

# PAPER

GET IN ON THE ACTION CULTURE  
**SPORTS, ART, COMMERCE**  
AND THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE

ROAR  
**RIHANNA**  
ROAR

*August  
2007*

THE GOOD, THE BAD,  
**THE RIHANNA**

\$4.00US \$5.50CAN



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**08.07**  
**OPINION**  
*with artwork by MEGAN BURNS*  
 (CURATED BY CARLO MCCORMICK)



**EYESPY**  
 by DAVID  
 HERSHKOVITS

**PLAY BALL!**

In the PAPER world that I navigate, team sports don't get any respect. LeBron James, Tony Parker (basketball) and Jose Reyes (baseball), to give you three examples, are superstars of their respective sports yet would merit barely a nod of recognition among the fashion cognoscenti. Skateboarding, snowboarding and surfing, on the other hand, are the hip sports of the moment. A few names pop up in the indie sports pantheon—Kelly Slater, Shaun White, Tony Alva—but for the most part, when it comes to media attention, they get very little. And that probably goes a long way toward explaining why team sports have lost their edge to the board people who now hold sway on hipster

sports du jour. Rather than shooting one hundred foul shots and working on going to their left, kids today would rather ride their skateboards, endlessly repeating the same tricks, working on perfecting the imperfectable.

Watching two dozen or so skateboarders going through their paces in Tompkins Square Park, as they do on a daily basis, I'm struck by the harmony of their movements, as one after another scampers onto his board in an attempt to nail a wheelie or some variation thereof. There are always a few girls in the mix and, among those enjoying a break from the action on the benches, a social scene of handclaps and head nods. The sense of community is palpable but not threatening. It's cool to skateboard and they know it. And I know it.

But to tell you the God's honest truth, I really don't get it. I don't skateboard, never did. I love to play all the wrong sports, particularly baseball and basketball. Yet I understand skateboarding's appeal. As the image of the rock star has changed from ego to emo so has the image of the modern-day-sports hero. No chest thumping or hyper-caffeinated high fives here. Barely a word can be heard above the trance-like drone made by the sound of rolling trucks—like a piece by Philip Glass. The repeated movements contribute to

the theatrical experience—half ritual, half improvised—a dance on wheels complete with its own soundtrack.

On the Avenue B side of Tompkins Square, it's another story. Two full-size basketball courts contain the ebb and flow of the game. Rap is definitely the beat, and the art of one-upmanship is in full play. The teams are a mishmash of neighborhood schoolyard legends, their older brothers and intense white guys with good fundamentals. There's

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no community here—what brings the players together is a round ball and the lines on the court within which they must contain their game. Occasionally, a pushing match will break out, someone will foul with a bit too much enthusiasm, but mostly the game is played by the rules.

What all sports have in common are rules—a way of doing things that's mutually agreed upon and self-policing, a black-and-white world with an occasional gray. Which is why prisons can have basketball games and hostile countries can host soccer matches. Once you are within the lines on the field, you are subject to a higher power, a rule book—let's call it a bible—that delineates what is admissible and what is forbidden and what is punishable by fines or penalties. There's honor among thieves and respect for the prescribed rules within the lines that mark the outline of the court.

The big three of team sports—baseball, basketball and football (and hockey too, if you want to throw that in)—have been hijacked by a corporate mentality (or lack thereof) best exemplified by the culture of ESPN Zone. That the National Basketball Association All Star game held last year in Las Vegas attracted record numbers of prostitutes tells you more than you want to know. Perhaps, it's a generational thing for me. There wasn't much skateboarding on the east coast, where I grew up after moving to this country. For me, team sports were a bonding experience that opened a door into the heart of what it means to be an American—with a common language, rules we can all abide by and a place where hard work pays off and talent prevails. It was in basketball, stickball and touch football that reputations were made.

What all this suggests to me is that times have changed and young people are more interested in being defined by community and culture than they are in joining a team in which everyone has to wear the same uniform and swear allegiance to the nation state of the New York Knicks.



**ONCE UPON A TIME IN A HEALTH FOOD RESTAURANT FAR FAR AWAY . . .**

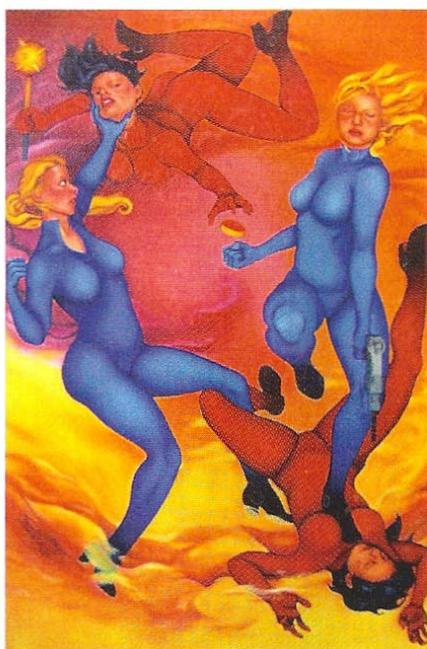
In Woody Allen's classic 1977 film *Annie Hall*, Diane Keaton's Annie takes Allen's alter ego Alvy Singer to a West Hollywood health-food restaurant. He

orders the "mashed yeast," and we all have a big laugh at the health-food craze sweeping the rapid, southern California landscape.

The restaurant was not a movie set but a very real health-nut enclave called the Source. Located on Sunset Boulevard and Sweetzer in West Hollywood, the Source was one of the first cultural landmarks I made a point of visiting when I first began my bi-coastal she-bop in the mid-'80s (they closed in 1994). While the Source did not serve mashed yeast, they did offer a tasty cornucopia of whole-grain and raw health foods that delighted my inner hippie chick. Now it's a Baja-style party bar filled with flat screen TVs and plastic Corona beer pillows. The convalescent home across the street is long gone, replaced by André Balazs's ultraslick Standard Hotel.

But the ghosts of the restaurant's mashed-yeast past have risen from the ashes of Woody Allen's disdain and are back to bear witness to a lost but essential part of L.A. history. A new book called *The Source: The Untold Story of Father Yod, Ya Ho Wha 13 and the Source Family* (Process, \$24.95) tells the surreal and epic story of a band of idealistic, velvet-robed hippie occultists and the sexy, charismatic ex-Marine known by his surrogate flower children as Father Yod.

Jodi Wille, the copublisher of Process Media (along with husband Adam Parfrey), is responsible for hunting



down former members of the obscure Source Family and has assembled a treasure trove of interviews, writings, rare photographs and even far-out, psychedelic music—the book comes with a CD—by folks with names like Sunflower, Prism, Mushroom, Aquanana, Octavius and Zinaru. The book's authors are Isis Aquarian and Electricity Aquarian. Isis was one of Father Yod's 13 "wives" (and was also designated Keeper of the Records at the commune), and Electricity one of the many "brothers" in the group.

Father Yod (aka YaHoWha) was born James Edward Baker. His life was destined to become a major motion pic-

**"As Father Yod, Baker had his own horde of suburban-kids-turned-hippie disciples who joined him in creating a homespun and wholegrain Utopia in a Hollywood Hills mansion once owned by Catherine Deneuve."**

ture (Wille is already being hounded by producers for the film rights). A decorated WWII hero who became a Marine Corps judo champion, Jim Baker made his way west when he heard they were casting a new Tarzan. He didn't get the part, but he met a girl and married her, and together they began a spiritual quest inspired by the writings of Canadian-born mystic Manly P. Hall. The couple eventually found themselves in Topanga Canyon among the West Coast beatniks known as the Nature Boys—Jack La Lanne, Gypsy Boots and Eden Ahbez, who wrote the song "Nature Boy" (which Nat King Cole later turned into a popular hit).

From Topanga and alfalfa sprouts, it was just a few small steps to a career as professional health-food nuts. But Baker came with baggage. During an altercation with a neighbor who pulled a knife, Baker counterattacked with some judo chops that left his attacker dead. Later, Baker accidentally killed another man in much the same way, and his subsequent spiritual quest was, in part, a way to reconcile with those demons. The first two health-food restaurants the Bakers opened were in-

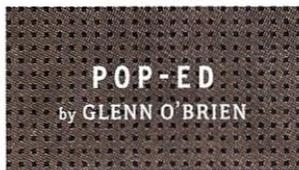
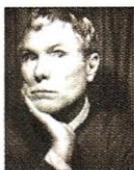
stant successes, and soon Baker began to play host to the swinging likes of Warren Beatty, Jane Fonda and Steve McQueen. His marriage, however, did not survive this period and he went solo to open the Source in the late '60s. Described by a former employee as "one big party," the restaurant was *the* spot to be on the Sunset Strip. Then Baker discovered yoga and everything changed. The whole vibe of the Source went meditative. After a trip to India, Baker became his own guru, writing the Ten Commandments of the Aquarian Age, which include the following passage: "Any part of this book may be reproduced without permission of the Author. The word of God cannot be copyrighted." As Father Yod, Baker had his own horde of suburban-kids-turned-hippie disciples who joined him in creating a homespun and whole-grain Utopia in a Hollywood Hills mansion once owned by Catherine Deneuve (and later used for porn shoots).

In one of the over 200-some fantastic photos in *The Source*, five foxy long-haired male members of the Source Family are posed on top of Father Yod's white Bentley—dressed in nothing but loincloths and brandishing bows and arrows. Of the Bentley, Wille told me, "Father felt that he needed the trappings of success in order to command respect . . . to be able to get away with what he was doing!" She laughs. "It was Hollywood meets the communal mystical experience."

The group eventually moved to Hawaii where suspicious locals believed them to be the next Manson Family. But unlike the Manson clan—or the Kool-Aid drinking followers of Jim Jones—this group preached life, not death. According to Wille, Father Yod's genuine wish for his "family" was spiritual enlightenment even if, says Wille, "Father's former guru accused him of being 'stuck in the sex chakra.' He was human after all."

Sadly, Father Yod met his maker in a bizarre hang-gliding accident off the Hawaiian coastline in 1975. After his death, the group quietly disbanded. One photo in Wille's book features about 30 white-robed, long-haired hippies making their way to an LAX parking garage after a sojourn to Maui. Staring at the faded Kodachrome im-

age, I can't help but marvel that a spiritual movement of such pie-in-the-sky idealism could ever have existed in our über-materialistic world. The Source Family created a kind of Utopia, however kooky and brief. And to reduce it all to a cliché or a joke begs the question: What *is* so funny about peace, love and understanding? Or, for that matter, mashed yeast? ★ *Pictured in photo: Isis Aquarian, Hawaii (2006)*



### REVOLUTION OF THE NERDS

The political system of the United States has been subverted by a conspiracy of extreme neoconservative theorists. They have seized unprecedented power under the cover of 9/11 fear and *American Idol* mania. The Constitution has been reinterpreted and no one seems to have noticed. We are in utterly new territory and neither Spider-Man nor Neo will get us out of this one.

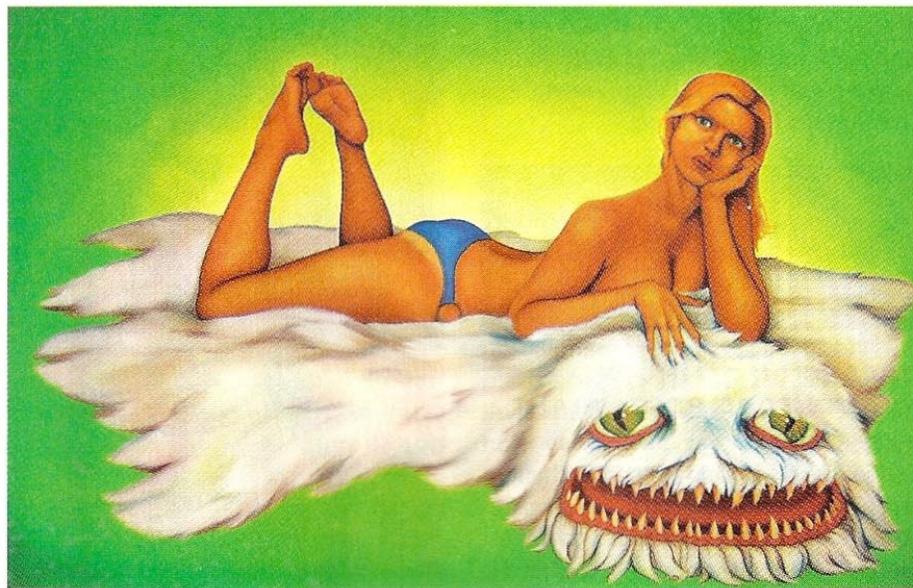
The Gonzales affair [Attorney General Gonzales has been accused of firing federal prosecutors who didn't follow the Bush agenda] shows that Darth Rove attempted to politicize the institutions of government, and to an unknown extent he has succeeded. Meanwhile, the Republicans have appointed to the Supreme Court ideologues who stand poised to back the executive

branch's ultimate power grab, endorsing Bush's claims to almost limitless powers as commander in chief. That it hasn't happened overtly is only because of the Democrat's timidity to challenge the White House.

Bush's attack on the separation of powers through has been relentless, particularly his practice of issuing signing statements to alter the meaning of laws enacted by Congress. In 2006, the American Bar Association called this "contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers."

Before Reagan, there were only 75 signing statements issued by presidents. Then, in 1986, Samuel Alito, at the time a Justice Department attorney, wrote a memorandum on the use of interpretive signing statements to "increase the power of the executive to shape the law." Alito is now, of course, a Supreme Court justice, and George W. Bush has issued ten times more signing statements than his predecessors combined, challenging the constitutionality of laws enacted by Congress.

Bush's statement on John McCain's Detainee Amendment, intended to curb the use of torture in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere, was a particularly flagrant challenge to Congress's power: "The executive branch shall construe [the law] . . . in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the president to supervise the unitary executive branch and as commander in chief and consistent



with the constitutional limitations on the judicial power.”

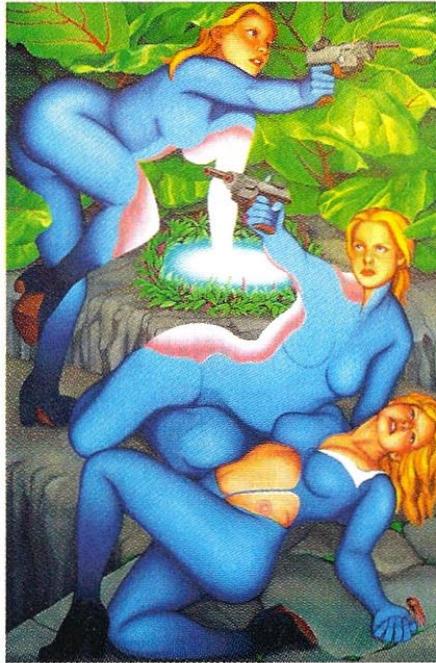
Bush sees his primary role as commander in chief—a “war president.” In fact, he is the war president, because he engineered the creation of a permanent, undefined and unlimited “war on terror,” which, by his reading, grants near dictatorial powers as long as war with ephemeral forces can be demonstrated through occasional acts of terror.

The principal theorist of “the unitary executive theory” is John Yoo, a former Justice Department attorney who worked on the Patriot Act and was a proponent of legalizing torture and denying certain protections established by the Geneva Convention. Bush surely dreams of Yoo joining Alito on a perfect-storm Supreme Court that would rubber-stamp every act of a war-powers presidency, or what we used to call a dictatorship.

There has been shockingly little reaction to the neocon coup. The Democrats fumble and split hairs over Iraq War exit options, blaming the administration’s perceived failures (Bush sees himself on plan) or incompetence. They are missing the point entirely. Rewriting the Constitution of the United States by interpretation and waging war at will are hardly marks of incompetence. But the Democrats are afraid even to address the magnitude of what has happened.

Only one voice has emerged from the field of braying Democratic candidates, that of Dennis Kucinich, the tireless Representative from Cleveland, Ohio. Perennially dismissed because he’s different, he continuously provides the most trenchant analysis and the most intelligent solutions for our problems. He’s not a professional rhetorician and dissembler. He’s not rich. He’s a vegan, and he sort of looks like one of those guys from *Revenge of the Nerds*. It’s easy to make fun of him. He’s sincere. And he is typecast as the candidate least likely to be president. Which is exactly why we should support him as if he were our Lincoln, our Joan of Arc.

We need to find out what really happened on September 11, 2001. We need to find out what happened in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. We need to find out just how politicized the institutions



of government, like the Justice Department and the EPA, have become. We might even want to do a little digging on the 2004 election. We need straight answers. Kucinich gives them.

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What does Kucinich stand for? Immediate withdrawal from Iraq. Avoiding war with Iran. Universal Health Care. Repeal of the Patriot Act. A turn away from globalization via withdrawal from the World Trade Organization and NAFTA. Ending the “war on drugs.” Working for effective environmentalism. Equal rights for gays. Promotion of family farms vs. factory farms. Banning handguns. Creating a cabinet level “Department of Peace.” And on April 24, 2007, Kucinich introduced articles of impeachment against Vice President Cheney.

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In the face of a labyrinthine coup d’état, who else can set things right? The strident, sometimes drawling, truism-speaking Clinton? The smug, overbearing, loose cannon Biden? The overeager, rather dim Edwards, who had the distinction of losing a debate to Dick Cheney? Dodd, the liberal most beloved by Wall Street? Or Obama, whose Camelot charisma is based on being a stylish unknown quantity?

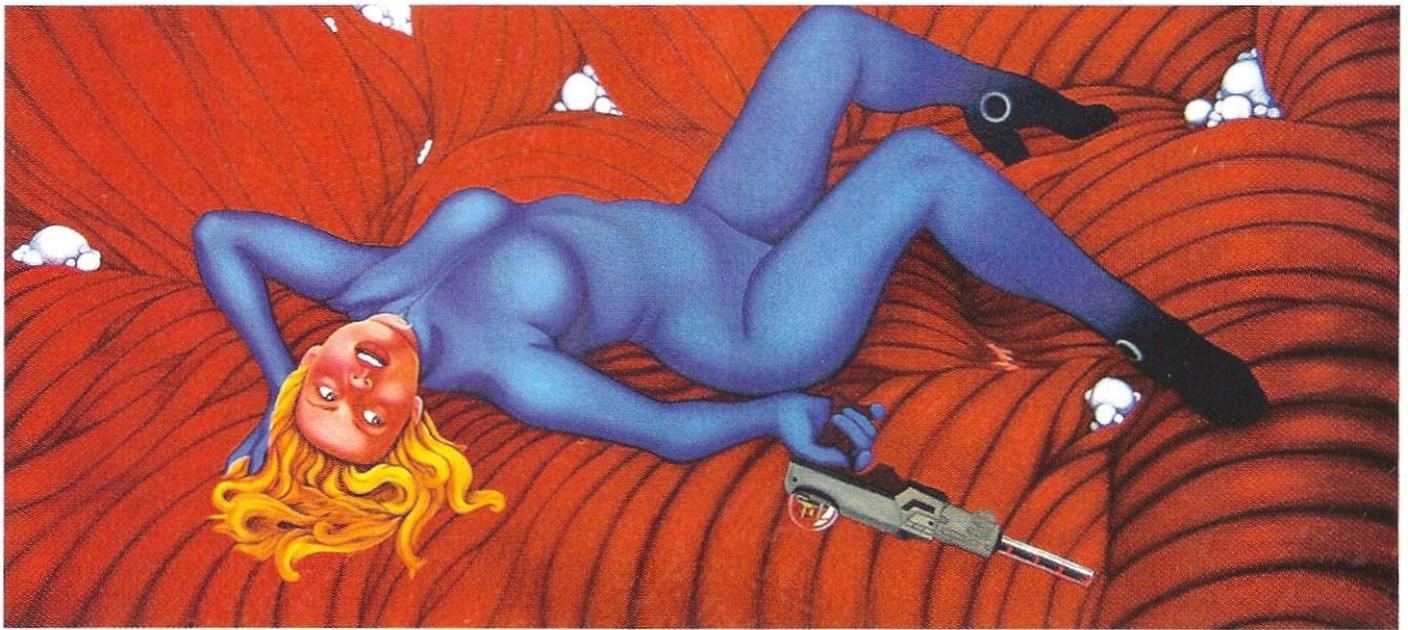
Dennis Kucinich, as journalists love to tell us, is a kook. He’s small, short and a vegan. He reported \$38 income on his 1982 tax return. Maybe he’s a nerd. But nerds have kept the flame of truth alive on the Internet, while professional pundits and *Entertainment Tonight* keep us in the dark shadow of Paris Hilton. We know Kucinich’s positions, and remarkably they all seem correct. The only thing against him is that he is utterly outside the traditional mold. Maybe, it’s time for the real revenge of the nerds. ★



#### HOME THEATERS OF THE FUTURE

Let’s face it, most people only see movies at home. With Plasma TVs and cold beers, and without the hassle, the experience of watching movies is more pleasurable than in the theater—save for the “in” film or blockbuster that you can’t wait for to come out on DVD. That’s why all civility in theaters is gone. Everyone thinks they’re in their living room, so they chatter aloud about the plot and answer cell phones without consideration to others around them.

I just attended the big trade show for some of the new gadgets and TVs of tomorrow, and, believe me, it’s going to make staying at home all the more inviting.



As most gay men know, size is important. Plasma-screen size varies from 32 inches to 40–50 inches, but future TVs promise to double and triple that height. I viewed a gorgeous 1,200 inch high-definition screen that was so clear and big that if you were sitting on your couch, you could be inside Angelina Jolie's left nostril.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, while some people like to download TV shows onto their iPods, a few newfangled gadgetries will allow them to outdo that. Soon, you will be able to download films and your

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favorite YouTube clips onto pens, watches, nipple rings or even Prince Albert piercings. Although, watching a spectacle like *Pirates of the Caribbean* on someone's dick seems somewhat dispiriting.

I perused new prototypes obviously inspired by Martha Stewart. One model

has a Cuisinart attached to one side and a blender attached to the other, with a handy drawer on the bottom to store all sorts of crafty items. Now you can chop vegetables, whip up a piña colada or even make a decoupage without missing one minute of *Judge Maria Lopez*.

Tiny flat screens with cable hook-ups will be placed in closets, basements and bathrooms, or mounted on vacuum cleaners so you can multitask and still be enthralled by *One Life to Live*.

TVs installed in doghouses and attached to cat beds were the rage at the trade show. Scientists spent many years experimenting with television for pets and were surprised to discover that replays of *Jerry Springer* (particularly episodes in which a table full of food is hurled and the food is scattered around the studio) seemed to have a relaxing effect on animals.

There are even blue state and red state models with computer chips that are sensitive to what comes across the airwaves. Any time Bill Maher or Jon Stewart open their mouths on the Republican model, the station will immediately switch to a rerun of *Saved by the Bell*. Likewise, *The O'Reilly Factor* makes a Democrat-sensitive television freeze up and replay last night's *Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report*.

New DVD players include the DVD-NC (nanny cam), designed to record your nanny as she watches your children and also to secretly record her in her own apartment in case she's squir-

reling away your husband's cuff links or any loose change found in your sofa.

Sound systems for the new TVs are so elaborate with their Dolby-like power that they can make your ears bleed; one offers tiny speakers to surgically implant into your eardrums for ultimate clarity. Another comes with a warning that, if turned to a certain level, the treble can kill any pet birds in your home or next door.

The breakthrough I found most astonishing is that pregnant women can now have movies projected onto the walls of their uteruses, offering unlimited choices for prenatal screenings. One expectant mom I interviewed thought cartoons might be an appropriate choice, while another pregnant woman said she intended to show her unborn *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's documentary about global warming. In her words: "You're never too young to be socially conscious." ★

#### ABOUT THE ARTIST:

New York-based painter Megan Burns exhibited her cycle of sexed-up space-age superhero self-portraits—"Agents of C.L.O.N.E."—this spring at the Proposition in Chelsea. Like Jane's Barbarella, the fiercest feminists always wear tights.