusiasts and people who do not regularly wash their feet need not apply. Send applications with digitally retouched photo attached via Internet, to iloveipodsandhatetheestablishment.pk.net

;-)

Tuesday, October 17th, 2006

The Mobilink Challenge

1. Go to the Mobilink website
2. Choose the HTML or Flash version, depending on the speed of your Internet connection
3. Locate a Mobilink HelpLine/Customer Support number (UAN) that you can call from a landline

Time Limit: 15 minutes

Note: The Islamabad Head Office number listed under Contact Us doesn’t count.

If you find the UAN, please let me know the URL and indicate the path you took to get there. The first person to post a valid comment will receive one of Pink Floyd’s greatest songs ever, “The Final Cut”. If you already have the song, I will

direct gobs of positive energy your way. If you hate Pink Floyd, I will recommend a good doctor.

Tuesday, November 21st, 2006

Yesterday, Dawn and Aurora held a conference entitled “Marketing to the Youth” and I was invited to participate in a panel discussion on the implications of new, participatory media such as blogs, and podcasts. I was asked to get there at 4:30 as our session was to start at 4:45. Well, it didn’t begin until 7:30 by which time 3/4 of the audience had left and the remaining misbegotten souls were zonked out of their brains.

3 people from our panel didn’t show up and the so-called discussion lasted for a grand total of 8 minutes. WTF? This is indicative of the value the old media/establishment places on new media. Typical and so fucking lame. The moderator kept referring to us as technology-savvy experts, which probably further alienates media types. Yes, we “get” tech but this whole new media thing is about the power of people engaging with each other and providing platforms for interaction. But who cares when money can be made the same way it’s always been made? Most advertisers and marketers in Pakistan recognize that the Internet is where the action is, especially when it comes to the youth. This is evident in the responses from agency chiefs in the bumper issue of Aurora. So, it would have sorta made sense for these guys to have listened to us for a change.

But, who can deal with change? Shove the token kids/techies at the end somewhere so that history celebrates Dawn for recognizing the role of new media when it was in its infancy in Pakistan.

Much worse, however, is the entire notion of marketing to children. Having raped and saturated every other segment/target/eyeball of society, the kids are fresh meat. It was Universal Children’s Day yesterday. But this show was all about capturing lucrative, untapped, young hearts and minds. Sell products, make money, satisfy shareholders - nothing new here other than the victims.

The “highlight” of the day was a gora from Young and Rubicam, who spelt Bill Bernbach’s name wrong on his first slide, after stating that he was a personal hero. He showed a series of disgusting ads targeted at children, replete with vile voice-overs, and when they ended, he said, “They’re violent but the kids love

them”. He concluded his presentation by stating that the advertising industry is extremely influential and has a social responsibility. *What drivel.*

When the floor was opened for questions, I told him that there was an inherent contradiction in his presentation. If you mindlessly provide violent entertainment to kids, because you “think” they “like” it, then why talk about social responsibility? We live in a macho, violent, male-dominated world, and producing ads driven by militant, aggressive language is ridiculously irresponsible. He said, “Oh I agree, I don’t like the voice-overs in those ads!”

Why the fuck did you show 5 of them then? Why reinforce a notion you don’t believe in? People like this are dangerous and ads of this nature are nothing short of child abuse. Another gora said, “I agree with the young lady but you see we are in competition with Hollywood and you have to attack with what’s edgy and in demand”. Vah! Have to? Attack? Has the advertising industry fucking lost its collective mind? And then people wonder what’s wrong with today’s kids. Can they not make basic links? Connect dots?

Empires crumble. They do. We just have to wait. Patiently. But we must not stop raising our voices against injustice. If you are a new parent, please spend time with your children. Understand what’s going on in the world, on the Internet, in schools, on MTV. Don’t censor rigidly without discussion. And please, learn to read between the lines of ads and make an effort to understand the effect of media on young minds.

On a positive note, it was refreshing to receive books instead of a plaque for participating in the conference

Wednesday, November 29th, 2006

The tradition of breaking the spirits of young people is alive and well at my alma mater.

The following charming comments were made by a female teacher who works with 9 year-olds:

1. You have a large head but no brains.
2. You belong in an Urdu Medium school.

3. Why were you in the toilet for so long? You must have been crying because you couldn't change your clothes yourself (the child was actually helping a friend).

The S.C.H.O.O.L. is the only enterprise in the modern world that gets away with blatant criminal activity without any public accountability. When a child fails, she is stupid. When a child is distracted, he has attention deficit disorder. When children talk in class, they are rude, obnoxious brats. It rarely occurs to anyone to question the quality of services being provided by the school and its teachers.

Parents who try are punished; their children are victimized by teachers in not so subtle ways until the message gets through: DON'T MESS WITH US.

No other service-oriented profession operates like this. Employee motivation, skills, and up-to-date knowledge are the responsibility of the individual and the employer; not of society. Why should the customer have to deal with the malaise afflicting education?

Schools operate like mafias and nobody in their right minds will take them on.

But for how long?

Wednesday, December 27th, 2006

Just heard a spectacular rendition of Hey Joe by Michael Pitt and the Twins of Evil. It's off the soundtrack of *The Dreamers*, a steamy French/American film by Bernardo Bertolucci. Can't find the damn song anywhere though *The Dreamers* centers around 3 beautiful people coming of age, and just coming a lot, and is set in 1968 Paris, during a tumultuous time of political upheaval and sexual experimentation. The film is a visual treat and occasionally intelligent, but prudes should stay away.

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2006 will mark the end of social networking on the Web.

2007 will usher in the era of post social networking and ever more obscene sums of money will be thrown at 22 year olds - until the Web 2.0 bubble bursts ...

Microsoft put up a special edition, Orange Zune on eBay ... with an opening price of 750 dollars. Nobody bid.

Am currently reading *Letter to a Christian Nation* by Sam Harris. He's cogent, articulate, smart, witty ... (and married). If you're tip-toeing around coming out of the closet (the GOD closet), this is the book to read. Actually, irrespective of your position on faith, religion, and God, *Letter to a Christian Nation* is a must-read.

.....

Al Jazeera's English news channel is awesome. Their tagline is *Setting the News Agenda* - which is so much more meaningful than *Be the First to Know*. "Al Jazeera English is destined to be the English-language channel of reference for Middle Eastern events, balancing the current typical information flow by reporting from the developing world back to the West and from the southern to the northern hemisphere. The channel gives voice to untold stories, promotes debate, and challenges established perceptions." ROCK ON!

The lineup of speakers for TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) 2007 has been announced. As the conference is unaffordable, at US\$ 4,500, and is completely sold out, wait for the videos to be unleashed. It's an absolutely fantastic show. This year's speakers include Alan Kay, Bill Clinton, Edward DeBono, Isabel Allende, Jeff Skoll, John Doerr, John Maeda, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Lawrence Lessig, Paul Simon, Richard Branson, Steven Pinker, Tracy Chapman, and Will Wright (the man behind the ground-breaking video game, Spore). There are loads of other amazing folk - evolutionary biologists, slam poets, humorists, composers, illustrators, designers, Nobel Laureates, photojournalists, nanotechnologists, cave explorers ... AAAAAAAOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

In January, New York retailer Saks Fifth Avenue, will unveil a new identity with more variations than there are electrons in the known universe.

The Process - as described by Michael Beirut of Pentagram

Kaafir shavad aan kas kay ba inkaar baraamad
Mardood-e-jahaan shud

But (*again!*) for how long?