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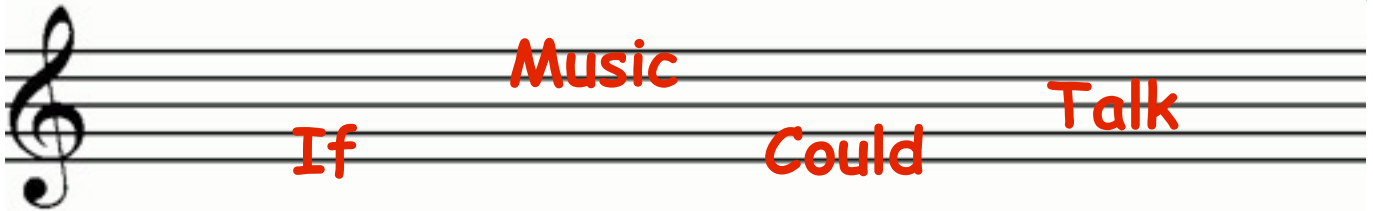
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Cover photo by Aurora Mazzoni

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By Jennifer Vitali and Marilena Petrocelli

Music may be the only interest that everyone has, because it's unusual to find someone that doesn't like listening to music. But the way music is perceived is changing in Italy. Compared with ten years ago, for example, the range of musical genres people listen to is much broader. To find out more about tastes in music, we decided to investigate.

First we decided we were most interested in the views of young people aged 14-25. For the older people in this group (aged 20-25), we asked our friends (45 in all), in face-to-face interviews. Since we have few direct contacts among teenagers, we investigated their views via online music forums. Twenty-five teenagers were surveyed this way. Our three questions for both groups were:

Which do you prefer: listening to the radio, CDs or watching music channels?

What kind of music do you like most?

Which do you prefer: Italian or foreign music? Who and why?



We didn't take into account every musical genre (for example, jazz, soul and classical music), just the most popular ones. And here's what we found.

Which do you prefer: listening to the radio, CDs or watching music channels?



Most people prefer listening to CDs. The first and fairly obvious reason given is that you can put any kind of music you want on a CD, and any musician you like. Secondly, there are no adverts or breaks between songs. CDs are preferred mostly by people who listen to a specific musical genre that you can't find easily on the radio or TV.

14-19 year-olds like CDs because they can sing their favourite songs along with their friends. 20-25 year-olds like CDs because they can listen to their favourite genre even when it is not broadcast on the radio or TV.



Some people also listen to the radio, mostly while driving. They say they like this because of the element of surprise over what song will come up next, and because it's a way to keep up with new music. Many young people also enjoy listening to other kinds of radio programmes, to take a "break" from music, especially 20-25 year-olds, because they find some programmes quite entertaining. Many 14-19 year-olds, on the other hand, say they find programmes to be an obstacle between them and music. Everyone finds the ads annoying.



Since music channels on TV constantly broadcast commercial music, people with other tastes don't watch them. We also found that 14-19 year-olds like watching music channels because it's a way of seeing their favourite musicians on videos. In addition, they like the charts programmes and gossip programmes. Most 20-25 year-olds, however, don't like music channels because of the constant commercial music and because they find the programmes a bit childish.

"I prefer to listen to CDs because I get fed-up going through channels to find something I like. The only way for me to get to hear what I like is to pop in a CD, so I know what songs are going to be playing, and I know I'll like them all."

"I listen to the radio in the car every morning on my way to work, and every evening on my way back. While driving I prefer the radio so that I can hear new songs, the news and listen to discussion programmes."

"I like music channels although there are too many advertisements. But I like them anyway, because you can see the singers and sometimes there are interesting music programmes."

What kind of music do you like most?

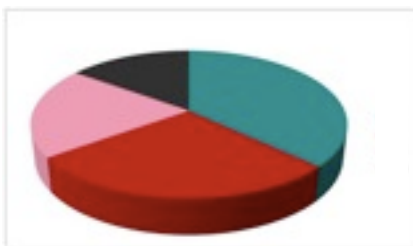
We found that taste in music varied according to age.

14-19 year-olds

A large percentage of girls prefer listening to pop, especially to singers from talent shows, such as Alessandra Amoroso, Valerio Scanu and Marco Carta.

A few teenage girls said they liked American rock, and most of the boys said they listen to metal and rock.

Regular clubbers like to listen to the music played in the clubs they go to, mostly to relive the sensations of their wild club nights with house, electro and techno music.



- pop
- rock
- disco
- metal

Preferred music genres: 14-19 year-olds

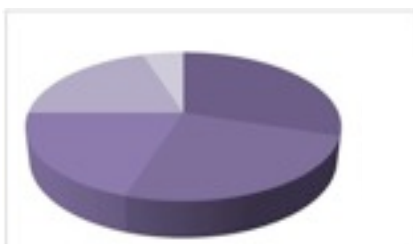
20-25 year-olds

Almost all the males in this age group say they listen to rock groups such as Guns 'n' Roses, Oasis, Nirvana etc...

As regards the females, most say they listen to pop and Italian music. Their favourites are Vasco Rossi and Ligabue. A few listen to rock music, such as Nirvana, Oasis, Green Day, Queen and U2.

Hip-Hop and R&B are listened to by both males and females. The favourites are Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, Eminem, Jay-Z and Rihanna.

Jazz and soul remain music for an élite, although Rome offers opportunities to hear these genres live. The young people that we interviewed, however, say they feel these genres to be old-fashioned.



- rock
- pop
- metal
- R&B
- soul and jazz

Preferred music genres: 20-25 year-olds

Where's the Soul Man?

By Giulia Di Cristofaro

Everybody knows the song 'Stand By Me', but Sean Kingston's remix 'Stand By Me Beautiful Girls' brought it up to date, making it sound like a brand new R&B song. It may seem hard to imagine, but the original version was first sung by Ben E. King in 1961, so it's now fifty years old!

This is just one example; so many of these old songs are still successful, and thanks also to contemporary singers and musicians who cover and remix them, Soul music certainly doesn't look like it's going to disappear. Here are a few more examples of cover versions and remixes that you will probably recognise: the Fugees' 'Killing me softly' (1996); 'I say a little prayer' by Diana King for the film *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997); Gareth Gates' 'Unchained Melody' (2002); Shaggy's 'Sexual Healing' (2006); Madcon's 'Beggin' (2007); 'At Last' by Beyoncé for the film *Cadillac Records* (2008); Duffy's 'Stay with me (baby)' (2009); Seal's cover versions of eleven soul classics on his album entitled *Soul* (2008).

But why do Soul songs continue to thrive? Perhaps their rhythm still sounds modern, or perhaps they are popular for the simple reason that, like the original singers, you will always need someone to stand by you *when the night has come and the land is dark*.

These songs are so powerful that when you listen to Ray Charles, Otis Redding, Nina Simone and all the other singers that have become part of the history of music, you can understand what music means. These singers felt and expressed the rhythm that was under their skin. They just closed their eyes and sang, and knew exactly how to do it. The voice came from within their souls (and from their history as Blacks in the US). Their voices and a few instruments had such a powerful impact on listeners. Some people say that today they sound old-fashioned, but without them R&B just wouldn't exist.

Today, there is a revival of Soul music, with neo-soul singers such as Amy Winehouse, Paolo Nutini, Sharon Jones and Eli Paperboy Reed, trying to talk soul-to-soul with a young generation of listeners, showing us a way to find our souls too.



Which do you prefer: Italian or foreign music? Who and why?

Most of the people in our survey said they prefer Italian music because they can understand what the singer is saying, and so they feel more involved emotionally. Among the Italian musicians, at the top are veterans such as Vasco Rossi, Ligabue, Jovanotti, Eros Ramazzotti, Laura Pausini and Tiziano Ferro. Songs like “Sally”, “Certe notti”, “L'ombelico del mondo”, “Terra promessa”, and “La solitudine” have gained great popularity over the years.

The majority of young people seem to prefer Italy's talent show stars. Most of their fans are female teenagers who like them more for their good looks than for their musical skills.

We also came across young people who like singers that have left their mark on Italian culture, such as De André, De Gregori and Battiato, whose songs are about love and also society and its problems, and often criticize governments and institutions. These singers are appreciated mostly by young musicians. Young people also enjoy the poetry of their lyrics, even where the musician's technique isn't perfect: one example is Lucio Battisti.

Foreign music is trendy, however, especially if it is from the UK, Ireland or the US. Some people prefer it to Italian music because of its lively rhythm. Teenage girls particularly like listening to trendsetting new bands and singers such as Tokio Hotel, Jonas Brothers and Avril Lavigne.

It also emerged in our survey that teenage girls like to quarrel online with other fans to defend their favourite singer or band. Some of them also said they like older groups, but when asked to name some of their songs, it turned out that they know just a couple of hits that they've heard mainly in commercials, movies or that their friends have told them about. The



most commonly mentioned are Aerosmith's “I Don't Want To Miss A Thing” and “Wonderwall” by Oasis.

Anglophone pop is listened to equally by male and female, and regardless of age. The Black Eyed Peas, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Robbie Williams, Michael Jackson (especially after his death, in the case of teenagers), Green Day, Beyoncé, Queen and U2: these are the pop musicians preferred by the majority of young Italians. A simple, unpretentious kind of music that listeners say “makes me feel better”.

Boys in particular state a taste for other genres: classic rock by Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and The Doors; grunge by Nirvana, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam and Alice in Chains; hard rock by AC/DC, Aerosmith, Guns'n'Roses and Black Sabbath; punk by the Sex Pistols and the Ramones. This is especially true in the case of young musicians: they say they want to know more about old rock bands to improve their own music skills.

Metal (including power metal, thrash metal, death metal, progressive metal, etc.) is most popular among males too, around 75% of whom say they play an instrument. The most popular bands in this genre are Megadeth, Blind Guardian and Dream Theater.

Those who state a preference for international music say it is because of the greater variety in the arrangements compared with Italian music.



Above: promo photo of Baustelle, 2010. Left: Neverstore, concert in Japan. Photo by Erick Eckerström on flickr.

Ave, dude!

by Aurora Mazzoni

A few days ago I happened to read an article about the differences between the English we learn at school and university and real spoken English. Among all the existing spoken varieties, I wanted to shine a light (or at least try to) on one I really enjoy, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), aka Black Vernacular English (BVE), with the help of some of my favourite songs.

A HISTORY THANG

Linguists and sociolinguists have long debated the origins of AAVE, and two hypothesis seem to have prevailed. The Dialectologist hypothesis claims that AAVE is an archaic British dialect, since it resembles the dialect of East-Anglia and Anglo-Irish and Scottish dialects of English too.

The proponents of the Creole hypothesis, on the other hand, claim that AAVE derives from a West African Pidgin that arose from communication between English and African traders. The pidgin that resulted from their need to communicate in daily life was carried to the New World by the first African slaves. It then came into contact with other African languages and Standard English (SE) as well as other pidgins and creoles.

Contact between standard English and the West African Pidgin mentioned above led to further evolution: into an English-based creole, and then a

decreolization of this creole. The resulting decreolized language is thought to have been the basis for AAVE.

Evidence of this is provided by Gullah, an AAVE variety spoken on the coastal islands of South Carolina and Georgia. Due to its geographical isolation, this language has maintained many of its original features, which can also be found in West African languages, although at the same time it has been influenced by SE.

Nowadays scholars tend to consider AAVE as the result of both of these spontaneous linguistic processes: influence of earlier spoken dialects on the one hand, and creolization on the other.

A LIL' GRAMMA

AAVE has its own distinct verb system. In the simple present, for example, the various forms of the copula (*is/are*) are omitted, as in: **What you cryin' about?** ("Mockingbird" by Eminem), although they are pronounced when stressed or when they can't be contracted in SE.

In SE, sentences like *I don't know where she is*, the stress is on *is*, and so you can't contract the subject pronoun and verb into **I don't know where she's*. (NB The asterisk denotes an example of incorrect usage.)

Similarly, in AAVE you can't omit *is* and just say **I don't know where she*, but forms such as ***I don't know where she at*** are regularly used.

The absence of the third person singular *-s* in the simple present is a characteristic feature of AAVE, as is the use of the infinitive **be** to express an habitual action:

We be burnin' not concernin' what nobody wanna say ("We be burnin'" by Sean Paul. SE: *Everyday we burn, not caring about what other people say. Note that **burn** here means smoking weed*).

There are two ways to express future in AAVE. The first is like the use of *will* in Standard English, and takes the form ***I'ma***, followed by **be** and the verb in the gerund form. It's often contracted into ***Imma***, as in the two examples below, which refer to a promise



and a threat, respectively (the way *will* is used in SE):

Imma be makin' all the deals you wanna do
("Imma be" by Black Eyed Peas. SE: *I'll make all the deals you want*).

I'ma make u look so ridiculous now
("Cleanin' out my closet" by Eminem).

The other type of future involves **gon'** or **gonna**, which expresses an indefinite future action, a plan or intention (like *going to* followed by the verb in the infinitive form in SE):

We gon' sip Bacardi like it's your birthday
("In Da Club" by 50 Cent).

Continuous actions are formulated in two ways. One form consists of the word **steady** used with the gerund:

In for the night, no longer steady mobbin'
("Steady Mobbin" by Ice Cube. SE: *At home tonight, so I won't be driving around in my car*).

I'm steady pumpin bullets in your sheets
("Point The Finga" by 2PAC. SE: *I keep shooting at your sheets*).

The other way to express a continuous action is through the Perfect Progressive, without the *has/have* auxiliary found in SE:

I been workin all day
("Wait a Minute" by Ray J F/ Lil' Kim. SE: *I've been working all day*).

AAVE also uses **be done** to indicate completed actions that are relevant now, the way the present perfect is used in British English.

How I be done waxed you in your house
("Down for my niggas" by Snoop Dogg. SE: *When I've finished killing you in your house*).

Done is also used with the past participle to express the recentness of an action, in substitution of the present perfect, as in this example:

I done turned into the man I never thought I'd be
("Papers" by Usher. SE: *I have turned into the man...*)

The negative marker is **ain't**, replacing both *be not* and *have not*:

I ain't got nothin' to prove I'm 'posed to smile
("Ain't I" by Jay-Z. SE: *I have nothing to prove I'm supposed to smile*).

The double negative is used here too, but triple or even multiple negatives can also be found. The elision of the syllable at the beginning of the word (**'posed** rather than *supposed*) is very common too, as in **'fore**, **'bout**, **'em**, **'cos/cuz**, but elision can also be internal, as in the case of **lil'**.

The last grammar point I want to mention is the way in which **got** replaces *have*:

U got it bad ("U got it bad" by Usher. SE: *You're strongly affected [by something]*).

This use of **got** is found in many expressions too, such as:

Cos they got nothing on you

("Nothing on You" by B.o.B F/ Bruno Mars. SE: *They're nothing like you/nothing compares to you*).

WORD 'EM UP

Contraction and elision play a major role in this variety of English, making words sound very different from SE vocabulary. But there are also plenty of specifically AAVE words. A term we often find in rap and hip-hop (besides **bro** which appears everywhere!) is **diss**, an abbreviation for *disrespect*:

Don't think I did that shit intentionally just to diss you
("Stan" by Eminem).

For a rapper to do a **diss** song also means writing a song in order to mock a rival, often to insult.

The word **crib** in place of *home* became so popular that a TV show was named after it, MTV Cribs.

Another large category of words concerns girlfriends (**mama**, **shortie**, **shawty**, **boo**, **wifey**, **hottie**) and friends (**homie**, **dawg**, **bro**, **buddy**, **bestie**). Insults are a big slice of the pie, too. The most common is **motherfucker**, whose final sound is often contracted to **mothafucka**.

This transformation of the *-er* ending of words into **-a** is common in AAVE: along with **mothafucka**, we find **gangsta**, **figa**, **sista** and a lot more!

When the topic is jewelry, you'll find terms such as **shine**, **ice** and **bling-bling** being used, as in this example:

Neck full of bling bling like the neptune sound
("Take Ya Home" by Lil' Bow Wow).

Rap and hip-hop lyrics also frequently mention brand names for cars, clothes, jewelry and so on. Here Jay-Z informs us of what he owns:

I keep you workin' that Hermes Birkin bag Manolo Blahnik Timbs, aviator lens 600 drops, Mercedes Benz, The only time you wear Burberry to swim...
("03 Bonnie & Clyde").

Which makes me wonder...what is the AAVE word for Hidden Advertising?

As far as vocabulary is concerned, however, it is impossible to schematize. It has been observed, mainly in children's classrooms, that once an AAVE term has begun to be used by a non-AAVE speaker, BE speakers stop using it, substituting it with a new one. In a world where globalization is putting a number of languages at risk, it's great to see a community so proud of its identity and its language.

Want to read more? See here:

<http://people.uncw.edu/martinezm/BLACK%20AMERICAN%20ENGLISH.ppt>

http://english.drjhsteele.net/4205_notes/L91-Chapter_8.ppt

Comics: Not Just Kids' Play

By Chiara Guida

People often think comics are only for kids. Maybe because, here in Italy, Disney comics are the most popular kind. But there is a whole world to discover: a world made up of superheroes (such as those of Marvel and DC) and evil characters.

X-Men (published by Marvel) deals with the problems of young people and racial discrimination, while *Kick Ass* (published by Icon, an imprint of Marvel Comics for creator-owned titles) tells the story of a teenager who turns himself into a superhero, which results in horrifying violence.

Some comic series are very popular. Creator-owned and graphic novel series are generally unsuitable for children, but they often become popularised as films. I'm thinking about *From Hell*, for instance, which tells the story of Jack the Ripper, or

about *V for Vendetta*, about a fascist regime oppressing an imaginary UK. Both comics are by Alan Moore.

Comics have always been an underestimated art form in Italy. Nobody seems to be aware of the amount of work and training that goes into the creation of a comic book, including the study of the human body.

Fortunately, in Italy there are some schools of comics too. One of the most important is The International School of Comics – Academy of Figurative and Digital Arts in Rome.

Francesco Lo Storto is one of the comic book artists who works there, as well as working for both Italian and American publishers. He agreed to do a short interview for *MiraMag* which is reproduced below.

When did you realise you wanted to be a comic book artist?

Actually, I have always drawn, even as a child, but I started thinking about comics long after that.

What did you study?

I have a degree in law. For some years I also worked as a lawyer, but in the end my desire to become a comic book artist took over.

How hard is it to get a name for yourself with comics, and earn enough to live on?

Oh it's very hard, however the possibility of serious work exists. Being passionate about comics can help but it isn't enough, also because this kind of drawing is not so easy, therefore I attended a school of comics, the same place where I teach now.

Have you ever thought of giving up?

People often ask me this question... fortunately not so often!!!

Do you like teaching young people who share your passion for comics?

Absolutely! Also because I often learn from my students. In my opinion, teaching how to draw comics is a reciprocal task.

Any new projects at the moment?

I just finished a job for the IDW (Idea + Design Works, an American comic book company), *Deep Space Nine*, and, yes, there's something new, but I am superstitious so...



Art Beyond Limits

By Silvia D'Ascanio

Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 9 April - 11 July
Tues-Wed-Thurs from 10.00 to 20.00
Fri-Sat from 10.00 to 22.30
Sun from 10.00 to 20.00
Mondays closed

One of the many exhibitions taking place in Rome at the moment is entitled *La natura secondo De Chirico* (Nature according to De Chirico). Giorgio de Chirico is the creator, along with Carlo Carrà, of Metaphysical Art, an Italian art movement of the 20th century, now celebrating its 100th anniversary.

For the occasion, the Palazzo delle Esposizioni is honouring De Chirico with a major exhibition of works from his entire production, from his symbolist debut to the development of Neo-metaphysics in his later years.

The main theme of the exhibition is the artist's concept of Nature, which according to De Chirico is undecipherable on its own and requires the artist to come up with a solution to the enigmas it holds.

Striking though his paintings are, I find it quite difficult to understand them. Here, for example, is *The*



Giorgio de Chirico, *The Disquieting Muses* (1916)

Disquieting Muses (1916), one of his most famous paintings, in which three faceless mythological statue-like figures are set against a disturbing urban landscape with looming shadows. Not only is the Italian Piazza present, as in many of his other paintings, but there are also official-looking buildings in the distance, and, at the far edge, a building with tall chimneys that looks like a factory. At first, what I see seems just like a strange fusion of geometrical shapes and colours. Only by trying to go beyond this first

impression and learning more about his work was it possible for me to grasp something of the painter's philosophy: his desire to go beyond limits, where logic has no meaning.

Caravaggio's True Colours

By Rosanna Damato

Scuderie del Quirinale, 20 February - 13 June
Sunday to Thursday 10.00 - 20.00
Friday and Saturday 10.00 - 22.30
Mondays closed

If you have three hours to spare, one for the exhibition and two for the queue - at least on Sundays - how about Caravaggio at the Scuderie del Quirinale?

I found the exhibition really beautiful. First of all because it was exciting for me to see paintings by Caravaggio that I didn't know yet, such as the rejected *The Conversion of St Paul* (1600-01), and those I had seen only in my art history textbook, such as *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (below).

While standing in front of his canvases, I was really astounded by his ability to depict the human body, as well as by his use of light, shape and colour. In his *true-to-life* style, Caravaggio paints characters from everyday life in a way that almost makes them appear to be moving. His use of light guides your eye, focusing your attention on the bodies emerging from the dark background. The colours, often based on shades of black and brown, strike you most when the dark shades are contrasted with the strong colours of the clothes worn by the characters.

If you want to admire works by this unconventional artist, go and see the exhibition!

But bear in mind that this will only be your first step... I have to admit there was something I didn't like at all about this exhibition, namely, that it is really only a small sample of Michelangelo Merisi's works. As

you will read on the information panels at the exhibition, to see more of his works you will need to go elsewhere, since in Rome twenty-three of his paintings are distributed across eleven different places.



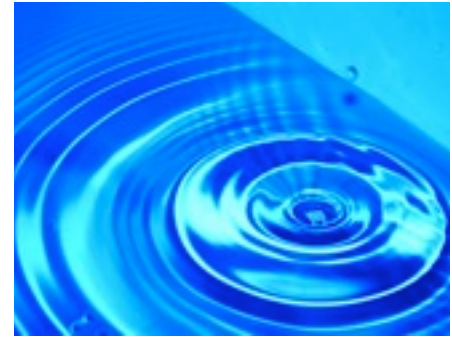
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1598-99).



Collage of Nele Azevedo's *Melting Men*

New Times, New Arts

by Aurora Mazzoni



Water drop image, by Aurora Mazzoni

People are constantly finding new ways to express themselves through art. Sculpture in particular seems to attract contemporary artists, with inspiration coming from a wide range of materials.

Brazilian artist Nele Azevedo, for example, has used ice to create hundreds of tiny male figures for installations entitled *Melting Men* in cities across the world.

These installations are part of an urban intervention project named Minimum Monument whose aim is to critique the concept of the historical monument in today's cities.

As the artist herself explained in an interview published in *GreenMuze* in December 2008, the monument "loses its static condition to gain fluidity in the urban displacement and in the change of state of the water" (www.greenmuze.com/art/interviews/641-nele-azevedo-interview.html). Many people read her installations as an action against climate change and global warming, although this was not the original purpose.

With its recycling of discarded objects, Junk Art is also seen as an initiative supporting the green cause. This art form emerged in the US particularly in the late 1950s and early 1960s, creating brand new artworks out of the junk of everyday urban life, such as magazine paper, buttons, lamps, bottles, rubber tyres, cigarette butts and so on.

Hungarian artist Balla Tamás also makes use of everyday items in his work, but food rather than junk. After making tiny sculptures with food, he takes photos of them. His works include human-shaped mandarin peel, portraits engraved on apples, a house and a cradle made out of eggshell. Based on a work by Tamás entitled *Final Exasperation* (of the lemon), the photo below depicts my own exasperated lemon.



Wishing visitors to his gallery "a very pleasant visit", Tamás advises "get[ting] recharged with energy". I don't know if the energy allusion has something to do with all the food shown, but visiting www.ballatamas.com is definitely yummy... ehm, very pleasant!

Somewhere between sculptures and pictures, Water Drop Art is really intriguing. It consists of immortalizing a water drop falling into water... literally, its splash!

Martin Waugh, an engineer with a passion for Water Drop pictures, explains on his website that what we "see on this site are high-resolution photographs of liquids in motion, captured with high-speed flash photography [...] I don't alter the shapes or composition. What you see is what nature provided." (www.liquidsculpture.com).

His pictures are certainly beautiful but I found that they also convey such a peaceful sensation that I couldn't help but give it a try. After twenty shots and some rudimental colour adjustments, the blue water drop image above is the best I could do.

Cybernauts often teach themselves how to use software such as Photoshop to help them create their Digital Art, which they then display on web galleries. On one of these galleries (digitalart.com) I met Don Laczi, "not a pro digital artist" (his own definition), but self-taught. As he put it: "I'm just an ordinary guy who loves to take pictures, loves to ride bicycles and loves to do a little tweaking using Photoshop. The internet is my resource, and all I do is practise, practise, practise." Currently his inspiration comes mostly from "cycling, nature and people-themed images."

Among his artworks, including those on Facebook, my own personal favourite is *I miss you*, which I find conveys all the nostalgia expressed in the title. Here is Laczi's own comment: "I created the image *I miss you* for a very special lady whom I care about and love. Too bad she didn't know about it."



Don Laczi, *I Miss You*

Some things never change.

Orsini Prince of Monsters

by Carla De Pascale

You who are wandering around the world looking for great marvels, come here

**Parco dei Mostri, Viterbo.
Permanent exhibition: Monday to Sunday
From 8.00 till sunset**

If you're interested in sculpture and architecture that is out of the ordinary, I suggest a visit to one of the most peculiar gardens you'll ever see: the Bomarzo Gardens (also known as The Villa of Wonders), where astonishing mythological creatures carved out of bare rock rise among the trees.

Prince Vicino Orsini had this Mannerist work built in 1552 (by Pirro Ligorio), perhaps as a dedication to his beloved first wife, who died young (there is also a temple among the trees dedicated to his second wife). Some say the Villa has an esoteric function (another name for it is the Sacred Wood), or maybe - and this seems the most likely explanation - he wanted this Villa for art's sake.

Many Renaissance writers carved epigraphs into the rocks after wandering through the garden. Prince Orsini himself wrote these words on a sphinx:

***voi che pel mondo gite errando vaghi di
veder meraviglie alte et stupende venite
qua ove tutto vi parla d'amore e d'arte....***

(You who are wandering around the world looking for great marvels, come here where everything speaks of love and art).

During my visit, what I found most interesting from an artistic and historical perspective was the Leaning House, which Orsini's wife had built while her husband was imprisoned in a foreign land. The house was built on top of a sloping rock as a metaphor for the family's imminent decline. When you go inside, a sensation of loss of balance overwhelms you, making your head spin. It's really bizarre - you should try it.

Info: www.parcodemostri.com

They killed the dreamer but...

By Giulia di Cristofaro

The Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Lincoln in 1863 freed all slaves in the US, but with the so-called Jim Crow laws, legalized segregation between Blacks and Whites continued up to the 1960s. After World War II, through acts of non-violent civil disobedience, civil rights activists such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr aimed at disrupting the enforcement of racial segregation rules and laws. By 1968, all forms of segregation had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

To find out more about the events that took place in these years, a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis would be really worthwhile. Housed at the Lorraine Motel, where the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated in 1968, the collection of items on display relates to the key episodes in the American civil rights movement.

Last summer I was lucky enough to visit this museum. I felt the strife, pain and injustice of those events. I got on a 1950s bus, sat next

to a statue of Rosa Parks, and listened to a replica of her famous refusal to move to the back of the bus. It was quite moving to think of what had taken place right where I was sitting. While looking at the displays, I had the impression that nothing had been moved: the cars were parked outside the Motel exactly where they were on 4th April 1968, and a wreath marked the spot where King was assassinated.

Although segregation is now illegal in the US, racism, discriminations and inequalities still exist, there as elsewhere. It is worth remembering the words of Martin Luther King Jr:

So I say to you, my friends, that even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal.



Sign outside the Lorraine Motel. Photo by Giulia Di Cristofaro



Storytelling

by Marina Brunetti



Once upon a time there were some important men whose job was to tell Kings and Queens about what was happening in their lands. Although those men were illiterate, they had a great memory and could remember everything. Kings' and Queens' decisions depended on what they told them.

As time went by, those men lost their power among Kings and Queens but they didn't stop telling stories about what they saw as they travelled around. They still had the power to bring people together. Those men were called storytellers. They used to stand next to big crackling fires and people would listen to their stories. This is how they kept their countries' tradition alive over the centuries.

Storytellers didn't have any kind of script, they only used their memory, their voice, their gestures, their movements and their expressions. The listeners' participation was also fundamental in making

storytelling a magic moment. Communication couldn't take place if listeners didn't let their imagination run away with them.

Nowadays, in many countries the storytelling tradition is disappearing. We don't have enough time to indulge our imagination and parents don't even have the time to tell their children stories.

Nevertheless, storytelling is still deeply rooted in Irish and Scottish culture. Scottish and Irish tales have a lot in common as they share the same Celtic origin. Listening to Irish and Scottish tales means entering into contact with their culture and their ancient tradition of folk and fairies tales. It means meeting fairies, elves, dwarfs, gnomes, trolls, brownies, leprechauns, mermaids, ghosts, vampires and monsters. If you go to Ireland you may hear people talking about changelings, dark fairies that are believed to steal human babies to take with them to the Fairy Realm. In Scotland you may come across the Cait Sith (pronounced cat-she), a large black supernatural cat.

The traditional tales have influenced many authors. Edgar Allan Poe wrote a dark tale called "The Black Cat", and William Butler Yeats filled his poetry with tales about fairies. Stoker is said to have got the idea of vampires, the undead and werewolves from his mother's tales.

Attempts are being made to keep this art alive. One of the best-known examples is Scotland's International Storytelling Festival, which brings together storytellers from all around the world. The Festival is organized by Edinburgh's Scottish Storytelling Centre and is an opportunity to learn more about Scottish culture and other cultures too.

From 22-31 October 2010, the 21st Scottish International Storytelling Festival will host storytellers from India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, China and Japan. Alongside storytelling performances, there will be talks and discussions, workshops, film screening and 'meet the storyteller' sessions.

In other words, an opportunity to witness the magical world of the imagination and take refuge in an ancient tradition which can both take us away from and help us deal with the anxieties of modern life, in a unique and special atmosphere.

Fully booked, 13-17 May

Turin's 33rd International Book Fair



By Jennifer Romeo

In Italy there is an event which every year without fail attracts floods of book-lovers, authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, agents, illustrators, translators and industry professionals as a whole: the international book fair, held annually in mid-May in Turin, and currently one of the largest and much awaited yearly events of its kind. Normally it lasts five days, with thousands of visitors every year.

At the time of writing, the fair is on (13 to 17 May), and as expected it has been invaded by crowds of ordinary readers, not just publishing professionals.

On the opening day there are more visitors than on other days, so if you ever go in the future, I'd advise going midweek, to avoid the huge crowds and long queues - I speak from experience!

The event takes place every year in the Lingotto Fiere area (the site of the former Fiat plant, later transformed into an exhibition, conference and commercial centre).

Naturally this Book Fair has a cost. There are fixed entry prices but also discounts for students, teachers and other categories, such as school groups.

I went in 2006 with my mother, and remember

seeing stands everywhere, with bestsellers, the latest publications, signed copies, rare first editions, difficult-to-find volumes, textbooks and so on. Each publisher - from the most famous

to those unheard-of - has its own stand. Each Italian region also has its own stand, with books by regional authors and other local items.

There is one thing I would criticise about this Fair: the book prices are the same as elsewhere. I went hoping to be able to buy books at a discount, but no such luck! I wonder what the point of calling it a "book fair" is if there are no discounts. Not fair!

I've heard that this year the IBS (Internet BookShop), Italy's largest online bookstore, is there with their e-book section, so it looks like Italian

publishing is also moving with the times. Just as well, since, (as Crystal puts it) the digital era is just around the corner.

Besides enjoying the wide range of books, visitors can also take part in debates and informal discussions, attend book signing and book presentations in which authors read aloud from their work. You can also watch screenings of films based on books, games, and so on.

Each year there is a leitmotif: this year it is **Memory**. In addition, as has happened every year since 2001, the Fair has a country as honorary guest. This year it's India, and for the occasion the Fair is hosting numerous Indian authors and others whose books focus on India. Among the guests is Vikas Swarup, the Indian novelist and diplomat whose first novel, **Q and A** (2005), was adapted for the screen, becoming the Oscar winning **Slumdog Millionaire** (also on my 3rd year English programme).

At the book fair you are likely to run into all sorts of famous people, from TV, cinema, radio, sport and politics as well as from the publishing world. You might even end up having a coffee or drink with one of them in one of the many corners set aside for food and refreshments.

The Turin International Book Fair is an important commercial showcase, an immense bookshop and a cultural festival all

in one. It's an opportunity to do something different, to broaden your culture and to experience the pleasure of reading. I'm very glad I've been at least once. Unfortunately I've had to give it a miss this year (exams are on the way), but I'd love to go again. It would be nice to close the university textbooks for a while and choose something different to read. And there, you're spoilt for choice! If like me you missed it this year, don't worry: there will be another one next year.

For more information, see <http://en.saloneibro.it/>





Life 4 Sale

by Enrico Mostarda

Mark Ravenhill is an English playwright, actor and journalist. **Shopping and Fucking** (aka **Shopping and F***ing**) was his first full-length play, performed for the first time in 1996. Its style associates the author with the new wave of playwrights who grew up during the Thatcher era (1979-1990).

His first plays were labelled by critic Aleks Sierz as In-Yer-Face Theatre, because their extreme language and images shock the audience into getting the message.

The main character in this play is Mark, a drug addict who shares a house with Robbie and Lulu. They live on their wits and the threesome is cosy until Mark decides to get clean from drugs in a rehab centre. When Lulu goes off in search of work we meet Brian, who is older and a manipulative drug dealer. Mark is expelled from the rehab centre and meets Gary, an abused teenage prostitute from whom he wants to buy sex.

In this society, based on buying and selling, when the characters are looking for love it always ends with a transaction. But Mark falls in love with Gary, who can't bear to be loved.

Ravenhill shows us the evils of the market economy society, in which the only values are money and consumerism. His characters live on the edge of this society. Robbie tries to obstruct the system by giving away five hundred ecstasy tablets, in an unconscious act of resistance to consumer culture.

I had some difficulties when I first started reading the play, because the author's approach is to recreate (in writing) aspects of informal speech, including hesitations and elisions of sound:

I s'pose...I sort of hope you missed me – I int gonna poison ya (SE: *I'm not going to poison you*).

He also uses slang terms, such as *scag* and *druggie*, as in: **I'm off the scag – I used to be a druggie**.

After a few pages, however, I got used to his style, so it doesn't really present any major problem regarding comprehension. Neither is the swearing difficult to understand, although some people consider the language of this play a little bit vulgar, in expressions such as: **Put the fucking stuff away**.

In my view, however, Ravenhill's language is just very direct, and well-suited to catching the attention of young people. It's closer to film dialogue than to theatre dialogue - at least until this play appeared! I would recommend reading this play because it's both funny and constructive, and perhaps we can hope to see it one day in a theatre here in Rome.



Neo: Why do my eyes hurt?

Morpheus: You've never used them before.

For all I know, we might be living in the Matrix. Who has the power to deny it? What if the life we're living is manipulated by an entity that makes us believe that this is the real life?

In my opinion, this is the fascinating secret ingredient of the Matrix, and also why *The Matrix* trilogy has reached a place in the film Olympus. It is of course a groundbreaking film with amazing special effects, marvelous kung-fu moves and high-tech digital setting. The Wachowski brothers (directors of the film) did an astounding job, so no wonder their film won four Oscars.

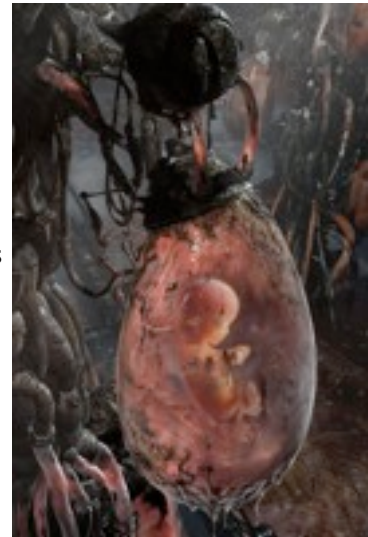
But, believe it or not, the film is also drenched with direct philosophical references to, for example, Plato's allegory of the cave, and to the philosophy of Descartes where human beings believe they are living a real life but in the end they discover that their reality is actually fake, like a dream.

Matrix reality is not real either, but is a sophisticated virtual reality in which the year is actually more like 2199 and the world is run by machines that have achieved AI (Artificial Intelligence).

Everything seems right, from the music selected to the characters' names, with all the elements jointly conveying the idea of the film, namely, the quest to save humankind from the threat of machines. The name **Neo** (of the main character) is an anagram of **one**, and the only one who has the power to save humanity. The last city on earth is named **Zion**, where people's hopes dwell. It recalls the City of God, seen as a second paradise, but this Zion lies in the earth's core rather than in Paradise. The name **Morpheus** is noteworthy too, referring to the Greek God of dreams. Morpheus has the task of waking people up from the illusion of the matrix.

The next time you watch this film, or if you haven't seen it yet, make the effort to see its underlying philosophical elements, and you will see what I mean. As Morpheus says:

Unfortunately, no-one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself.



Subtitle Blues

By

Laura Sarrica

I'll be a translator! That's what most modern language students think, and it's what I thought too. I wanted above all to work with cinema, so I attended a course for dialogue adaptors. With my brand new certificate, I then began to send my CV to dubbing companies. I sent at least a hundred, and received less than a dozen replies, all saying that they weren't looking for new staff, but if one day they did need someone, they'd get in touch.

I called up all those who hadn't replied, and usually got a secretary saying that no new staff were needed. Then one day a company boss answered the phone. Impressed by my initiative, he granted me an interview. The only important things I was asked about at the interview were my computer skills and English language abilities. One of the secretaries was English mother-tongue and we spoke in English about my experience of translating free online fantasy role-playing videogames. Although I was looking for a job as a dialogue adaptor, the company's policy was for beginners to work as subtitlers, and then take an adaptor's test.

I was told I would have a three-week trial period in which they would teach me (for free, they said) how to use their subtitling software and the basic rules of subtitling. I was also told I should be thankful for this since many companies charged trainees for a grounding in subtitling. Then, if I showed that I was a fast learner and good at the job, I would have a three-month apprentice contract: no insurance, no days off, and a tiny salary of around €300 for three months. Well, I did it, I was in. I got the job, wasn't that what I wanted?

I had half of a desk next to the post-production console, a dusty ancient (Win 95) computer linked to a machine that printed titles directly onto the tapes. I was entrusted to the guy in charge of the post-production department, who instructed me on the basic rules of subtitling: titles had to be one or two lines, max. eight characters for a one-line title, max. seventeen characters for a two-line title; two or three seconds for a one-line title, four or five seconds for a two-line title. If a title was too long, or stayed too long on the screen, it would distract the audience from the images. This is especially important if you are subtitling movies or a TV series, in which images are the main focus, but it's a helpful rule also for subtitling interviews or documentaries as I was doing.

The guy told me that the average speed requested for subtitling was sixty titles per hour, which is about one title per minute. That's quite a tall order, because to come up with a good translation that fits the two- or five-second limit, you often have to listen to the whole sentence, rewind, and then divide it into short segments of eight- or seventeen-character titles. One or two excess characters can mean that an entire sentence of up to five titles has to be rearranged.

Having the script would have noticeably sped up the work, but I was given scripts only after my three-week trial period, because I think they wanted me to prove I had good listening comprehension skills as I often subtitled documentaries in which English was spoken with foreign accents.

The subtitling software had been developed specially for the company, and I wasn't allowed to take it home to practise using it: I had to learn during the four hours I was there. It wasn't difficult to use, but a simple error could block it. This meant I had to quit the programme, losing all the titles I hadn't saved. One of the first things I learned was to save every two or three titles! But that was also a waste of time, since my goal was one title per minute, and the whole reloading operation took at least forty seconds.

As time went by and I showed I was good enough to be taken on as a regular employee, I thought that a regular contract was only a matter of time. The guy in charge often said how they liked the way I worked, and that a long-term contract was probably on its way.

And this is where life plays its tricks: I got pregnant. I found out three weeks before the end of my three-month contract and notified my employers immediately. The company all of a sudden entered a crisis period: new long term hiring wasn't possible at that moment, but I was good at my job and, once this period had passed, they would definitely call me.

That was four years ago. Like many women who have lost their jobs when they became pregnant, I still haven't had that call, and it will probably never come. A young girl without childcare responsibilities can be hired on short-term contracts. A mother on the other hand, needs a regular contract with INPS contributions, days off and a proper salary.

In other words, mothers cost more!

Greece for Dummies

How to survive as a tourist

By Claudia Colvin

Summer is now approaching and you're probably looking for somewhere to go to on holiday. Well, how about Greece? Wonderful sea, wonderful food, wonderful people... however, if you do decide to visit this enchanting country, do bear in mind these tips.

Transport

The best way to move about in Greece depends a lot on where you are. If you're in Athens, you will find public transport quite efficient. The tube line is excellent and the buses aren't bad, as long as you avoid taking those that travel through narrow streets. In these cases, you will see bus drivers doing things like stopping in the middle of the road, getting out of the bus and moving rubbish bins so as to squeeze through, or waiting for somebody to move their illegally parked car. Moments such as these provide precious opportunities to extend one's Greek vocabulary in the swearing domain: the insults used are very imaginative and articulate, involving a vast range of family members. On the other hand, if you are on an island, I strongly recommend using a quad



instead of a moped. The roads are unbelievably steep, almost upright, and using very gritty gravel or earth is clearly a must: asphalt is reserved for main roads, so unless you'd like to pay a visit to a Greek hospital, I'd stick to quads or cars (or go on foot). But always bear this

in mind: whether on an island or the mainland, in the countryside, mountains or wherever in Greece, **DO NOT EVER, EVER, EVER** get into a taxi. Taxi drivers hardly ever use both hands to drive. One will be either holding a mobile phone, or a cigarette, or a komboloi, a traditional Greek pastime in which a string of beads is skilfully tossed about with one's fingers. I still haven't figured out why this has to happen whilst driving, but trust me, it happens, and often. They are adept at combining this one-handed driving with speeding and going through red lights - great multitaskers. The fares are very low, so this is a definite plus, but I would recommend checking your insurance policy before taking a taxi ride.

Food

Greek food is really very tasty. You can find good home-made traditional Mediterranean food almost everywhere. One great advantage is that you can eat any time it takes your fancy. Tavernas open around midday and stay open until about 2 am, so you won't have to worry about kitchens closing and that sort of thing. The food is good value and the more you eat, the more wine is on the house, so go for it! However, there are some catches. If you don't like one of the following ingredients: garlic, lamb, peppers, onions, oregano... tough luck, because you are bound to find at least one of them in each dish! Furthermore, being a vegetarian in almost a sacrilege in Greece, so make sure the person you are travelling with is not a veggie, and make them order lots of meat to compensate for your sacrilegious behaviour.

Conversation

Greek people are wonderfully easy to talk to: easygoing and energetic, they will always have a smile on their lips and something nice to say. Don't worry if you don't speak Greek: Greeks are quite good at languages. Almost everybody speaks English and many speak Italian too, so you shouldn't have any trouble communicating. However, there are a few subjects I would avoid in conversation. A big no-no is Greek language, unless you enjoy being smothered in an endless panegyric on how perfect and superior the Greek language is. They claim that OK derives from the Greek *ola kala* (lit. *everything good*) and that Greek has many ways of expressing the same concept (as if other languages weren't familiar with synonyms). I once spoke to a Niko (you will meet at least one Niko, Giannis or Constantinos during your stay, as the range of male names seems to be fairly limited), who wanted to stress this fact by pointing out how many different ways of saying glass there were in Greek. He listed five and I faked a distinctly impressed faced, not having the courage to tell him that his other words actually referred to totally different things, such as mug, flask and goblet. I would also avoid expressing over-enthusiastic comments on Turkey or comparing Greece to Turkey, as many Greeks find this deeply offensive. Otherwise, feel free to express yourself!

I hope my tips help you to have an enjoyable stay!

View of Athens from Lykavittos Hill. Photo by Claudia Colvin, 2010

African Kick-off

By Valeria Testa

From 11 June to 11 July, an event widely considered the greatest in sport will take place: the FIFA World Cup. And, for the first time, in an African country.

The first whistle will be blown at 16.00 at the FNB stadium (named after the First National Bank) in Johannesburg, kicking off the match between South Africa and Mexico, who share their Group A with Uruguay and France. The remaining seven groups contain the 28 other teams who qualified.

Like previous World Cup events, this one has a mascot: a green-haired leopard named Zakumi. This choice shows clearly how much nationalistic folklore there is wrapped up in this event.

To show their support, the South Africans blow a traditional trumpet called the *vuvuzela*, or *lepatata*, to give it its Setswana name. This particular object has been criticized for the deafening sound it makes. Some sceptics believe that the noise might distract the players on the pitch. FIFA wanted to ban the use of the *vuvuzela* during this year's World Cup, but the SAFA (South African Football Association) defended the use of the instrument as a symbol of South African culture, and the President of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, has authorised its use during this year's World Cup.

The organisers hope that the event will be an opportunity to re-establish unity in South Africa, where violence has marred everyday life in recent times. At present the situation is far from peaceful, and joy and pride are only the good side of a harsh reality.

South Africa's history does not read easily, and they are a nation still trying to recover from the Apartheid system that ended only sixteen years ago. In 2008, forty-two Nigerian immigrants were the victims of xenophobic violence in South Africa. There are also concerns over the possible spread of HIV among the 430,000 fans who will arrive in South Africa to support their teams. It is thought that the lack of drinkable water could also lead to an increase

in dysentery and malaria.

The World Cup is nonetheless an excellent opportunity for unity. So I can only say: Go on, SA, make some noise! And good luck!



Zakumi, from the Animated Mascot Promo

Victory Day in Russia

By Alessia Bianco, Florentina Constantin and Fabiana Scacchi

One of the most important celebrations in Russia and the former Soviet Union countries since 1945 is Victory Day on 9 May, which marks the day when Nazi Germany surrendered to the USSR during WWII. This year's preparations were especially intense because guests and troops from the US, Britain, France, Poland and most of the former Soviet Union countries were to join the Russian army in the parade at the Red Square.

During the two weeks leading up to Victory Day, everywhere we went we could see banners and people working hard, setting up boards with slogans such as **a strong country in strong hands**, reminding everyone of Russia's well-known strength.

Stages were also set up for concerts in a number of parks and central squares. At night, many streets were blocked off completely, so as to enable parade rehearsals to take place, with tanks and special units of the Russian infantry.

The most important symbol of the holiday is the Ribbon of Saint George. Initially, it was associated with the order of Saint George which is the main award for military valor, but is now worn by civilians as an act of remembrance.

We had the opportunity to see it with our own eyes and be a part of everything. The first thing we noticed was the enormous military pride, and the intense involvement of the people.

For Victory Day itself, we organized a picnic to Vorob'evy Gory so that we could have a good view of the fireworks from 10 pm. This is a wonderful park near the University that provides a magnificent view over the entire city centre. The fireworks lasted for at least twenty minutes and they were absolutely amazing. We were surrounded by hundreds of people as enthusiastic as we were.

On our way back home in the underground, many people sang traditional Russian songs and waved the national flag.

We felt quite overwhelmed by their patriotism and realized that in spite of their multiethnic differences, Russian people feel the need to celebrate this historical event all together.

Victory Park (Парк Победы),
Moscow. Photo by Florentina Constantin, 2010



A Green Dream

By Marina Brunetti

23 April, 1990. Hi there! I'm a 6-year-old child and I love reading and writing. Right now I'm writing a fantasy tale about the future...

My story is in 2010, without cars or traffic - only little spaceships that go very fast and make no noise! I have a pilot's license and my own spaceship. But when you buy a spaceship, be sure to ask what it eats! It's not like the past when cars used petrol - my new blue and yellow spotted spaceship only eats sweets! Now people can walk around without worrying about being run over. And I won't cough anymore when breathing that horrible grey smoke, which always makes my eyes fill up with tears.

And here's some more news from the future: people can move across the world thanks to new, hi-tech elevators! It takes about half an hour to get to China! The elevators are made of glass, so you can see fantastic things beneath your feet, like colourful cities and the huge parks where my mum takes me to run and play with the other children. The elevator goes up and up until the blue sky, the yellow sun and the green land all sink together into the sea. And if you are brave like me and look down when it goes up high, you'll see the earth glistening like a painter's canvas!

In 2010, each city has its own special smell: Rome smells like daffodils; Amsterdam like tulips; London smells like mint; Havana smells like coconut. This is because in the year 2000, scientists found a way to create energy from flowers, fruit and other nice things. No more smelly grey smoke coming out of the chimneys and fireplaces - only scented clouds of many colours. Like a wonderful rainbow appearing on a gloomy day when all you were thinking about was sleeping and not going to kindergarten but then you see the rainbow and everything is fine!

Next to my daffodil-scented home there's a small wood where robins, woodpeckers and squirrels live together. A lot of different fruit trees grow there, and me and my friends enjoy climbing up the trees to pluck apples and apricots. I love those sweet, juicy apricots... yummy! In my future world, green is all around us because an International law made by very high-up people forbids building more than three scented farms for each city. But I'm not going to tell you any more about my story. If you want I can sell you a copy!

23 April, 2010. I'm a 25-year-old university student who loves reading newspapers and learning about what's happening in the world. Today I'm joining a protest against the building of an incinerator in the countryside of Albano, a town near Rome. The protest has been organized by a group of citizens of Albano without the support of any local political party.

I need to take the bus to get there. I walk to the bus station. It doesn't take long from my home but the road seems never-ending as it's really hard to avoid breathing in the exhaust fumes around me. Sometimes I have to stop. I try to catch the smell of the flowers struggling to break through the asphalt.

Finally I get on the bus and I realize I have forgotten to bring my book with me, so to while away the time I start wondering about the future of our world...

I remember that when I was a child I used to imagine what things would be like in the future but I didn't think that in 2010 people would be still discussing incinerators and carbon emissions. Of course, in recent years many Governments have realized that global warming and climate change are a threat to our future. And we can't fight them with bombs and weapons but with renewable resources – sun, wind, trees and bio-fuels.

Some important steps toward the so-called green economy have already been taken. Several Northern European countries are investing heavily in off-shore wind farms, while Spain is investing in solar energy and solar power plants. In 2009, Europe established the so-called 20-20-20 targets. This means that European countries are to cut carbon emissions by 20%, raise renewable resources by 20%, and cut energy use by 20%. All by 2020.

To reach these targets, the European states agreed that 10% of transport fuel should be replaced by bio-fuels or other fuels from renewable resources. Each country also has to promote energy-saving. For example, by encouraging public transport and non-motorised transport, building houses with eco-saving systems and encouraging 'green shopping'. In order to cut carbon emissions the EU is also promoting the 'capturing carbon dioxide' process. In other words, catching the carbon emissions produced by factories and storing them within geological formations.

While some EU countries have already made headway, Italy is still very far from reaching a satisfactory level of renewable energy production. I believe, however, that we can learn from our fellow Europeans. I also believe everybody could make their own 'green revolution' in a small way, even by changing bad habits such as throwing things on the ground... But my thoughts have distracted me so much that I've almost forgotten to get off the bus! I'm starting my green revolution from the Albano incinerator...

23 April, 2035. I'm a 35-year-old woman. Now I have two children who love listening to stories and tales. Most of all they love when I tell them the story of how the beautiful and brave Lady Green saved her friend Sir Earth from the cruel old Lord of Smoke. It all started when...

AN INTERACTIVE TALE: "SURVIVORS"

By Cinzia Bianco and Aurora Mazzoni

1950-Sam and Agent A015 were getting ready to leave the MI-6 headquarters and were already heading towards the TIMEGATE when 1940-Sam showed up, leaving them disconcerted.

"What the hell....?!" exclaimed 1950-Sam.

"How did you manage to escape?" asked Agent A015.

"I ripped an electric wire from the wall and used it to strangle the prison guard."

"Mmm.... and how did you get out?"

"I remembered the way" he answered, vaguely.

They stared at him for a moment, relieved about his successful escape, but also bewildered by the strange expression on his face, and his blank gaze.

"So now that we're all reunited, can we please get a move on to the TIMEGATE!" said Agent A015.

On their way there, 1950-Sam updated his younger-self on their discoveries about the Corals and Atlantis.

"These Corals, the ones who took us prisoners, are survivors from the mythological land of Atlantis..."

"So they're not so mythological as was thought," said A015.

"...and their aim is to get their island back to the surface again. "This is one of the reasons why I time-travelled. In my age all sorts of apparently natural disasters are destroying these islands. We believe that they are a prelude to the return of the Corals! We still don't know exactly how they plan to return, but we need to go into the future to warn the authorities that we, they, all of us, are on the brink of a major catastrophe! The return of the Corals would mean the utter destruction of land and life as we know it! The security of both Britain and Ireland is at stake here!"

In their concentration on the issues at hand, they didn't notice the cars following them. The two Sams and the Agent finally reached the TIMEGATE and passed through, the Corals behind them still managing to remain unseen.

"The mouse is taking us to the cheese," chuckled the Coral who was sitting in the passenger seat.

"Yes, they were so engrossed that they didn't realize he'd been brainwashed", replied the driver next to him. "So much for the great pride they take in their security measures - they didn't even search him, the fools!"

The scenario they found in London was unreal. Nightmarish. Dark clouds occupied the skies above the city. The land was cracked by earthquakes and a disgusting rotten smell leaked out of the potholes. There was no light, bar from the street lamps spared by earthquakes. A putrid stench hung in the air. The streets were deserted. Big Ben stood part-destroyed, and the Thames had burst its banks at several points, partially flooding the city. Many building were in flames, and there was no asphalt to be seen anywhere, just slimy pools of mud everywhere.

1940-Sam and A015 looked aghast. 1950-Sam turned towards them and said: "This is much worse than it was when I left. But we mustn't let this devastation keep us back from our mission. If we want to have the opportunity to rebuild our city, we have to focus, try to put our minds to work and see what we can actually do. We have to go to Army HQ and warn them!"

Meanwhile, the Corals too were rushing towards their own headquarters to inform the military leaders of their community of the need for immediate attack. By the time they had arrived, everything had been set up for battle.

At the same time, at the M16, the two Sams and A015 were informing Field Marshal O'Connell, the man in charge of the Emergency Department, about what they had discovered. Within seconds, O'Connell had ordered his regiments to mobilise. Within minutes, he had fighter-bombers sent out to monitor the skies. Within the quarter hour, he had tanks positioned at all the high-risk spots throughout the land, and had reached a consensus with the Irish Taoiseach on the urgent need for joint action. With the knowledge now of their common enemy's identity and attack strategy, O'Connell knew it was paramount to co-ordinate British Army and RAF action with the technological know-how of Ireland's specially-trained Hi-Tech Task Force. The security of over six thousand islands was at stake.

"I have an idea" said 1950-Sam, "we need to root out the problem. They must have a main supply of lead somewhere. If we destroy that, they'll be defeated!"

"You're absolutely right, Sam! It will be in the lab!" replied A015.

But while they were talking, a huge earthquake shook the land. "They are attacking!" yelled Field Marshal O'Connell. They took a look out of the window and saw hundreds of Coral jets flying low over their heads, shooting thousands of leads capsules deep into the terrain.

O'Connell ordered his troops to fire back. They were still in front of the window, when a jet appeared. Marianne was inside. She sneered as she pushed the missile launch button. In a matter of seconds, the floor where O'Connell's office was located exploded. The only ones to emerge alive from the debris were the two Sams. They fled the building as fast as they could, rushing towards the lab to destroy the Corals' lead supply. They jumped into the first car they came across, seeing desperate crowds of people running around aimlessly in their attempt to escape the land that was heaving under their feet.

To avoid the Corals, the two Sams drove along the tube tracks all the way to the lab. When they arrived, they looked around for the emergency and evacuation map, and the silos containing the lead supply. They had almost reached the silos area when 1950-Sam felt a hand on his shoulder.

"What the...! How...how did you find us?" said 1950-Sam.

"We've known all along where you were...You've been fooled, doc! Or maybe I should say, you've made a proper fool of yourself!" said the Coral who was now twisting 1950-Sam's arm behind his back. 1940-Sam suddenly walked towards the small group of Corals who had arrived on the scene, removed a microchip from his shoe and turned abruptly towards 1950-Sam.

"Well, Sam, this is your chance to join us and support a just cause."

"What the heck?!... ." 1950-Sam could hardly believe his ears.

He certainly could not imagine that his younger self could knowingly want to kill his own future. Finally he realised. "And what if I don't?" he said defiantly. "You can't kill me unless you want to die too!"

"That's where you're wrong!" sneered 1940-Sam. "If you kill me, you die too, but if I kill you, I will survive!" His eyes still had a lifeless look about them.

"I could never join your side." 1950-Sam was appalled at the very idea.

"Right then, you've made your choice." 1940-Sam nodded to two burly Corals, who swiftly grabbed hold of the older Sam and threw him headlong into one of the nearby lead-filled silos.

"It's over. Bye-bye British Isles. Long live Atlantis!" said one of them, gloating.

Together with his Coral companions, 1940-Sam walked out of the lab towards a waiting jet. Within minutes of taking off, they were all sitting back in their seats, ready to observe the final phase of their mission and watch the islands below them disappear beneath the waves... forever. Or so they assumed.

THE END?

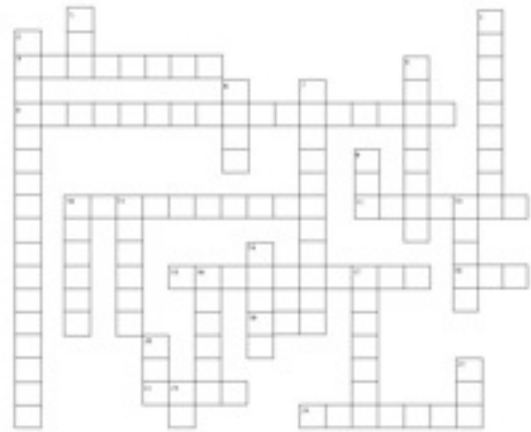
Summer Crossword: Language Practice 1

By Michela Candi

CROSSWORD CLUES

DOWN

- 1 Used for a type of bread, and a type of whisky
- 2 He wrote The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- 3 Shakespeare's birthplace
- 5 A republic in Central America whose capital is Tegucigalpa
- 6 It often starts like this: Did you hear the one about the...?
- 7 Oscar-winning actress of Sophie's Choice
- 9 Beauty is in the --- of the beholder
- 10 Edgar's brother in King Lear
- 11 Artist Klimt's first name
- 13 Carrying weapons
- 14 Open and shut your eyes in a flash
- 16 Capital of Kazakhstan
- 17 Someone who only thinks about him/herself is this
- 20 Unhappy
- 21 Allow, permit
- 23 A well-known TV series about medical emergencies



ACROSS

- 4 A narrative poem by Edgar Allan Poe
- 8 A movie directed by Tim Burton
- 10 One of the Masters of French Impressionism
- 12 The famous woman from Diabolik comics
- 15 Bono Vox's birth name
- 18 Prefix relating to the environment
- 19 Ninjas in pyjamas
- 22 Expensive in the UK
- 24 A person who believes that God does not exist

If you want to print out a copy of the summer crossword (or find the solution), see *MirraMag* on .

ANSWERS (Yo, Yo Check it Out!)

Language Practice 2: 1P, 2Q, 3S, 4M, 5A, 6E, 7R, 8T, 9K, 10O, 11L, 12D, 13N, 14G, 15I, 16H, 17J, 18B, 19C, 20F.

Language Practice 3: 1a, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5a, 6c, 7c, 8b, 9c, 10a.

Yo, Yo Check it Out! Language Practice 2

By Aurora Mazzoni

Title: Outta my System

Songwriters: Alston, Jaron; Dupri, Jermaine; James, Rick. Singer: Bow Wow F/ T.Pain

Match each number 1-20 (in brackets) to one of the letters A-T below the lyrics.

[INTRO BOW WOW SPEAKING]

Damn, I mean, I just keep thinkin' about you
I mean, I wanna move on but I can't move on
It's like you got some kinda hold on me (1) and, man
don't know
But I'ma go ahead and talk about it, listen

[VERSE 1]

I'm sittin' lookin' out the window like damn
Tryna fix this situation that's at hand (2)
You're still runnin' through my mind
When I'm knowin' that you shouldn't be
Me all on your mind and I'm knowin' that it couldn't be
'Cause **you ain't called and I ain't even appalled (3)**
I still got **a lotta (4)** pain, I ain't dealt wit it all
I been **runnin' 'round with other chicks (5)**, I'm single and
they lovin' it
I'm likin' it but I just want the one that I was in love with
That's not the end of it, I'm tryna let you go
I can't **get a grip of it (6)** is what I'm tryna let you know
You got a hold or some kinda control of me
I don't know what it is but **I gotta get you gone from me (7)**
I'm workin' at it and **it ain't gettin' no better (8)**
Just tryna be like, yeah, forget it, whatever
Instead of starin' out this glass, lookin' at this bad weather
Damn, I gotta pull myself together 'cause

[REFRAIN - T-PAIN]

When I'm with somebody, all I think 'bout is you
When I'm all alone, that's all I wanna do
I miss the smilin' **faces in my Sidekick (9)**, outta town
visits
All the time we spent together
Makes it hard to **get you outta my system (10)**
And you know what you do to me, do to me
You don't even understand, damn
And you know what you do to me, do to me
It's so hard to get you outta my system

[VERSE 2]

I'm too **attached (11)**, my heart won't let me **fall back (12)**
I got it bad, that's what you can call that
And when I see you in the streets, that's the worse for me
Used to love the little things you did, that's what works for me

It's too **major (13)**, don't see you in my **pager (14)**
Know what you doin', where you at or can I see you later?
The **fellas (15)** tellin' me, just let her go, Bow
Believe me, I'm tryin', man, I just don't know how
I be in all the **top spots (16)**, leavin' with the **hot shots (17)**
Knowin' they just want me 'cause I'm in the top spot
That's not **poppin' (18)** and my brain ain't stoppin'
Thinkin' who she with or where she goin', is she **club hoppin' (19)**
I never had this kind of problem in my life
This is my first time dealin' with this kind of fight
It's every night and every flight and every time you in my
sight
Damn, this ain't even right 'cause [...]

[REFRAIN]

[HOOK - BOW WOW]

Is it wrong for me to feel this way?
You been runnin' through my mind all day, can you feel me?
I been tryna get you off my mind
But I can't after all this time, that's what kills me [X2]

[REFRAIN]

[BOW WOW SPEAKING]

I remember everything that me and you talked about
Me and you had our whole life planned out together
And if I could, I would turn back the hands of time
And correct all my mistakes that I ever did
But now I guess I **gotta (20)** move on, right?
It's still hard and I still love you to this day
Peace

Here are the answers... but in the wrong order!

- A. dating other girls
- B. working
- C. going out dancing in clubs
- D. detach myself
- E. control it
- F. must
- G. beeper (US), bleeper (UK)
- H. best places
- I. friends
- J. important people
- K. photos of you I used to see in my mobile communication device
- L. entangled
- M. a lot of
- N. important
- O. forget you
- P. I feel like you have a strange influence on me
- Q. trying to solve this problem
- R. I must get you out of my system
- S. I'm not dismayed about the fact that you haven't called me
- T. it's not getting any better

Yo, Yo Check it Out! Language Practice B

By Aurora Mazzoni

Choose the right answer:

1. **I ain't tryin to lead ya on** ("Gangsta Lovin'" by Eve F/ Alicia Keys)

- a) I'm not trying to deceive you
- b) I have never tried to be a leader
- c) I'm not trying to take you anywhere

2. **To help your ass from bouncin off the walls when you get down some** ("Stan" by Eminem)

- a) To stop you from being a pain in the ass
- b) To help you feel better when you feel bad
- c) To help you jump up and down

3. **My little niggas jerkin, what's up with you?** ("I wanna rock" by Snoop Dogg). **Jerkin'** is:

- a) a new sport
- b) a new dance movement
- c) a new way of shooting

4. **Lil Homie so crazy and he stay tryna split em** ("Roc The Mic" by Bow Wow)

- a) My friend is so crazy. He needs counseling.
- b) My friend is so crazy and he keeps trying to separate them.
- c) My friend is so crazy. He's with a girl named Tryna even though they split up

5. **Brooklyn be the place where I serve them thangs** ("Jigga my Nigga" by Jay-Z)

- a) Brooklyn is the place where I work
- b) Brooklyn is the place where I last went on holiday
- c) I'm a slave for Brooklyn

6. **Whatchu hollerin? Gotta pay rent, bring dollars in** ("Renegade" by Eminem F/ Jay-Z)

- a) I'll rob a bank to pay the rent
- b) We have to pay the rent even if you holler, so shut up
- c) What are you hollering for? We have to earn money because we have to pay the rent

7. **Hair nappy but i'm happy pocket full of doe** ("That's my name" by Bow Wow F/ Snoop Dogg). What does he have in his pocket?

- a) candies
- b) keys
- c) money

8. **But I gotta keep it real now, cuz on a 1 to 10 she's a certified 20** ("Yeah" by Usher)

- a) But I have to take it easy because on a scale from 1 to 10 she's a 20
- b) But I have to stay real because on a scale from 1 to 10 she's a 20
- c) She climbed 20 steps, for real!

9. **Ain't no needin' waitin' up, you done got you another home** ("Girlfriend" by Nelly F/T N'sync)

- a) You don't have to find another home
- b) I've just bought you another home
- c) There is no need to wait up, you have just found another home

10. **Homie you aint Fresh Azimiz** ("Fresh Azimiz" by Bow Wow), Fresh Azimiz means:

- a) you're not as fresh as I am
- b) you stink! Why don't you take a shower?
- c) you're not a freshman anymore

"CUT"

Check your answers on page 21



Horoscopes

Waiting for Summer (exams)

By Luna Proietti



ARIES: Relax, put away the textbooks, and stop thinking about exams! You are too anxious and will therefore make a lousy job of everything you do these days. Better to put an effort into having fun!



TAURUS: It's time to get close up... to the heaps of books you dumped on your desk some time ago! Exams are on the way, so don't let your mind drift... Shakespeare and the Prof are waiting for you!



GEMINI: Why does that classmate of yours always come around to visit when you're up to your ears in work? How about inviting him/her to study with you... could be a good way to learn more about the subjects you're studying and... about him/her!



CANCER: The stars are propitious! You're so excited about new you've just received after a long wait, so that gives you a boost. Don't waste this opportunity to show everyone who you are! You'll have several of those great 'I love being a student' moments.



LEO: You're losing your concentration by thinking about holidays, but if you want to take a few exams this summer I suggest you stop messing around. Stand up, stop acting so desperate, and get down to work. Everyone knows you can do more than you think you can!



VIRGO: You're at a crossroads. You can decide to allow yourself to be dragged into the snake pit because of the lack of self-confidence that torments you, or you can opt to be the king or queen of the mountain (of books you have on top of your desk). The choice is yours!



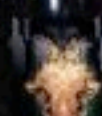
LIBRA: Your relationships are a bit shaky at the moment - so you might decide to shift things around to suit your new mood. Everyone is up for promotion or demotion -- it's all up to you! Plus, it's a good time for you to make some new friends.



SCORPIO: You're understandably confused. You'll just have to wait for the fog to clear, otherwise you could go forward on the wrong track. But at least your fog is not as dense as the volcanic ash cloud! And be confident: every cloud has a silver lining!



SAGITTARIUS: Team dynamics are in the dumps, no one is getting their point across and everyone is feeling frustrated. Looking for a leader to get things back on track? DIY! You have to be more self-confident, and start believing in yourself!



CAPRICORN: Things are not how they seem: you are perfectly capable of coping with books, friends and university exams! Come on! Shrug your shoulders and drop your negative thoughts; you know what you do is always good!



AQUARIUS: Your mental energy is helping you fire off great ideas this month, so find some way to record them all without wasting a precious moment of inspiration! Life speeds up later on.



PISCES: You've always had a decent relationship with your bosses, teachers and other authority figures. In fact they often treat you as an equal, and now they're coming to you for advice! Try not to get too stressed out about the gossip you hear - everyone needs to talk about someone else!

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