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A Cultural Chronicle of the
Last 24 Hours in Pre-9/11 America

Conner Good



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Designed by Erin Agnoli

Special Thanks to Dr. Erin McCarthy

*For my nephew and his peers,
those who will only ever know 9/11 as a thought*

1996

Motorola releases a wearable cellular telephone

East Coast blizzard

Whitewater scandal

"Unabomber" Theodore Kaczynski arrested

TWA Flight 800 crash

Centennial Olympic Park bombing

Clinton signs welfare reform law

Prince and Princess of Wales divorce

Taliban captures Kabul

O.J. Simpson trial

10-day stock market surge

Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments signed

First electronic car released

1997

Madeleine Albright becomes first female Secretary of State

North Hollywood shootout

Heaven's Gate mass suicide

Timothy McVeigh convicted for Oklahoma City bombing

U.S. releases new 50-dollar bill

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone released in London

NASA's Pathfinder probe lands on Mars

Andrew Cunanan kills Gianni Versace

Teamsters strike

Diana, Princess of Wales, dies

Mother Teresa dies

Titanic

1998

Frozen water found on the Moon

Ramzi Yousef convicted for World Trade Center bombing of 1993

Unabomber convicted

Clinton-Lewinsky scandal

Galaxy IV satellite brings down 85 percent of world's pagers

U.S. embassy bombings

Swissair Flight 111 crashes

Google launches

First segment of the International Space Station sent into space

U.S. orders attacks on Iraq's nuclear programs

1999

The Sopranos premieres

John William King convicted of hate crimes

Dr. Kevorkian convicted of second-degree murder

Kosovo War

Trial for the murder of Matthew Shepard

Columbine

Oklahoma tornado outbreak

Napster launches

Benjamin Nathaniel Smith's 3-day murder spree

U.S. soldiers beat Army Pfc. Barry Winchell to death in his sleep

John F. Kennedy, Jr.'s plane crashes

Woodstock '99

Los Angeles Jewish Community Center shooting

Viacom and CBS merge

World population reaches 6,000,000,000

EgyptAir Flight 990 disaster

U.S. gives control of Panama Canal back to Panama

2000

Y2K

The DOW closes at dot-com bubble peak

PlayStation 2 released

United States v. Microsoft

Datapoint files for bankruptcy

Israel and PLO fail to come to an agreement at Camp David

First crew of ISS sent into space

Iraq denies the U.N. right to inspect for nuclear weapons

Florida recount

Christmas Eve Indonesia bombings

2001

AOL buys Time Warner

Wikipedia launches

Dale Earnhardt killed in last lap at Daytona 500

The Netherlands pass the first same-sex marriage law since 342 AD

First Apple stores open

Timothy McVeigh executed for Oklahoma City bombing

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The forecast for today is 60s-70s in the Northeast and Midwest, 70s-80s in the Northwest and Southeast, and 90s-100s in the Southwest.¹ The East Coast can expect gloomy weather—some showers, thunder, wind, and maybe some heavy downpours during the day-to-day. Drivers in some parts of the West Coast will find themselves floating through a fog with visibility at less than a ¼ of a mile. The central states will have a quiet, dry afternoon, while rain and hail in the South will leave some parts of Texas powerless.²

But Florida is really in for it. Things in Miami have an end-times feel to them as citizens all around the city brace for another downpour. It is the first landfall of a subtropical rain system headed straight toward Floridians. They're used to the floodwaters thanks to the past few weeks' weather, and they've had their fair share of the national spotlight in newspaper articles and TV spots. A native Floridian might tell you that this sensational flooding hoopla is a tad overblown, but most news sources report on it in a fashion that suggests something unusual is going on this flood season—something worth reporting, and maybe even a cause to be a little shaken.

It could go on all day, all night, for the next few days.

— a citizen quoted in *The Miami Herald* today

Floodwaters are expected to reach 15 inches. Floridians can thank their lucky stars that Hurricane Erin isn't coming anywhere near them.

Al Roker is right in just about every neck of the woods: as forecasted, the temps today are 60s-70s in the Northeast and Midwest, 70s-80s in the Northwest and Southeast, and 90s-100s in the Southwest.

Today is Monday, September 10th, 2001. At 12:00 AM tomorrow morning, today will fall into the past. But almost everyone who has picked up this book knows that something else will happen 8 hours and 46 minutes after today ends: the fog will become bulbous and impenetrable smoke, and the blackouts will become broken NYFD responder transmissions, and the commonplace temperature will become the unfamiliar ache accompanying all of us on our unscheduled journeys home to see loved ones. The cheer in Al Roker's catchphrase will become the ruptured panic in New York City's collective voice as the second tower falls. A nation will drop into mourning for something that—in brief seconds of endless time—it will not and could not possibly understand. It will forget the outrageous Florida flood season. It will forget the very colors, feels, and tones of one day before. For a little while, it will forget that those colors, feels, and tones ever were.

We will start to call this world "post-9/11," but it is unclear how soon that will start. This designation will seem to imply a trauma of sorts has ended, that we are going to react to this trauma and use it to determine and better our lives. But whenever this label starts to roll off our tongues, we will already be behind. The post-9/11 world will already be in motion before there is a word for it, before the neurons of our time can bring it to us.

To try to put an era into a sentence or a paragraph is to do it a disservice. Even entire books just scratch surfaces. The vast complexity of the culture we build defies definitions and relies on intuitions. While the attacks of September 11th will rock our nation, they will not be the only things picking up, the only things dropping in or gathering speed. They will not be the sole dictation of cultural consciousness. To say that post-9/11 America will be a place ruled by fear—to list descriptors and trends and rules of the time—will not make things make any more sense, and neither will trying to induce nostalgia or point blame. Rather, history provides a type of therapy in the muddiest and most undefined of places: pockets in the hindsight of culture. If we can remove ourselves from the post-9/11 world and immerse ourselves in the pre-9/11 one, perhaps we can poke through what went wrong, what went right, what changed. What was and what will be find a peculiar place to make sense of things: right in the middle. It is during the eve of a great nosedive in cultural thought that we find the brightest enlightenments of the eras that bookend it. Content that sits on this edge shows the flow of things before and the trace of things to come.

As a way of coping with the events of our lives, we push our feelings, thoughts, and impulses into a stream of content—into the cultural condition—as all generations have done before us. It is with this collection of content that we can put our fingers on the bloodstream of an era. And while there is a cost to looking back and prodding a generation's context within the context of our own, it will continue to be the only thing we can do to cope with worlds outside of our grip. Even though there are no definitive answers on this journey, hindsight remains our only true and emotional link to what was.

There is always a life pulse to things on this planet. We find its footprints in the papers, TV shows, and Internet posts. With hindsight and trained intuition, we may be able capture tiny fragments of it—the era's consciousness. And if we get to those moments, maybe we can clutch them between our fingers and hold them up to the light—for as many seconds as more than a decade's divide allows before they disappear into wisps of concrete dust.

Today is Monday, September 10th, 2001, and it will be for 24 more hours. The current culture, viewpoints, attitudes, focuses, and social consciousness will remain for 24 more hours.

A few of those hours are already up when *The New York Times* drops on newsstands. We can picture the regular subscriber sighing when they pick it up—more annoying election coverage. Competitors for Giuliani's spot as New York City mayor have cluttered the rapport of newspapers and news programs alike for the past many weeks. But it all ends tomorrow at the polls. Finally, New York City will make a decision, the election ads will disappear, and our weekly *Times* subscriber can go back to normal life. The front page today shows well-known faces microphoning up for their last debate, held yesterday.

Of course, the candidacy for New York mayor is only one story in the national news. For those news-savvies not in New York, 4 stories seem to rise to the surface of reports this morning. Each one lays its ground over a few days, and not all of them have had every part of their stories told yet. Some haven't had every part of their stories happen yet.

Yesterday, a 55-year-old man by the name of Muhammad Saker Habashi walked onto a train platform in Israel, “wearing blue jeans and a checkered shirt and carrying a box the size of a videocassette recorder,” according to James Bennet of the *Times*. In a matter of seconds, Habashi flicked a switch and shook up Israel by becoming the first Israeli to commit a suicide bombing inside of his own country.

Police recovered a hand at the detonation site. They check it for fingerprints today.

It would only take a handful of extremists to make the nightmare seem real to many Israelis.

— James Bennet, writing in *The New York Times* today

After Habashi’s ties to extreme militants were exposed, he went missing. Israeli forces have been looking for him in the Palestinian city of Jenin for a few weeks now.

Today, the terror organization Hamas drops a VHS tape off at Reuters News HQ. On it, Habashi speaks from the grave.

God gave me the honor of being one of the martyrs.

— Muhammad Saker Habashi, reading from his notes, carrying a Koran and an M-16

Habashi chose a very uncertain time for his martyrdom, because forces in the Middle East planned tonight to be the weeks-in-the-making meeting of Shimon Peres (Israeli Foreign Minister) and Yasir Arafat (Palestinian Authority leader).³ After more than 10 months of violence, many hope that this meeting will give way to a cease-fire agreement. Another one. This will be their second try.

Unfortunately, even before the sun came up this morning, Palestinian soldiers shattered pregnant calm with the sound of gunfire, killing 2 Israelis at an isolated desert outpost. In response, Israel attacked Jenin (where Habashi was believed to be a few weeks ago) and cut its power. With all this bloodshed early in the day, Peres and Arafat will go back and forth into the night. They'll never even be able to agree on when and where to meet. Their snipers and their tanks shot senseless the hopes of easy peace this morning, when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict started biting its tail again.

Arafat and Peres share a steadfast grip on world headlines and news cameras.

Further north, the citizens of Belarus cry foul on their leader, President Aleksandr Lukashenko, who just won re-election. Election commissioners say that he won 75.6 percent against primary opponent Vladimir Goncharik's 15.4 percent, but they withhold detailed voting records.⁴ The public asks, "Why?" while newspapers print that 79,770 of the 80,000 election commissioners were appointed by Lukashenko's associates in the current Belarusian administration. Lukashenko's grip in Belarus is so tight that he can even get away with arresting some of his political enemies on the morning of the election.

Today, tomorrow, and onward, the streets will fill with cries of "Shame!" and "Freedom, freedom!"⁵ Alongside other human rights groups decrying the election, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will soon publish a report⁶ claiming that Lukashenko had the votes rigged before they even came in. Apparently, he already waved his executive hands over smear campaigns and blocked airwaves.⁷

Long live Belarus!

— chant of Belarusian protesters today

The city of Sacramento ripples across print today, because Joseph Ferguson is likely involved with 4 murders that happened in the region this weekend. Ferguson made agitated and threatening phone calls close to the time that the killings took place on Saturday. He is missing, so authorities have named this “disgruntled security guard” as a prime suspect.⁸

The authorities are right. This past week, 3 events kicked Ferguson’s future into gear: his girlfriend broke up with him, authorities caught him vandalizing her car, and Burns Security—his employer—suspended him because of it. In response, he killed 4 people. 3 of them were Burns Security employees. While the FBI searches for Ferguson, Burns Security issues a mass evacuation of 1500 employees from their homes today. The story of the Sacramento killer pulses through the city.

At around 11:30 PM, a highway patrolman will pick up on a stolen car and start a chase. The chase will end around 10 minutes into the morning of September 11th with the car smashing into a light pole on the corner of Folsom Boulevard and Zinfandel Drive.⁹ Joseph Ferguson will shoot himself in the driver’s seat before the patrolman can reach him. Pre-9/11 America will remain the only America when Ferguson ends his life.

Later, reports will surface that Ferguson, during his killing spree, compared himself to the likes of Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber executed earlier this year). Today, Ferguson thinks he is a terrorist. He does not foresee the whimper that his rampage will become.

I've taken four victims, this should be good enough to last about a week on the news. It's time to feed the news media... I giveth and I taketh away, that's how it goes in fucking life.

— Joseph Ferguson, speaking on a suicide tape found later

As examiners of a pinprick in time, with our prime source being the recorded events at our fingertips, we must acknowledge the fluidity of news. At any point in time, there is news that we're already talking about, news that we're reading about right now, news that we're going to read any second, and news that hasn't even happened yet. The papers we read today can only include discourse on past events. While we read, we are already behind, because things happen today that aren't in print. Because of the live nature of TV and the connected nature developing on the Internet today, it is crucial to prod our dusted fingers through each of these channels—even the stories that don't make the 11:00 news. Today's world audience is starting to siphon itself into different media categories. We must keep up with it in order to accurately capture today's consciousness.

Ferguson's case is one that hasn't reached its tipping point in the cultural consciousness. There are other stories worth mentioning that break to a crisp focus on the lips of the nation this morning.

Once again, the world revolves around Venus.

— full-page ad for Avon in *The New York Times* today

Last Saturday night, while Joseph Ferguson was busy displacing his rage on his fellow employees, beloved sports stars Venus and Serena Williams were playing tennis in our living rooms. The sisters stood on opposite sides of the court in the first “sibling” U.S. Open final in 117 years. These are the beaded-dreadlock enthusiasts who made the game “cool” for many unexposed Americans—23,000,000 to be exact, if you’re tabulating the viewers on Saturday.¹⁰ The match was undoubtedly the top ratings-earner of the night.

Even though the public was on the edge of its seat, Venus and Serena gave a hesitant match. Apparently, it’s hard to want to destroy your sister with a tennis ball. Despite this, Venus and Serena are the icons we look to this week, as both the world and the front page get harder.

You're looking at the floor of the New York stock exchange. How low will stocks go? With troubling economic news, anemic growth, and rising unemployment, all eyes are on Wall Street today, Monday, September 10th, 2001.

— Katie Couric, opening this morning's *The Today Show*

Fears of an economic dip settle over U.S. publications. After unemployment's rise of .4 percent in July,¹¹ Democrats blame Bush while the entire country fears recession. In Congress, a debate rages over Democratic and Republican tax cut proposals. The Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee even suggests skimming off a few dollars from the Social Security surplus.

There is a Social Security surplus.

Some of the world's top bankers and economists, including President Bush's top economic advisor, all predicted today the U.S. economy will avoid an outright recession.

— Dan Rather, reporting on *CBS Evening News* tonight

The congressional pressure over the quaking economy provides some unfortunate timing for the 59-page scientific report that arrives on the Capitol building's steps today. In it, the National Academy of Sciences urges that new colonies of human stem cells are required if this scientific field aims to effectively treat patients.¹² The report surfaces after Congress officially banned human cloning in July, so the economic outlook for this cause doesn't look very encouraging.

Neither stem cells nor tax cuts help the Democrats and Republicans get along any more than usual. But according to polls cited by Alison Mitchell and Richard W. Stevenson of *The New York Times*, confidence in the Republican Party is "faltering."

President Bush is ready to leave the bickering in D.C. and board a plane to kick off a week of combating illiteracy in Florida. But before he takes off, he presents an education bill related to his trip and pleads for Congress to put aside its partisan ideologies for the sake of our children.¹³ Today—the same day that a giant caricature of a kindergartener leading his parents to school is featured on the cover of a 3-dollars-and-50-cents copy of *The New Yorker*—Bush makes Justina Road Elementary in Jacksonville his first educational stop. He will visit Emma Booker Elementary the next morning and read with the kids in order to promote his bill.

It seems that the White House is on the move: Secretary of State Colin Powell, the shadowed centerpiece of this morning's *Time*, is on his own trip to Peru and Columbia today, hoping to spread messages of drug-free democracy in South American countries. On this day—the same day his plane takes off—the White House officially declares Columbia's United Self-Defense Forces "a terrorist organization."¹⁴ The organization is notorious for a plethora of corrupt activities, including murdering civilians, kidnapping politicians, and coaching drug cartels.

I hope this will leave no doubt that the United States considers terrorism to be unacceptable regardless of the political or ideological purpose.

— Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking today

Powell plans to stay in South America for 3 days.

Back on American soil, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announces that the Pentagon military budget has lost track of 2,300,000,000,000 dollars. He makes it clear in his speech that he won't stand for this ridiculous and untraceable military overspending anymore.

LA tow truck driver Candelario Flores is finally in “stable condition.” Flores accidentally ran over a 4-year-old boy on Saturday while pulling his tow truck out of a gas station parking lot. He was immediately pursued and “severely beaten” by a flurried crowd of outraged citizens. The police are still looking for 2 people seen using a crowbar “or some other metal object” pulled from the Kelmark Tow vehicle.

While many ask why this mob rage heightened the way that it did, some are quick to point out that the incident occurred only a few blocks from where the infamous race-based beating of Reginald Denny took place in 1992.¹⁵

Flores is Latino. The boy was black.

The [American Muslim] Alliance's efforts are geared to mobilize American Muslims for candid participation in mainstream politics, civic education and community volunteering, in part to dispel unfair public stereotypes of Muslims at large. A sustained international effort is necessary to combat oppression and intolerance in Afghanistan.

— M. A. Siddiqui, in his letter to *The New York Times* today

Newsweek occupies a very Microsoft-Word-like template with a 90s sensibility to its academia, but there is a sense of dignified informality in the writing styles of today's papers. Hard news writers aren't afraid to have fun with irony. Fashion writers aren't afraid to have personality. Movie reviewers aren't afraid to be downright cruel. It's an age of acknowledged funny business with feminist mags like *Bitch*, *Bust*, and *Moxie* starting to draw their own ink.

These developments of prose come at an indefinite and costly time. Even while many of us subscribe to about 2-to-3 hard-copy magazines, the future of print is hazy. Not every American picks up a newspaper. A report will be released in *Generations* this fall making the assertion that about 50 percent of adult Americans read newspapers every day. Whatever percentage is correct, statisticians expect it to drop steadily. Close to 100 percent of American homes have TVs, and many are now unboxing desktop computers for the spare room. The purpose and absorption of news is coming into question without our realizing. Members of the newspaper industry coin this as "the depression of print," unsure if low sales this year are temporary. Where are the good newsies when you need them, and how can we put them on the Internet?

In today's *New York Times*, the first mention of "Kabul" is on page A4 in an article about how hard it is to find a lawyer there.

War in the Middle East? Can it happen? How can it be avoided?

— ad sponsored by FLAME in *The New York Times* today

Top Secret E-Bomb: The electromagnetic pulse bomb is unlike any other weapon in America's arsenal, reducing an enemy to Stone Age existence. Now the bad news: terrorists can build one for 400 dollars.

— this month's cover of *Popular Mechanics*

Considering our past brushes with terrorism on native soil and our brazen use of the term in newspapers and CNN headlines, it may not be rash for a navigator of the American conscience—on this day—to suggest that “something's gotta give.” The global fear of terrorism is already here, and for some countries, ever-present. In America, it is a subdued hum. It passes as a side-factor in most hard news articles and even on TV. There is fear, but it isn't the focus. We'll leave the kind of people who read *Popular Mechanics* to deal with the hum.

Every event is a variable, and these stories are a part of today's calculations. When we compute calculations, sometimes a moment surfaces between the numbers—just near the end—when we start to pick up on what the outcome may be. These peeks-around-corners can be trivial, but they can be massive. By breaking today's numbers into workable figures—people, for instance—we may be able to sneak a peek at some of the outcomes in culture's constantly flowing algorithms. Some cultural icons, and perhaps the ideas that surround them, can be tracked into the past.

Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, challenges the Bush administration's current plans for a new missile defense system today. He makes sure to mention that this new plan will violate 40 years of arms control treaties with other countries around the world while compromising national security and costing a substantial amount of money. The projected cost of this plan could be anywhere from 60,000,000,000 to 120,000,000,000 dollars.¹⁶

Are we willing to end four decades of arms control agreements, and go it alone, a kind of bully nation, sometimes a little wrong-headed, but ready to make unilateral decisions in what we perceive to be our self-interest?

— Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Seung-Hui Cho attends a Monday morning of high school in Centreville, Virginia today.¹⁷ In 2 years, he will start following up his diploma with a degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Senator Hillary Clinton attends a reception in New York City today to honor Heather Mills—divorcee of Paul McCartney and charity spearhead—with *Redbook's* Mothers and Shakers Award.¹⁸

Dr. Bruce Ivins sends the findings of his most recent guinea pig study to one of his associates in an email today. The email details how Ivins has been testing a vaccine to see if it will make the guinea pigs immune to “virulent B. anthracis spores.”¹⁹ If the FBI’s future verdict is correct, Ivins will soon prefer paper mail to email, and he won’t be sending letters.

People announces that Angelina Jolie is “the latest celeb” to help out with United Nations efforts for the first time today. There is no emphasis on “for the first time.”

One of the future founders of YouTube, Jawed Karim, attends the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign today on his path to claim a B.S. in Computer Science and Engineering.²⁰

The Jewish Museum Berlin opens its doors today, chronicling eras of the Jewish culture and experience within the walls of a zig-zag-shaped monolith. In a few years, its architect, Daniel Libeskind, will be one of only a handful to submit a design for Freedom Tower—and with just one name on the byline. His own.²¹

An unfamiliar man in his 20s carries an AKM rifle while assisting Taliban forces in their fight against the Northern Alliance today. He was born in Washington, D.C., and his name is John Walker Lindh.²²

Jane Lynch, most recently seen on TV as a reporter in the season finale of *The West Wing*, proudly stands on rocks above crashing waves in an advertisement for Nexium inside today's *Newsweek*.

Senator John McCain recovers from recent prostate surgery at the Mayo Clinic Hospital in Phoenix, Arizona today.

Rupert Murdoch shares an “amiable dinner” with Australian Prime Minister John Howard in Washington, D.C. this evening. The encounter regards how Murdoch’s papers will or will not support Howard’s campaigns in Australia, as Howard will reveal at a later date.²³

Barack Obama is an Illinois state senator, a professor at the University of Chicago, and a lawyer at Miner, Barnhill, and Galland. He plans to attend a state legislative hearing tomorrow in downtown Chicago, Illinois.²⁴

Item 13 of Wasilla, Alaska's 7:00 PM city council agenda is entitled "Mayor, Clerk, and Attorney Comments."²⁵ The mayor is a 37-year-old woman named Sarah Palin. It is her 6th year running item 13 and the city it concerns.

High-schooler Michael Phelps prepares to sign over his first ever endorsement 2 years before graduation. He trains for the upcoming World Aquatics Championships in Barcelona.²⁶

National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice prepares for a talk tomorrow. She plans to speak to the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies about what she believes to be the biggest threat of the day: nuclear missile attacks from North Korea and Iraq.²⁷

The cover story of today's *Newsweek* shows a peek into the Mormon lifestyle, a concern in public avenues because the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City are only 5 months away. A glossy photo on page 52 shows the president/CEO of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, Mitt Romney, sitting eagerly at the bottom of a luge track.

A woman named Terri Schiavo is on day number 4,240 of her bed-ridden state.

A 17-year-old named Mark Zuckerberg attends Phillips Exeter Academy today.²⁸ Just one more year till graduation.

According to an anonymous source, the regular staff of a hospital in Rawalpindi, Pakistan clears out tonight, and a new, secret team replaces them. If *CBS Evening News* is right, Osama bin Laden spends the night in this hospital while doctors administer kidney treatments. Most of bin Laden's colleagues know that his stomach and back often trouble him, but no one will claim to know who reserves his hospital bed tonight.

The U.S. has no way of knowing who in Pakistan's military or intelligence supported the Taliban or Osama bin Laden (maybe up to the night before 9/11) by arranging dialysis to keep him alive. So the U.S. may not know if those same people might help him again, perhaps to freedom.

— Barry Peterson, reporting on *CBS Evening News* January 28th, 2002

There is still a linguistic clash of "Osama" versus "Usama." Which one is correct? When his name falls prey to the population's lips, trend will unify its spelling.

While some figures and paths on the ground today may appear familiar to future eyes, some tracks can and do lead to nowhere. They appear as logical assumptions and predictions, things that today's majority accepts as a "not-too-far-off fact." The future always appears clearer before the never-ending fog of it hits us, even on a Monday like today. Put simply, what we think will be will not necessarily be.

AOL Time Warner Said to Be Pursuing AT&T's Cable Unit.

— headline in *The New York Times* today

You can be sure that AOL's websites will be the fastest ones. AOL Time Warner will control the Yellow Pages of tomorrow.

— Jeff Chester, Executive Director, Center for Digital Democracy,
quoted in tomorrow's *Chicago Tribune*

You will find a black-and-white, cow-spotted box in advertisements across newspapers and TV channels today. This is the logo for Gateway, one of the top 2 desktop computer companies operating in the exciting marketplace of modern tech. Gateway could be doing better, though. Thanks to the uncertain economy, people aren't buying as many personal computers as they used to. Dell, the sworn enemy of Gateway, hasn't made things easier by dropping their own prices.²⁹

The iPAQ Music Center is Compaq Computers' brand, spankin' new 799-dollar audio device about to "remake home entertainment," according to Mike Langberg of the *Akron Beacon Journal*. The iPAQ Music Center's innovative claim to fame is its ability to use a hard disk to store MP3s. In today's article, Langberg calls it a PAR, or Personal Audio Recorder. He says that it's the audio equivalent of the "PVR," which currently rises in popularity. He is referring to TiVo, or what will eventually be known as "DVR."

[The iPaq Music Center] is at least a year ahead of its time—a wonderful example of what lies ahead.

— Mike Langberg, writing in the *Akron Beacon Journal* today

The "i" in iPAQ precedes the "i" in iPod, an MP3 device currently unheard of. In fact, Apple isn't mentioned once in this month's *Popular Science* article, "MP3: Just Press Pay," which details "the future of digital music." While writer Suzanne Kantra Kirschner does trace the beginnings of monetization and capitalization in the MP3 business, she misses the mark on the iPod by only months.

MP3 devices mentioned in Kirschner's article: the Philips Expanium Exp401, the Samsung Yepp YP-30S, and the Audiovox CMP-3.

The iPod will come out October 23rd. The iPAQ Music Center will be discontinued before August 2002.³⁰

In the centuries before this, our species has incorrectly predicted matters of government dominion, physical creation, and human hubris. Now, we're just wrong about technology and its role in those categories. We possess an adolescent grasp—a burgeoning naïveté—on things that are “smart.” We haven't figured out that it should be a prefix for the word “phone” yet. From the GPSs rolling out in automobiles this year to the continuing war between Gateway and Dell, the cartoon in today's *New Yorker* sums up our tech-virgin situation pretty well.

A man sits in front of his computer. He calls out an open window:

“Lassie, get tech support.”

— Arnie Levin's cartoon in today's *New Yorker*

Still, our tech takes up sizable space in our wallets and in the physical world. Advertisements for TVs in *Time* are void of flat-screens, instead favoring huge, rectangular boxes made to be the centerpiece of your living room. A clunky desktop computer, tower, and keyboard trap a man in his airplane seat on the pages of *Popular Science* this month. It's a clear message: you should get a laptop. The innate obsolescence date of ideas and products is more of a far-off thought for the page-turner.

In a world where the “endless pool” is considered an innovation, Google isn’t even on the list of top web advertising revenue. Microsoft and Yahoo! are among the world’s top choices for now.³¹

As PDA owners are aware, Web pages are designed for desktop monitors, not for puny handheld screens. No problem with Interactive Imaging Systems' virtual 21-inch monitor on a handheld iCom browser.

— this month's Popular Science

Popular Science lays claim to the future in its monthly section "What's New." This month, the magazine gives us a peek at the iCom browser, yet another instance where the "i" comes before the Apple. The iCom's purpose is to present the Internet to PDA users in a more aesthetically appropriate manner. We're attached to seeing the Web on our big computer screens, so why should it have to be small on our devices? The iCom is supposed to be available early next year, but there's no expected cost yet.

Among other exciting innovations are sub-notebooks (we will eventually call them netbooks, and they won't really stick), self-warming cans of coffee, and voice-chat video games, where you can chat live with others playing the same game in living rooms across the country at the same time! The first game to try it out is *Alien Front Online* for Sega Dreamcast.

Agilent Technologies announces a new frontier in phone navigation—they call it the button mouse. Blackberry will adopt and modify this technology as the signature element to its smartphones in the coming years.

Memora's Servio personal server provides "Wi-Fi" direct to your home for only 1495 dollars.

The self-warming coffee is to be released in Britain next spring. It's supposed to fit in your pants pocket.

Mr. Donald Trump targets his own plans of what-will-be on expanding his empire. He told the world in July that he intends to build a “giant green fountain pen” in the center of downtown Chicago, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. Trump says that he will unveil the full blueprints in 12 weeks, but today, a discarded plan laid out by OWP&P Architects of Chicago slams the media streams.

According to OWP&P, Trump Tower Chicago is expected to be 140 stories of hotels, condos, shops, offices, and a public observatory rivaling that of the Sears Tower in the same city. Trump accuses OWP&P of releasing the plans to spur a publicity stunt. The blueprints he intends to use for the final tower are actually with Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. OWP&P did not win the commission.

Another thing about Trump Tower Chicago—at 2,000 feet tall, Trump plans it to be one of the tallest buildings in the world. But tomorrow’s events may humble Mr. Trump, or maybe just frighten him into preserving his green fountain pen from becoming a bulls-eye in the skyline: the tower will be built at 1,389 feet instead.³² Its name will change to Trump International Hotel and Tower, and it will reside at 401 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60611.

We can't blame Mr. Trump if tomorrow's events affect his plans. Even on the day before 9/11, the ethos of airplane culture doesn't fly well in the popular headline on the popular page. As a set piece, airplanes still engineer a fearful playground.

A case from 1971 resurfaces today. In that year, a Black Power extremist effectively commandeered a plane departing Ontario and forced its crew to fly him to Cuba after dropping off the passengers in Toronto. He somehow convinced the crew to let him go, and after they landed, authorities lost his trail. In 2001, a ginger ale can from the jetliner—filed away in evidence for decades—revealed a fingerprint that finally led authorities to Patrick Dolan Critton of New York. Today, authorities arrest and charge Critton. He woke up as a schoolteacher and father of 2 this morning, both under the real name he's always used.³³

Critton built and experimented with homemade pipe bombs when he was 24. He is 54 today.

Last month, Air Transat Flight 236 emergency landed in Portugal after both of its engines failed. All 304 passengers survived. However, some of them are still in the middle of a class action lawsuit with the airliner, and Flight 236's pilot and copilot are on the stand today.³⁴

The suit surrounds the transfer of fuel from a working engine to a leaking engine during the flight. Airline employees divulge that improper handling procedures prior to the flight could be responsible for the failures. Apparently, someone installed the old model of an engine when that someone should have installed the current Rolls Royce one.

The plane still sits in the Azores of Portugal, waiting for the investigation to end.

Germany's Defense Minister is in court today, too, charged with employing government planes for personal use. Specifically, visiting his girlfriend overnight in Frankfurt and Majorca.³⁵

An article in this month's *Popular Science* entitled, "Freeing the Skies," displays a graphic of air traffic in the United States at one specific time. 7,000 tiny white planes cloud a black map on a weekday afternoon.

Perhaps the most recognizable of planes in the media today is a dinky, twin-engine Cessna 402B. Even though the crash was last month, some publications like the *Houston Chronicle* and *Newsweek* still dedicate some of their space to R&B star Aaliyah's recent death. *Newsweek* informs readers that Aaliyah was reportedly hesitant to board the little plane in the Bahamas and could have waited for a jet to pick her up. She reportedly put aside her fear because she "just wanted to get home." Production equipment and passengers bogged down the Cessna during its fateful flight.

Aaliyah's most recent album, *Aaliyah*, came out this past July. She was in the tropics to record a music video for "Rock the Boat."

Am I supposed to change? Are you supposed to change? / Who should be hurt? Will we remain? / You need a resolution, I need a resolution / We need a resolution, we have so much confusion

— Aaliyah, singing "We Need A Resolution" from *Aaliyah*

This week's *Billboard* charts put Maxwell's *Now* at number 1 and Juvenile's *Project English* at number 2. *Now 7*, one of the first of 80+ current hits compilations, is right behind those debut albums. Notable sophomores on the list: Alicia Keys, 'N Sync, Linkin Park, Usher, and Jennifer Lopez. Hip-hop has a heyday, boy bands duke it out (let's not forget the Backstreet Boys), suggestive vixens rock fantastical music videos (Britney Spears' *Oops...I Did It Again* came out last year), and mellow R&B pokes its "cool" head out of plastic CD cases.

Tomorrow, Ben Folds will release what will probably be his most beloved album, *Rockin' the Suburbs*. Lyrical veteran Bob Dylan's album *Love and Theft* will also hit shelves tomorrow—on the heels of its 30-second commercial set between lustful poker faces in a smoky gambling room.

While the industry explores a *variety* of genres, the acclaimed king of one accepts the world's applause. This past Friday, Michael Jackson donned his sparkling silver glove again for his first continental U.S. concert series in 12 years.³⁶ With admission at 2500 dollars a ticket, the rest of Madison Square Garden packs with celebrities that aren't afraid to join in on the performance. In fact, half of the festivities consist of MJ renditions by modern pop-forgers like 'N Sync and Britney Spears.

Tonight is the last performance. From the cacophony of applause to the unanimous standing ovations, there appears not to be a scar or blemish on Michael's name.

We may see today as an age where we love our celebrities, right before finding out that we love seeing them in ruins so much more. Michael is adored. Britney is adored. Serena and Venus Williams are adored. Jennifer Anniston and Brad Pitt? Made for each other. Lance Armstrong taking steroids? A ridiculous thought. The future won't be totally devoid of icons that we love. But will there be an icon without a *TMZ*, *E!*, *EXTRA*, or *ET* on his or her heels, trying to find a scoop?

Today, the extremist paparazzi is a concept not yet viral.

Is that sorta weird? Cause everybody sorta knows about your—you know, like everyone knows you're dating. And he's famous, and you're famous, I guess... I get very upset when my, you know, fantasy show-biz relationships don't work out.

— Rosie O'Donnell, speaking to Britney Spears about her relationship with Justin Timberlake on today's *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*

In fact, we don't only adore our MJ's, Britneys, and Debra Messings. We want to be them. This idea is arguably a constant throughout all of popular culture, but today we acknowledge it.

Make them your own.

— Levi's ad featuring Destiny's Child in this month's *Cosmopolitan*

In order to express ourselves, we adopt the statements that our icons wear on TV channels and magazine pages. The girl trio Destiny's Child looks at you from inside the first 2 pages of *Cosmo* this month, wearing super-low bootcut jeans and colored denim tops that start half-way up their torsos.

We want to be on Mars with Britney.

This is where the classic “you’re not old enough to wear that” mom and daughter debacle roars. Mom would rather you stay on Earth: lose the bright red leather, the denim jacket from Limited Too, the overindulgent lip gloss, the bare midriff, and the belly piercing...?! Teen girls aren’t just making these wardrobe choices to piss mom off, they’re doing it for Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, who are both 19 and 20, respectively. A poll claims in *The Daily Breeze* today that 58 percent of mothers and daughters have this fight, and 77 percent of mothers see Spears and Aguilera as “bad influences.”³⁷ Public schools face the issue of conservative uniform regulation.

Everyone wants to dress like their favorite pop star.

—Jermaine Dupris, quoted in today’s *Chicago Tribune*

According to Marisa Fox of the *Chicago Tribune*, the most popular jean right now has the exact same 3-inch rise that Britney wears for her videos, concerts, and public image. MTV isn’t just making music videos anymore—if at all. It dictates industries.

Regardless, these risqué garments usher in an age of body confidence—and not just for teens.

I see women of all ages feeling comfortable with their bodies and confident enough to express their personality with clothes that are sexy and individual.

— Diane von Furstenberg, quoted in today's *Chicago Tribune*

A dynamic shift occurs in personal perception: women aren't ashamed to be skinny anymore. Now, those who aren't stick-thin feel the weight to lose a few pounds.

We might be able put the blame on Sarah Jessica Parker and her *Sex and the City* co-stars. She's the skinny, busy woman trying to have it all and blog about it at the same time. That seems to fit well with Linda Gillian Griffin's description of this era's developing fashion personality:

The idea is to look like a busy woman who has thrown these clothes on with little or no thought.

— Linda Gillian Griffin, writing in the September 30th
Houston Chronicle

For decades, TV and film have shown us “ideal” models of human beings, especially in the physical sense. The dam breaks: an urgent need to live up to those beings presents itself. If the ladies on screen show skin, you better, too.

Already on day 4 of fashion week, god-fearing fashion is gone: miniskirts, tight denim jeans, miniskirts, asymmetrical blouses, loose peasant shirts, and miniskirts all show off skinny torsos and legs as they flow down runways in New York City today.³⁸ Every model wears heels, and the sense is that you should, too. On the other hand, the growing acceptance of super skinny brings “the tomboy” back as an acceptable companion look.

We approach the peak of apologism to the stars—the same people we look to for our wardrobes and ideals. But every peak must dip. It could be argued that the upcoming fall of some of these stars (thanks to the media) will be responsible for the shift to a new, favorable attitude: a desire to be unique and express the hell out of ourselves.

In the suit and tie world, suits and ties disappear. Walk down the street of any major American city during lunch hour, and you will notice there is an insufficient number of sophisticated businessmen present. But appearances deceive in this case: they're all here, hiding under unbuttoned dress shirts and loose jackets.

Dressing down is no longer a thing, because business casual is in the middle of replacing business snappy.³⁹ Why wear an uncomfortable suit when you have to transfer planes, pick up lunch from Panera, grab coffee from Starbucks, drop off a portfolio, and give a presentation all in one day? Fashion writers of the time claim that the constantly-on-the-go lifestyle is responsible for this change in men's attire.

He might also take a cue from John Varvatos, who once again presented a collection that very straightforwardly addressed the wish of grown-up men to dress in a manner that is uncomplicated.

— Ginia Bellafante, referring in today's *Times* to Tommy Hilfiger's runway collection

Some men resist the shift, most notably the higher-ups in the executive world. They wouldn't be caught dead without their cuff links snapped. Jason Ashley Wright of *Tulsa World* writes about this pushback, arguing that ties are actually becoming more popular in corporate America. He blames it on the dragging economy. If 3 guys go into a job interview, the tie gets it. Wright also credits the rise of the dapper to Regis Philbin, host of the wildly popular *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. It's a very subconscious relationship: Regis, host and supposed millionaire, dresses well. Everyone wants to be a millionaire. Everyone dresses well.

It appears that the world of men's attire is divided.

For those men who don't feel the wringing of the on-the-go lifestyle, the prep look comes in. Collars and sherbet-colored button-downs top the shelves of every retailer.⁴⁰

Fashion week in NYC started on the 7th and plans to end on the 14th.⁴¹

When it comes to accessorizing the road, 4 vehicles dominate.⁴² While everyone isn't driving them—because everyone can't afford to—these cars and trucks serve as a platform for examining fluid design trends of the era.

The 2001 Ford F-Series (usually seen as the F-150) kicks up its horses this year, but it still has the punch it needs to be classified as a Super Duty. Finesse? Maybe not so much—with its wide chassis and blunt nose, it looks like a powerful hippopotamus. Last year's model looked worse, though; this one has a more dignified hold on the road. One look, and you know it belongs in the Australian Outback. It also serves as a nice flash of the cash in your wallet: you need to have a nice garage for this adult German shepherd of a truck. 813,701 sell this year.

If the F-Series is a hippo, then the Chevrolet Silverado is an alligator. Maybe it is more apt to say that the Silverado is your typical Matchbox toy truck. It comes with more of a sense of rough-and-tough, though, and its body hovers closer to the ground. All it needs is a rugged mountain range in the background (exactly the kind that Chevy gave the Silverado in its ad campaign), and it's ready to roll. 652,646 sell this year.

Trucks are definitely the top seller this year, but the small car category is still tight competition. The Toyota Camry series—despite its plain, angry, squashed-bug look—sells well with small families. Its reputation makes it reliable. 434,145 sell this year.

The Ford Explorer comes in at number 4, and it is the epitomical SUV. It looks like Ford fused a van and a truck together. With the extra step up you have to take to get inside, it has the elevated feeling of a truck, sure, but it's got the interior of a family transport. This is also the exact SUV we'll start seeing the "TV FBI" use in raids and sting operations soon. 433,847 sell this year.

According to *Time*, the average price of a gallon of gas today is 1.78 dollars.

Starbucks released a statement this past week reassuring its customers that it never put ephedrine, a stimulant, in its tea products.⁴³ This bout of PR comes after a lawsuit with the LA Superior Court.

Mega moneymaker Blockbuster announces today that it plans to make some big changes in the company's business model in order to keep up with accelerating times. The movie rental chain divulges that it will cut a quarter of its VHS inventory in the coming year in favor of extra space for new DVDs.⁴⁴ The hope is that this move will add a few percentage points to Blockbuster's yearly profit margin. The company predicts that DVD sales will make up half of their revenue by December 2002.

It's a very positive move. They are taking stuff that is not producing income and getting it off the books.

— Larry Haverty, State Street Research and Management,
quoted in tomorrow's *Houston Chronicle*

Samsung runs an offer in *Time*: if you buy one DVD player, you get 3 DVDs free. 3 DVDs is a lot different than getting thousands of movies and TV shows for 8 dollars a month, or better yet, sidestepping the law and getting them for free.

Outside of corporate headlines, the faces behind top company desks are changing. They're getting younger.

There is a weird flux at play right now. Many college students feel divided between getting their degrees and going off to explore the opportunities of Web entrepreneurship. With all of their friends either running a business or starting a "blog," the frontier doors are open. Shouldn't they be manifesting destiny?

You're sitting in class, and meanwhile you're hearing about people making millions and millions of dollars... You want to make money, too.

— Zaw Thet, quoted in today's *Chicago Tribune*

Zaw Thet, 21, dropped out of Stanford in order to create GetInventory.com. Thet's elders are going through a similar ideological struggle. The ambitious Generation Xers don't really care too much about knowing if they'll have a job next year. Even with the economy taunting a nose-dive, this generation of professionals asks, "What am I going to do with my life?" not "How can I invest for my future?" To push their passions into the world, they open their own small businesses. Sarah Nesbitt of *The New York Times* believes that their number will only grow.

4 letters to the editor in *The New York Times* this morning respond to a recent article on the trend of more women governing colleges and taking political office.

The information world of today keeps its hands wrapped tightly around television, the otherwise-known stronghold of content. Almost everyone practices the habitual wielding of the remote as each day winds down. Some families eat their dinner around the thing. Despite how we feel about it, it ties us together like nothing ever has before. We haven't optimized the democracy of the Web for total cultural use yet. It's not a device meme like the TV.

Unfortunately, reruns clog airtime tonight on most channels.

CBS precludes a solid block of multi-cam sitcoms surrounding *Everybody Loves Raymond* with an episode of *Hollywood Squares*, a game show consisting of B and C-list celebrities stacked on top of each other in a tic-tac-toe formation. It's a reboot of a more retro version from the 60s. The network tops off its night with a rerun of *The Late Show with David Letterman*.⁴⁵

NBC's only ace-in-the-hole tonight is the "Broadway on Broadway" special. It shows yesterday's events in downtown NYC as Broadway casts took to the street itself to generate a free preview of this fall's biggest performances (the Disneyfied *Aida*, *The Lion King*, and *The Producers* being this year's top earners). Recycled Jay Leno jokes finish off the NBC lineup.

There is definitely a rebirth of the game show heyday with *Hollywood Squares* on CBS, *The Weakest Link* (a cold, uncaring show wherein contestants drop through the floor) on NBC, and *Jeopardy*, *Wheel of Fortune*, and of course, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* on ABC. *Millionaire* makes the moolah in more ways than one, coaching contestants in the ways of capitalism in a question-based game that leads up to a 1,000,000-dollar prize. According to *Variety*, *Millionaire* hogs 2 spots on the current top 5 ratings-earners list. Tonight marks the first of a 4-episode event in which athletic personalities compete for their charities of choice. Regis Philbin (also notoriously the host of *LIVE with Regis and Kelly* in the daytime) welcomes tennis record-holder Martina Navratilova to the hot seat after she qualifies in the “Fastest Finger First” segment. Thanks to tonight’s charitable nature, the network allows for loosey-goosey rules: behind Regis, athletes like Charles Barkley and Johnny Bench pitch in with some advice.

ABC and FOX follow real sports arenas tonight—or, at least plan to. On their own turf, the Denver Broncos beat the New York Giants 31 to 20.⁴⁶ But the airwaves disappoint a lot of baseball fans this evening with the announcement to cancel the Red Sox v. Yankees game. Hopeful fans in Yankee Stadium are probably a little more disappointed. They’ve been waiting hours for this game to start.⁴⁷

On cable, a network called Bravo airs a Jane Austen movie and a special on Leslie Nielsen's comedic life. For now, it appears that Bravo has a shortage of content, because its lineup is on a constant loop.

Cartoon Network's Monday night reruns: *Dragonball Z*, *Dexter's Laboratory*, *Samurai Jack*, *Powerpuff Girls*, *Courage the Cowardly Dog*, and *Johnny Bravo*. After the kids of today hop in bed, classic syndication kicks in, giving way to a more nostalgic audience: *Flintstones*, *Scooby Doo*, *Tom and Jerry*, and *Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck*. There's a new *Rocket Power* on tonight, and reruns of *The Wild Thornberrys*, *Rugrats*, and the recklessly popular *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

MTV airs a *variety* of music-based shows, but it's starting to scoop into "reality programming." *Variety* announces in today's issue that MTV is considering a 3rd season of O-Town's reality show, *Making the Band*.

On CNBC, it is the first year of *Hardball with Chris Matthews* and the last year of *Rivera Live*.⁴⁸ Brian Williams anchors *The News with Brian Williams*, a program that started in 1996.⁴⁹ But CNN's claim to the airwaves is *Crossfire*, a show that pits 2 opposed commentators against one another for a lively debate. This kind of show gains popularity across TV schedules, especially on FOX News. A large portion of the viewing audience wants to hear figures talk about the news, not report it.

The Daily Show, 30 minutes of "fake" news comedy, is in production year 6.⁵⁰ Its host, Jon Stewart, sits behind a metal-lined desk in a blue-carpeted studio. The show is back from a 2-week vacation tonight, and the first thing to poke fun at is the economy. A clip rolls of President Bush approaching his podium for a press conference—in slow motion. Jon runs his hands through his hair and pops his cheek in pregnant silence. Then:

We're doomed.

— Jon Stewart, reporting on tonight's *Daily Show*

Tomorrow's *Daily Show* will not air.

Tonight's highlights on HBO include the goose-bump-inducing *What Lies Beneath* and the equally goose-bump-inducing *American Beauty*, the latter being a family drama that paints an eerie angle on typical, suburban life at the end of the 20th century.

The mind behind *American Beauty* is also the same one behind one of HBO's proudest triumphs right now—*Six Feet Under*. With shows like *The Sopranos* and *Sex and the City*, HBO sets a standard for cable entertainment that gives top networks a scare.⁵¹ Just last night, the first installment of the war miniseries *Band of Brothers* premiered. It not only reminded the U.S. of its hands in World War II, but also showed how epic and dramatic cable can be. HBO holds 94 Emmy nominations this year.

The 53rd Primetime Emmy Awards are scheduled for this upcoming Sunday, the 16th of September. No one in the industry knows that the red carpet won't roll out Sunday, but 7 weeks later.

Events tomorrow will make for an unprecedented few hours of broadcast television, during which industry professionals themselves will forget their jobs, and boom mics will pick up the gasps of TV crews inside studios. Today, the schedules, lineups, and roll-ins are impeccably planned. Tomorrow, the cuts and framings will live in a visible gap from the hands that make them.

It would be remiss not to point out the overarching themes in the new TV lineup starting this month: spy, agent, spy, and undercover agent. TV studios unanimously bank on the 007 genre for the first time since the 1960s, each one rolling out its own colors and shapes of the type. A 35-year-old J.J. Abrams talks about the annual, cyclical nature of genre storytelling in today's *Austin American-Statesman*: the only drawback is that it costs a pretty penny. In a few years, Abrams' name will be synonymous with the most expensive TV pilot in broadcast history. It will involve a plane crash.

Among these spy shows are *Alias* and *24*, along with *The Agency*, *Thieves*, and *UC: Undercover*. Shall we ask why the first 2 will go on for numerous successful seasons, while the others will deflate in their primetime slots?

Not just a secret agent. She's a concealed weapon.

— tagline for *Alias*

In *Alias* (ABC), viewers will follow spy seductress Jennifer Garner (Sydney Bristow) through a subculture of undercover espionage, secret organizations, and even sci-fi like mythology for 5 years.⁵² In *24* (FOX), viewers will clock in an hour with toughened operative Kiefer Sutherland (Jack Bauer) in shadowy interrogation rooms and shady warehouses as he tries to protect a black president from assassination. That's only season 1; *24* will continue for 8 years.⁵³

A lot can happen in a day.

— tagline for *24*

Posters for *24* seen in public today feature Sutherland's serious face under transparent overlays of alarm clock numbers.

To catch a criminal, you have to become one...

— tagline for *UC: Undercover*

UC: Undercover (NBC), with its overdramatic music, screeching car chases, ear intercoms, and hard, mustached bosses, will be canceled at the end of its first season.

With John Stamos alongside Melissa George, *Thieves* (ABC) doesn't need a tagline. That's unfortunate, because despite a bickering couple tangoing through cracking safes and laying out cheap punches, *Thieves* will be cancelled in November with 2 episodes unaired.

CIA Agents defend the country against terrorist attacks.

— this month's *Cosmopolitan* sums up *The Agency*

The Agency (CBS) will employ a glossy yet depressing tint (à la *CSI*) over attractive actors and serious men in crisp button-downs and tight ties. For the idealists in all of us, the show will follow the romances that form between the people who protect our country. According to this month's *Cosmopolitan*, the writers of the show cite real CIA operatives.

The Agency is set to premiere this Thursday. It will be postponed to a week later and then cancelled at the end of season 2 without resolving a life-threatening cliffhanger.

Terrorism. Nuclear Threats. Biological Warfare. A New Era. A New War.

— tagline for *The Agency*

Does the future success of *Alias* and *24* versus the brief lives of other shows have something to do with where they will place the literary fourth wall? Both *Alias* and *24* will have a shine to them not defined necessarily by their style, but by the tone of their verisimilitude. Their worlds will be so fantastically defined that they will pull us out of our own. *UC: Undercover*, *Thieves*, and especially *The Agency* will instead remind us of a picture we hold in our head—perhaps a smoking, flaming, and terrifying picture. Despite efforts to show new takes on old material, these programs will peter out.

Last year, 2 TV shows premiered with Latino main or supporting characters. This year, there are 5.

The most successful of those shows will be *Scrubs*.

While we revolve around the TV, the movies still capture us. This summer, Michael Bay's epic, *Pearl Harbor*, came out as the top contender, grossing 197,000,00 dollars in the U.S.⁵⁴

On the cinematic mind recently are *Jeepers Creeps*, *Rush Hour 2*, and *American Pie 2*.

At the top of the box office this week is *The Musketeer*, a rendition of Dumas' tale with Hong-Kong-style fighting added to a mix that equals 10,700,000 dollars of return.⁵⁵ Under *The Musketeer* is the romcom *Two Can Play That Game*, in which Vivica A. Fox has an executive power struggle with her on-screen boyfriend. This out-of-control love game does best with young adults.⁵⁶

Fox will guest-star in 2 future episodes of *Alias*.⁵⁷

Coming in at number 3 at the box office is Mark Wahlberg and Jennifer Aniston in *Rock Star*.

That's the thing, people think rock stars—it's a big, old—just Mark Wahlberg singing and Jennifer Aniston in the background, going, "Love you." And it's not...

—Jon Stewart, reporting on tonight's *Daily Show*

Aimed at the college audience, the film features Wahlberg as an American Joe who starts a band and subsequently gets picked by his rock icons to replace their lead singer. The tribulations of the road (sex and drugs) challenge his relationship with Aniston, but the film comes off as a not-so-perceptive love letter to the 80s, some critics say.

Weren't they great, those theatrical bad boys like Slayer, Anthrax, Poison, and AC/DC? Wasn't their big hair great? Isn't it fun, secure in our tasteful 21st-century Gap wardrobes, to pretend they were great?

—Lisa Schwarzbaum, writing in this week's *Entertainment Weekly*

The lack of animal stars at the top of today's box office is surprising albeit refreshing after a season chock-full of them.

This summer alone offered Cats and Dogs, Planet of the Apes, Jurassic Park 3, Dr. Dolittle 2, American Outlaws, Rat Race, Osmosis Jones, Evolution, The Mummy Returns, A Knight's Tale, and of course, The Animal: all films that starred animals or had significant sequences involving them.

— Rick Lyman, writing in today's *The New York Times*

Lyman believes that the frequency of animal-related films is due to a rise in family audiences and the birth of many new cable television channels. As for the low earnings in the animal movie category this week, we might be able to put that under the "just sick and tired of it" heading.

In the storytelling world that lives on paper, Clive Cussler's newest installment of Dirk Pitt's global, historical adventures tops *The New York Times* best-seller list. But Cussler can't wipe away the shadowy, murder-driven thrillers that some of us need: Catherine Coulter, Faye Kellerman, Robert Crais, Phillip Margolin, Tess Gerritsen, Linda Howard, and James Patterson all stake their claims in this week's list, too.⁵⁸ John Irving has recently released a new novel that fits in at number 9 without making too much of a splash.

Jonathan Franzen is *The New Yorker's* guest contributor this month. He takes on this role after recently bouncing back from the viral reception that his book, *The Corrections*, is America's modern novel.

For most kids and young adults, *Harry Potter* is the obvious choice to make while in the bookstore (the first 4 books are still in the top 10 today). Lemony Snicket's witty parody of dark fiction, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, rises just beneath. Dimensional serials, featuring parentless teens in this case, seem to really attach to 4th-graders and middle-schoolers.

Thanks to the availability and adoption of storytelling content, we have a platform from which to pull our design trends. *Sex and the City*-style lettering glimmers attractively for advertisers of elegance such as designer jewelry, clothing, and perfume retailers. While J.K. Rowling makes the Garamond font popular with her books, Macy's tries out the Impact font, infamous thanks to Windows '98. Impact will become something that the advertisers for Macy's won't be caught dead in soon.

Magazine ads for Microsoft adopt a convenient, handwritten style, as if to imitate a PostIt note. They have nothing to fear in today's market. They can pass for classic ads; they don't need to be groundbreaking.

On *The Daily Show* tonight, Steve Carell presents a segment “examining” sex’s role in the advertising of cars, alcohol, and candy. While celebs dot magazine ads in slightly suggestive poses, inanimate objects as symbols in ads for Astroglide do the trick just as well. Most ads portray products in the hands of cheerful, humorous peers and adored celebrities. Models are just learning to narrow their eyes and lift their chins a little bit. The “aloof” look—cool, confident, and above it all—comes into posture. Lips hang a quarter of an inch open in *Cosmopolitan*. Men wear sweaters more often than not. They play cordial with the camera.

Anti-drug TV spots litter the mind, backed by branding changes in the National Youth Anti-Drug Campaign.⁵⁹ Harsh-lit close ups of aerosol cans on photography displays flash across the screen. The commercials encourage you to fill in the blank.

_____: *My Anti-Drug*.

— NYADMC 2001 anti-drug ad

2 previous deaths (besides Aaliyah's) dwell in the back of our heads: Dale Earnhardt, a NASCAR icon, and Timothy McVeigh, the man responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. Earnhardt died behind cameras and warped metal. McVeigh died behind a glass window.⁶⁰

Today, *The New York Times* publicizes the death of Samuel H. Miller, the chief pilot of the first-ever U.S. trans-Atlantic passenger flight in 1958. The flight “marked the beginning of the jet age.”

Time prints today that Michael L. Dertouzos, the unsung pioneer responsible for integrating the Internet in the worlds outside of government and business, died at 64. When he was alive, he predicted that 1 in 3 American homes would feature a computer by the mid-90s.

Today, George Harrison is 58.

John Gotti is 60.

Johnny Cash is 69.

Ronald Reagan is 90.

Marlon Brando is 77.

Arthur Miller is 86.

Rosa Parks is 88.

Kurt Vonnegut is 78.

Robert McNamara is 85.

Walter Cronkite is 84.

John Hughes is 51.

J.D. Salinger is 82.⁶¹

There are always particles in the smoke—constants—that the consciousness of now can reach for in order to reconstruct the consciousness of then. In the calculation we find ourselves a part of, every piece of data that we experience—be it print, Web, event, thought—leaves a chalk line to be traced. And while time may appear to weather the chalk, time only spreads it further onto the surface. The wisps become cloudy not because they don't make sense, but because we can't feel what they were to us. The line was concentrated, but the experience of the moment is lost before it is even over. When we look at yesterday or yesteryear, not everything comes into focus. There is always more that we don't have, and with the amount of content we continue to generate, we make the task daunting.

We've chosen a clear path, though. We looked at the forecast, and we looked at the front pages. We poured through the news that was, is, and will be. We found people in places during and before their time. We picked at roads to technological nowhere and rode with predictions to maybe somewhere. We questioned air travel ethos, we listened to what's selling in the music scene, and we asked how we see our icons. We saw how we wear our icons, how we wear just clothes, what cars we're buying, what businesses are doing, and what we're doing to create them. We turned on the TV, we got a peek at what's coming; we took a trip to the movies and then the bookstore. We picked up on the advertisements surrounding us, the people who died before us, and the ones glowing in the sunsets of their time on Earth.

But that's not enough. There's more in this never-ending sea of data. It's an overload, but it's a calculating one, a determined one—a sensible one. This is the overload of cultural consciousness, and it is always one step ahead of its variables. We're stuck in its forward motion as it builds and builds, and we build and build in symmetry with it. This is the core of life: data that becomes thought. And 99 percent of the time, we aren't even aware of that those thoughts are racing through our brains.

A book such as this cannot tack it all down. Even a book such as this becomes subjective by nature. A book such as this could be and probably is totally wrong about many of its acclamations. But this book is made of words, when the purest form of what we call reality seems to prefer numbers. It refuses to make sense without them. From the numbers, we can pull conclusions and questions about who we were and what the world was to us. The dots are always there in that endless sea, and the pre-9/11 world isn't the only one we can explore. We can navigate through that endless sea just as sailors do—by knowing where we came from and by using maps and numbers. They could be 9/11/01 or they could be 5/4/70 or they could be 12/7/41 or 11/22/63 or 7/4/76. These numbers—and all of the data that surrounds them—don't just tell us about who we were. They tell us about who we are now, on the crisp edge of forward time. They tell us who our grandmothers were—and even if they've passed—who they are now. They tell us what our ideas were and where they've gone. They expose the cogs in the machine that we—and our ideas—always will be.

If we believe that intelligence is merely a product of complexity—of the number of connections and folds in the brain—what does this mean for the endless sea that we find ourselves in? How many connections are inside of it? What is it trying to do?

What does it know that we don't?

The dots are here. Hindsight marks our place amongst them. Time pushes us up the number line, deeper into the calculation.

Tomorrow morning, scattered showers will give way to cloudy skies in the eastern United States, while severe flooding and rainfall will continue in Florida and other parts of the Southeast. There will be small hail in parts of Texas again, and a storm system from the Pacific will attack the West Coast with showers, thunderstorms, and lightning.⁶²

This will leave the Northeast fairly quiet.

The forecast is 60s-70s in the Northeast and Midwest, 70s-80s in the Northwest and Southeast, and 90s-100s in the Southwest.

2001

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9/11

Anthrax attacks

War with Afghanistan begins

iPod introduced

Windows XP released

PATRIOT Act signed

AA Flight 587 crashes in Queens

George Harrison dies

Enron files for bankruptcy

Shoebomber

2002

Open Skies Treaty signed

Daniel Pearl of *The Wall Street Journal* kidnapped and killed

Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City

NASA's Odyssey starts mapping Mars

Invasion of Afghanistan

Coup against Chavez fails

U.S. report on state sponsors of terrorism released

2002 MN misses Earth by 75,000 miles

Department of Homeland Security founded

2003

Space Shuttle Columbia disaster

War in Darfur

Protests against Iraq War

First identified case of SARS

Iraq War begins with U.S. invasion of Iraq

U.S. tornado outbreak

SARS declared contained

Saddam Hussein's sons killed

Blackouts in the Northeast U.S.

Michael Jackson arrested

Saddam Hussein captured

2004

Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction

Facebook launches

Martha Stewart convicted

Abu Ghraib Prison controversy

Accomplice of Oklahoma City bombing convicted

U.S. gives sovereignty to Iraqi Interim Government

Freedom Tower groundbreaking

President George W. Bush re-elected

Southeast Asia tsunami

2005

Elections held in Iraq

North Korea proclaims ownership of nuclear weapons

YouTube launches

Terri Schiavo's feeding tube is removed

Pope John Paul II dies

Rebellion against the U.S. occupation of Iraq

Mark Felt revealed as "Deep Throat"

London transportation terrorist attacks

Hurricane Katrina

U.S. soldiers seen burning 2 Taliban soldiers alive

Trial of Saddam Hussein

2006

NASA's final attempt to contact Pioneer 10

Human Genome Project publishes last chromosome sequence

Java earthquake

2006 Lebanon War

Twitter launches

Al Jazeera English launches

Shooting at West Nickel Mine School

Saddam Hussein executed

2007

iPhone announced

Virginia Tech

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows published

WGA strike

2008

U.S. recession begins

U.S. tornado outbreak

Castro resigns

Taliban attempts to assassinate President Karzai of Afghanistan

Bill Gates steps down from Microsoft

Michael Phelps breaks gold medal record

Somali pirates

DOW loses 777 points

Bank bailout

Obama elected

2009

U.S. Airways Flight 1549 crash-lands in the Hudson

U.S. stimulus

H1N1

Air France Flight 447 crashes

Michael Jackson dies

2 journalists abducted in North Korea

2010

Haiti earthquake

Chile earthquake

Volcanic ash disrupts air traffic

BP oil spill

Greek bailout

Synthetic genome announced

WikiLeaks

Tea Party movement

Chilean miners trapped

North Korea/South Korea conflict escalates

2011

Arab Spring

Japan earthquake and tsunami/nuclear scare

British royal wedding

Osama bin Laden killed

Norway terror attacks

Occupy

World population reaches 7,000,000,000

Iraq war ends

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