



The view
from here

By ANDREW LE
Features editor

Settling for less

Do you lick lick lick it like a lollipop? Do you like to spell out b-a-n-a-n-a-s over a repeating cheerleader beat? Do you want to stare at my lovely lady lumps, and rhyme it with my humps? If you do, you're the majority of U.S. consumers, who manage year after year to make the worst music the absolute most popular.

And I'm not even saying this from an embittered rock snob point of view. It's not that I'm against hip-hop and rap being the predominant form of music, it's just that atrocious hip-hop and rap is popular now. I mean, how many times can R-Kelly really sing about peeing on 14-year-old girls? It's all the same now, rims, yayo, rims, Hennessy, rims, money and rims. Sure, all of NWA's songs dealt with being gangstallions, but at least songs back then had lyrical quality.

For example, a sample line from Warren G's *Regulate* which came out in 1994 contains such poetic lines as "Sixteen in the clip and one in the hole/ Nate Dogg is about to make some bodies turn cold." Compared to 50 Cent's *Candy Shop*, which was released in 2005 and charted number one; "I take you to the candy shop, I'll let you lick the lollipop. Go 'head girl, don't you stop, keep going 'til you hit the spot."

And that's not even the low point. Just three years ago, the number one song in the United States was *My Humps* by the Black Eyed Peas which contained the lines "My hump, my hump, my hump, my hump, my hump, my hump, my hump, my hump, my lovely little lumps."

It's even gotten to the point where I would rather drive in silence, than have metaphorical nails driven through my ears by listening to Top 40 radio. But even though the quality of music has gotten progressively worse every year, people still listen.

Our music used to inspire the world; people used to risk their lives just to play the Beatles in the USSR, the East Germans broke the Berlin Wall to David Hasselhoff - and now our songs are about how low our chains hang.

This topic is dead and done though, music has been going downhill for a while and it's going to stay that way as long as people are willing to settle for mediocrity.

But my-oh-my how people love mediocrity. People love pseudo-celebrities who contribute nothing to society on Laguna Beach, they love mediocre pop stars who repeat the same word over and over again, and they love mediocre movies that have big explosions and little thought. But is it apathy that causes us to do nothing about it, or are we just really comforted by the fact that everything around us reflects our own lack of ambition?

Being a 'mad scientist' pays off

By JACQUE ORVIS
Staff writer

With the economy the way it is, more and more students are looking for creative ways to make money. For the typical student, jobs of ice cream scooper and burger flipper beckon. The more inspired become mad scientists.

One such student is Amanda Morrison. Equipped with a trunk full of chemicals, safety goggles, popsicle sticks and purple and green cups, she entertains children at birthday parties, special events, summer camps and especially after-school programs by dressing up like a mad scientist and showing kids how to make slime.

"I am a mad scientist," said Morrison, while stirring obscure chemicals in purple and green cups until a green, thick and slimy substance appeared.

However, Morrison wasn't always a mad scientist. Before, she was a clerk for 24 Hour Fitness and a movie theater signing in guests and popping popcorn. "It was horrible," said Morrison about her previous jobs. Morrison adds that priorities were different as a clerk than as a mad scientist; as a clerk, her job was to make money, but as a mad scientist, her job is to make children happy.

Morrison never thought that she

would ever work with children. "I had no interest in kids, and I didn't know they were so fun," said Morrison. "It's wonderful." Morrison's job isn't rare, nor is it necessarily local. The Canadian-based company, Mad Science, is nationwide, with franchises all over the country and tons of mad scientists employed at each one.

At the Bay Area franchise, Morrison works with several other mad scientists, including the infamous Mean Mr. Green and his assistant Kinetic Kyle, and they perform shows such as Mad Mixtures, Indoor Fireworks & Lightning, Chemical Luminescence, Fizzy Physics and others. Each show is catered to entertain and educate children. "It's an over-glorified day care," said Morrison.

These are not just random people who dress up in lab coats and make green goop. Each scientist endures an extensive background check, is fingerprinted and is tested for TB. As for Morrison, she visits over 40 Bay Area schools to conduct after-school mad science shows, but she only performs at six of them per week. As for her hours, each session only lasts for two hours, which she said works perfectly around her school schedule. "I have a fun job," she said. When asked if this could be her dream career, Morrison said there are full-time scientists, but she's



Photo by Jacque Orvis

'Mad Scientist' Amanda Morrison plays with a rubber glove while in her scientific vestments.

more interested in attending college, living life, and making money.

"There are too many things for me to be able to do," she said.

In college at age 12

Continued from Page 1

"For example, when I was 7, I wanted to see what college level studies would be like. With that in mind, I took Ohlone College's math placement exam and scored into advanced math classes with students who were in their 20's."

After completing nearly all of the math classes offered by Ohlone, Huang felt as if he had "reached the ceiling of that experience." At that time, he began to challenge himself to branch out, resulting in him taking physics courses as well as English courses.

"In order to measure my own degree of success at learning those subjects, starting at the age of 9, I assessed myself with benchmarks by taking the SAT subject tests in Math IIC, Physics and Chemistry."

Huang's greatest strength in academics lies in his desire to improve. One of his accomplishments was receiving a score of 800 on the SAT Math IIC test when he was 9 years old.

"Taking the test and receiving the full score was a very important accomplishment for me because this was the first major standardized test I took. Also, this test set the path for all the other standardized tests I have taken."

Huang's philosophy of life is to "keep going" like the Energizer Bunny. "All my accomplishments fill me with humbleness. Humbleness that I, and individual of 12 years of age, am fortunate enough to be ready for college far ahead of the usual age. All my achievements, from seven AP [classes] to over 50 college credits, are what I consider to be blessings from God."

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Ohlone student writes novel

By ANNA BIARITZ ROLDAN
Staff writer

Do you have a passion for art? Think you're the Picasso of your generation? If so, you might just be what Rachel Cortez is looking for. Cortez is an aspiring novelist who is holding a contest for the cover of her proposed first novel.

Cortez, who prefers writing fiction, started doing creative writing in elementary school. Cortez said that experience has taught her a lot and that is reflected in her writing.

According to Cortez, "I remember one of my stories won a contest, and the other students gathered to hear it read in the assembly room. I think that was when I knew that I wanted to share my stories with a larger audience." Cortez's writing skills budded from her mother's reading and encouragement to read and maintain a wide set of books.

Cortez mentioned that her mother aspired to be a writer but just never got to do it since she started a family. Cortez claims that her writing is a tribute to her mom who has always been supporting her in all she partakes.

Other than her mother, the rest of her family, friends and people that surround her also inspire her. Cortez said that each has a story and are a part of each other's story. She said, "I can only hope that my story resonates with others and draws them into a world away from the everyday chaos."

Cortez said she believes in life-long learning and that knowledge really does lead to opportunity. Cortez is currently a full-time student taking online classes at the University of Metaphysical Sciences, which is an "organization dedicated to assisting people in becoming knowledgeable about metaphysical concepts and discovering the true self," according to their website, www.umsonline.org/.

She hopes her classes will lead her to be a spiritual counselor. To earn money, though, she also sells a variety of crafts.

Cortez's novel is entitled *The Sariel Chronicles*. The main character in this novel is Sariel, a fallen angel who happens to be famous for being one of the Watchers in the book of the prophet Enoch.

The book talks about what may have happened during Sariel's life as a human being. Since Sariel is very much an inter-dimensional time traveler, the events take place in different dimensions and time periods here on Earth, in many places like Atlantis, Peru, Scotland and even here in California.

Cortez chose to write in fiction since with fiction there is more room to tap into the imagination, which serves as an escape from reality. As Cortez said, "with the fantasy and metaphysical genres there's a whole universe of other worlds to write about."

Cortez said that the main character is definitely a reflection of herself, her personality and her inner struggles. She writes about what she knows and draws characters from her own experiences.

The moral of *The Sariel Chronicles* is not to allow one's self to be a victim of the number one predator in our world today - fear. The target audience for her book are all those

who are soul-searching just as the main character.

Cortez has started a contest for her book's front cover. She is holding this contest since there are many talented people who she would like to work with. This contest is also her way of helping artists market themselves.

The contest for the front cover artwork is open to everyone. Rules and guidelines for the contest can be found at the journal section of Cortez's personal DeviantArt web page, <http://shortsharpshock.deviantart.com>.

Cortez is looking for anything from traditional art, to digital paintings to photography for her cover art. However, the art has to use the stock image provided of the main character Sariel and rules are specific in that the character cannot be seen wielding a gun. The art will also have to be converted to a digital format for the publisher to use it. Cortez has already received quite a number of entries.

All entries will be evaluated and given points by the judges. The winner, aside from getting a spread on the front cover, will be recognized on the first page of the book. The winner will also be allowed to plug their website address on the site.

The Sariel Chronicles is Cortez's first book of an intended trilogy. She hopes to publish it by early 2010. Although Cortez has not yet found a publisher, she said the novel is significantly under way and continues to be a work in progress.

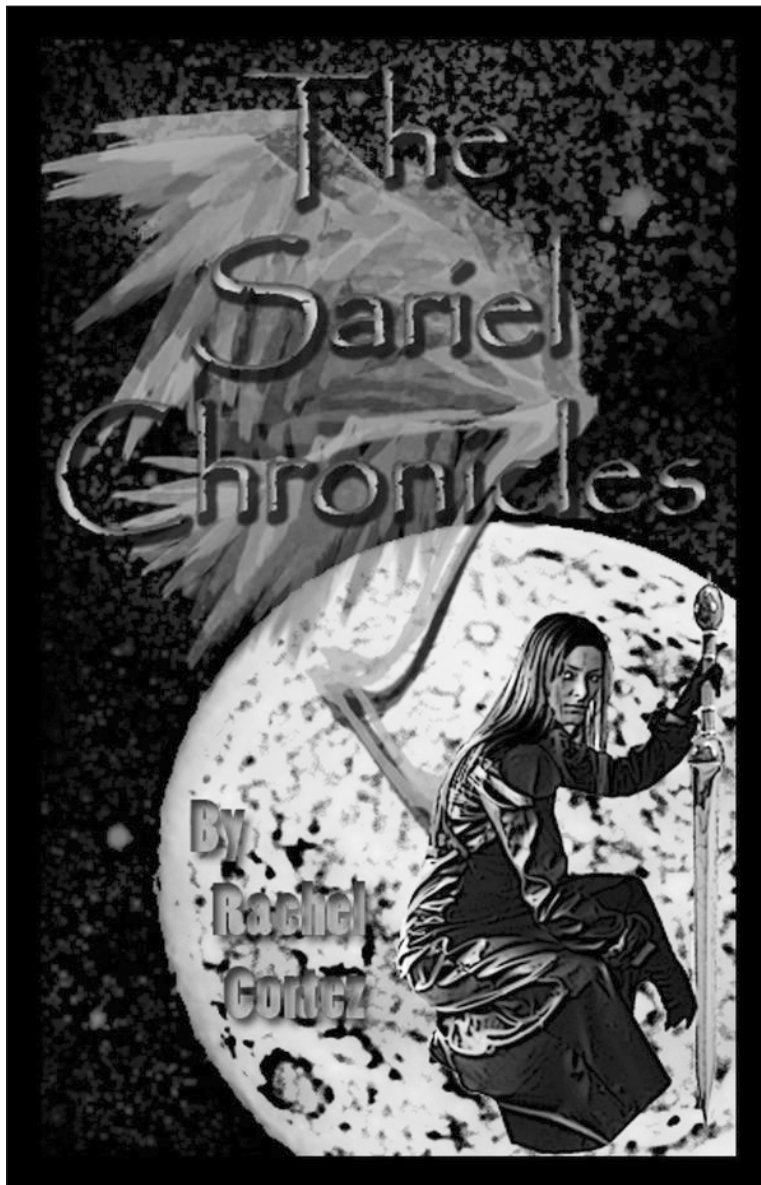


Photo courtesy of Rachel Cortez

Sample book cover for *The Sariel Chronicles*. The author is currently accepting submissions for the cover for her first novel.



Weighing Anchor

By ERIC DORMAN
Editor-in-chief

Cyberspace nation

Bump.

Did you feel it? No? That's all right; you'll feel it again. Because this isn't the last time the real world and the virtual one are going to collide, and next time, the impact won't be so soft.

The collision happened last week, when a Japanese woman was arrested for committing a "virtual murder"—logging on to her online husband's account and deleting his profile. While it isn't the murder itself that has her facing jail time (up to five years, for illegally accessing a computer and deleting electronic data), the story nonetheless highlights the ever-closing gap between the real and virtual worlds.

The Japanese woman's story is only one small piece of a puzzle that has been slowly pieced together over the past decade with the exponential growth of Internet networking and graphics capabilities. I've seen parts of this jigsaw, this melding of concrete and virtual worlds, firsthand—some time ago, I heard the story of a student who his parents entrusted with some real-life cash to help him make it through the semester. When the student returned to his parents soon after asking for money, they discovered that he had spent several hundred dollars on a weapon for an online fantasy game. He was forced to sell it, but had no trouble finding a buyer; there were plenty of other users who were willing to shell out real-life cash for a virtual tool.

Whether you believe the student was foolish or justified in his virtual purchase, the fact remains that virtual reality is only going to become a bigger part of our everyday lives over the coming years. If you disagree, look at it this way: as virtualization technologies continue to increase at the same mind-boggling rate we've seen from them over the past decade, the online experience is only going to get more real. Will plain old reality improve at the same rate? It's doubtful.

If history is any indication, as a race, humans tend to follow the path of least resistance. It isn't an indication of laziness so much as efficiency: we look for the most happiness for the least amount of work. And for all its faults, that's what the virtual world offers.

I'll be honest. I don't have a significant virtual presence and I don't see anything in cyberspace appealing enough to compel me to shift my life from terra firma to the virtual world of pixels and avatars. But as long as the virtual world continues to march toward a version of reality that we find more attractive than our current version, we will see more and more people moving greater parts of their lives online. Like it or not, we're in for a closer mix of real and virtual worlds.

Bump.

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scholarships
could be so easy..."



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