

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13 - 15, 2009

# WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

## Lost in translation

Olivia Merilahti  
of The Dø and other  
French musicians  
dare to sing in English

The perfect Valentine wine | Dining in post-boom Iceland

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Cover photo: AFP

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## WEEKEND JOURNAL

EUROPE

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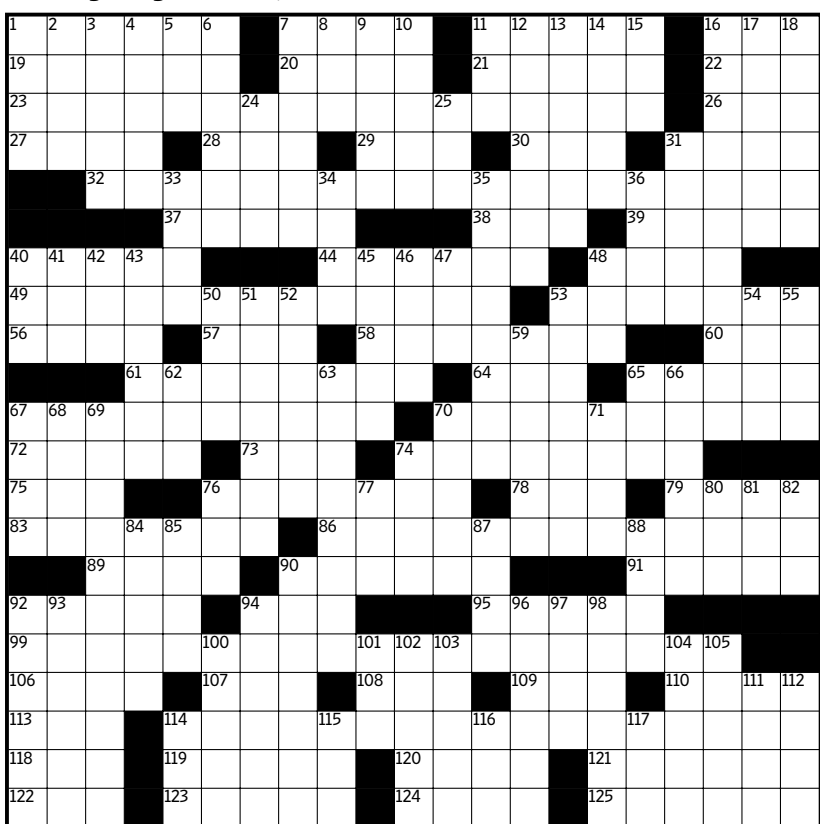
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## THE JOURNAL CROSSWORD / Edited by Mike Shenk

### Across

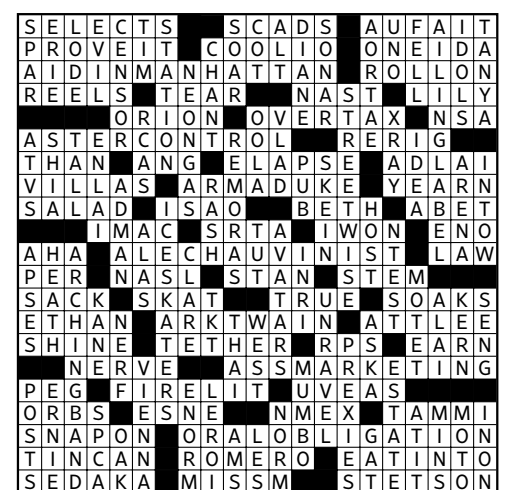
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### Last Week's Solution



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Crossword online  
For an interactive version of The Wall Street Journal Crossword, WSJ.com subscribers can go to  
WSJ.com/WeekendJournal

### Down

- 1 Corp. phone line
- 2 Workplace safety org.
- 3 Cheri formerly of "SNL"

# Inside a fashion label's scramble to survive

**B**ACK IN SEPTEMBER, menswear label Five Four sold out of a new \$325 peacoat in one week. Buoyed by strong orders from retailers, including Macy's, designer Andres Izquieta ordered luxurious fabrics from an Italian mill.

"I was thinking we were going to have a new category of \$300 to \$500 coats for fall 2009," says Mr. Izquieta, 28 years old. His co-chief executive, Dee Murthy, also 28, was

## On Style

CHRISTINA BINKLEY

confident, too; indeed, he had splurged on a new Aston Martin Vantage sports car for himself in March.

Alas, when world markets crashed the following month, consumers snapped their wallets shut. Many of the retailers that sold Five Four's trendy, casual jackets, shirts and other pieces canceled orders or backed out of payments.

Suddenly, Los Angeles-based Five Four found itself in free fall. "I feel like I woke up the first week of October, when everything stopped," Mr. Murthy says.

In the aftermath, the financial markets are no longer yo-yoing from day to day. What's left is an unclear future. But as businesses like Five Four traverse the new terrain, they are creating long-lasting changes that will affect all consumers—from where clothes are produced to their price and quality.

Marketing guru Paco Underhill predicts that the business world "will change more in the next five years than it has in the past 100." The process isn't purely destructive. "Each time something is gone, it frees up room," Mr. Underhill says. Five Four's scramble—ranging from its rethinking of supplier and vendor relationships to an expansion into socks rather than \$500 coats—show the evolution under way.

Knowing that only the agile would survive, Mr. Murthy and Mr. Izquieta acted quickly last fall to save their seven-year-old company. The line of \$500 coats was out. The new price had to be below \$200, they decided.

At six o'clock one evening, Mr. Izquieta emailed the Italian mill operator to cancel the \$17-a-yard fabric order. The mill operator immediately dropped his price to \$7.50 a yard. "I could tell from his tone that he was under water," the designer recalls. The Italian textile industry is known for high quality and better factory working conditions, but numerous designers are fleeing its high prices.

Mr. Izquieta, too, had to put cost-

cutting first. He located a mill in India that would produce a worthy fabric for \$2 a yard, reducing the retail price of the coat to \$185.

Meanwhile, lenders were shutting off credit to Five Four's vendors and many of the 1,000 stores that sell its clothes. For November, it had orders worth \$1.2 million—but only about \$100,000 came from retailers with sufficient credit. "We had to figure out ways to ship these customers their winter orders," Mr. Murthy says.

He called retailers, saying, "This is a vicious cycle. If you can't pass credit, I can't sell you these goods, and if I can't ship you the goods, I can't stay in business." The solution: Five Four shipped on faith—accepting post-dated checks, personal credit-card payments, and even verbal IOUs. "They offered any terms we wanted," says Dan Kogan, chief executive of Emoda, a retailer with stores in Philadelphia, Atlanta and online.

When one over-embellished shirt style sold poorly at Atrium, a store in New York, Five Four took it back and sent other shirts. "Their price was significantly lower than most of their competitors, given the quality of the goods," says Ivo Nikolov, Atrium's menswear buyer.

Mr. Murthy and Mr. Izquieta laid off four employees, bringing their workforce to 25, and cut all advertising. They pulled out of the trade shows where they had sought new retailers. They stopped using air-mail to ship some goods to and from their manufacturing facilities in China. They dropped the thread count of some woven shirts to 40 from 50. When their landlord declined to renegotiate their Los Angeles warehouse and office lease, they found new space for 50% less.

The survival plan was to help keep their existing retailers in business by making extra accommodations and to drop prices 20%. Both turned out to be important measures in cementing relationships: When Emoda cut its brand portfolio to 120 labels from 280, it doubled down on Five Four.

Back when Mr. Murthy and Mr. Izquieta launched Five Four while students at the University of Southern California—deriving the name from college slang they used when saying good-bye—the fashion world seemed to offer surprise riches. The first jeans they made, five years ago, cost \$14 to make and carried an intended retail price of \$68. A day before the pants shipped, a friend commented, "Nobody buys jeans for \$68. You should sell them for \$110." The partners snipped off the tags that night—and the jeans blew out of stores at the higher price.

But to raise cash these days, Five Four is manufacturing just about anything that will turn a buck: backpacks, wine-bottle openers and socks—three pairs for \$20. They're cutting out middlemen by selling direct to consumers on their Web site and in pop-up stores—a trendy retailing concept in which shops open for just a few days or weeks.

Five Four's net sales wound up flat at \$8 million in 2008. With widespread store closings among their

retailers, the brand is being sold in 800 stores, down from 1,000.

On a recent day at Five Four's office, Mr. Izquieta said he's still ambitious. "I want to create our generation's Polo. You can't be a megabrand in the U.S. today if you're selling a woven shirt for \$200," he said. "I think the concept of luxury is passé."

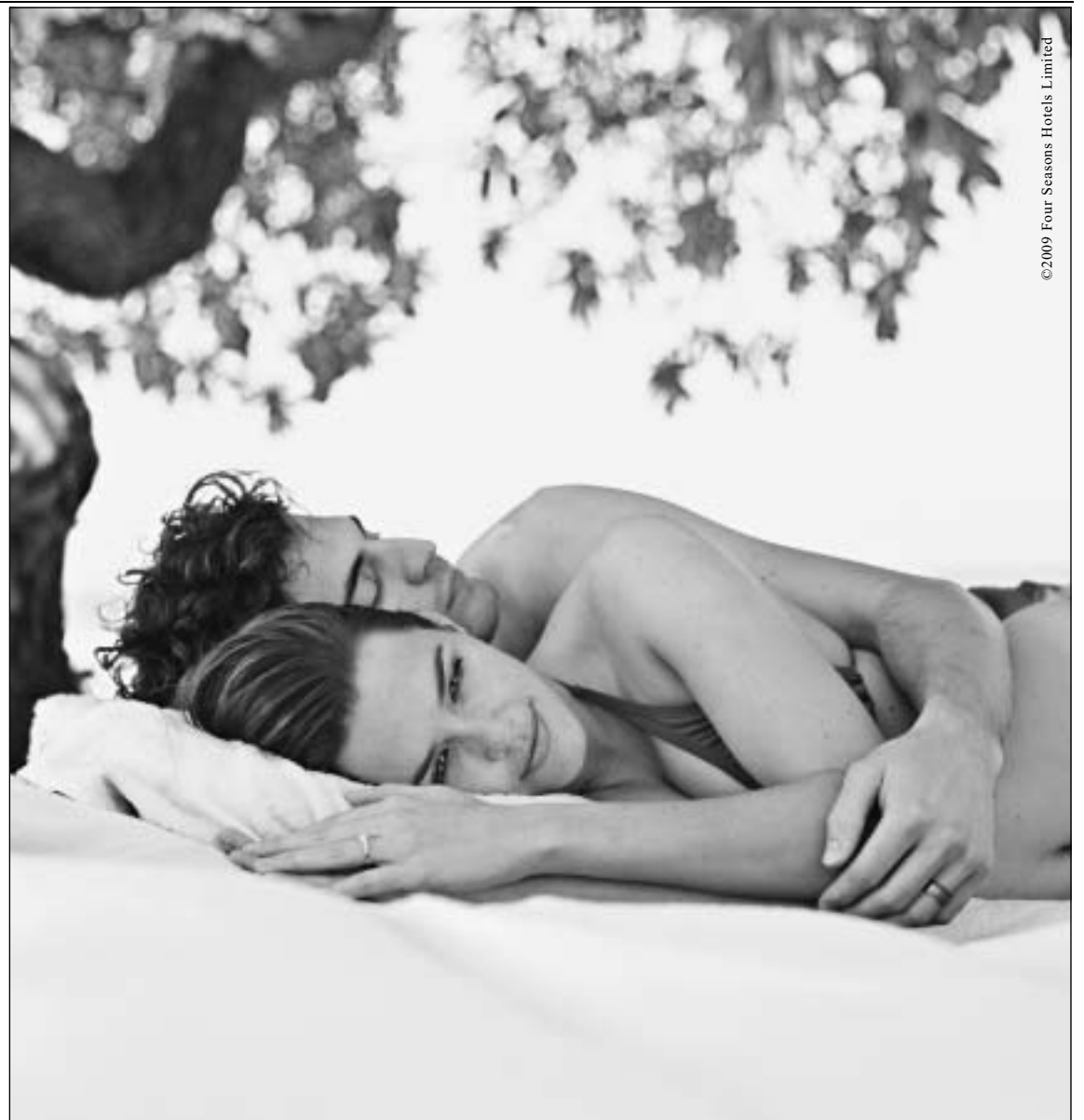
Moments later, the company's chief financial officer stepped into the room with more disquieting news: Their buyer at Macy's had just been laid off, leaving Five Four with no relationship at a key customer.

Mr. Murthy laments the end of his love affair with his still-new Aston Martin. It's nearly paid for, but he's convinced people give him dirty looks. "I always wanted a sports car. Now I'm like, 'What a stupid purchase. What did I think I was proving by buying that?'"



Photos: Evans Vestal Ward for The Wall Street Journal

In a harsh retail climate, Five Four founders Andres Izquieta and Dee Murthy had to act fast to save their company, including rethinking their collections (below).



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THE BEST PLACE TO SPEND TIME

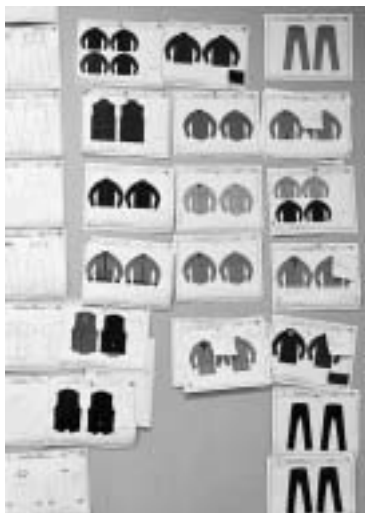
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# An elegant wine for your Valentine

HERE'S AN IDEA for Valentine's Day this year: Stay home and cook for your Valentine. Make something unexpected, like a whole fish. And, with the money you're saving on a restaurant, splurge on a wine that is particularly seductive: Meursault.

Heaven knows there are many romantic wines on the shelves. Champagne—especially rosé Champagne—is always romantic. We find that the velvet-like luxuriousness of red Burgundy creates a special mood. But Meursault has a lot going for it: It's made from Chardonnay and its tastes aren't so dissimilar to California Chardonnay that they'd be a leap of

## Tastings

DOROTHY J. GAITER  
AND JOHN BRECHER

taste—and, really, who wants to take any leap except a leap of love on Valentine's Day? It comes from a fairly big area, as these things go, and both the 2005 and 2006 vintages were good, so there are plenty on shelves, though only a small amount of any particular label. And it's expensive enough to be special but not so expensive that it's crazy. And there's this: The wine actually gets sexier as the night goes on. But we'll get back to that.

Overall, we are big fans of Burgundy, both red and white. We find even generic Bourgogne Blanc can be a good deal and some of the very expensive, famous white Burgundies can leave us speechless, especially when they've been properly aged. It's important to find a merchant who cares and knows something about Burgundy because there are so many Burgundy producers and vineyards and quality can be inconsistent.

With all of this in mind, we bought 50 from the 2005 and 2006 vintages, which are the ones you are most likely to see on shelves. We set a price limit of \$75. It's difficult to find a Meursault under \$35 and prices go way above \$100, but if you think about spending somewhere around \$50 or \$60, you'll be fine. While there are some well-known names, such as Louis Jadot, many of the producers are small, so it's impossible to know which you will see



Dylan Cross for The Wall Street Journal

in your store. We included regular Meursault, Meursault from specific vineyards and Meursault from premier cru vineyards such as Charmes and Genevrières.

We tasted the wines in blind flights over several nights and we became convinced that this really is a great idea for Valentine's Day. Yes, they taste like Chardonnay, with some tropical fruits, a bit of oily mouthfeel, some toastiness and maybe hints of nutmeg and cinnamon, with a bit of comforting weight. They have some of the fullness that people expect from American or Australian Chardonnay. But they also have tremendous clarity, great acidity, true focus and an underlying taste of minerals. They often have abundant oak, but it's balanced with fruit and lemon-lime acidity, giving the wine interesting dimensions.

Most of all, they have something that can't be described as a flavor: They have confidence. As we wrote about one, Pierre Matrot Premier Cru "Perrières": "It's relaxed and comfortable with itself. It's not trying to be anything. It just is." We taste far too many wines—and certainly far too many Chardonnays—that are trying too hard. They're self-conscious and therefore hard to drink. The best Meursault has elegance and finesse and yet is oh-so-easy to drink and enjoy without doing any work at all. Confidence is sexy, and these are confident wines, or as John said at one point: "They're romantic and sexy because they're mouthwatering and subtle and they touch the soul and the mind more than the palate. They're more emotional than tactile."

Serve these wines right out of the refrigerator. Remember to pour only a small amount into your glass at any time. Leave the bottle on the table. As the wine warms and as it gets air, an amazing thing starts to happen: The wine becomes even more ephemeral, especially if you hold it in your mouth longer than usual before swallowing. The tastes become more cloud-like, making the long, coating, cleansing finish even more surprising. As you sip the wine, it seems to grow warmer and fan out, like you've just swallowed a little bit of sunshine. And darned if you don't get a warm glow all over.

## The Meursault index

In a tasting of white Meursault from the Burgundy region of France from the 2005 and 2006 vintages, these were our favorites. All fine Burgundy is made in limited quantities and some stores specialize in it while others virtually ignore it, so it's impossible to know which you might see. These wines demand elegant food. While lovely now, they could age well for at least several years. An interesting discovery: When the tasting was over, we noticed that we'd tasted three wines from different wineries that used fruit from a vineyard called Les Narvaux, and all three, including our best of tasting, were among our favorites.

VINEYARD	PRICE	RATING	COMMENTS
Domaine Vincent Girardin 'Les Narvaux' 2006	\$53.99*	Very Good/Delicious	<b>Best of tasting and best value.</b> A wine of presence. Crisp and clean, but with subtle, complex smells and tastes of nutmeg, oak and all sorts of fruit. Seriously lively, but plenty of minerals to keep it grounded. Fine wine. Tastes expensive.
Jean-Philippe Fichet 'Les Chevalières' 2006	\$72*	Very Good	Rich, ripe and enveloping, with lemons, limes and sweet wood. Needs veal in cream sauce. We also liked Fichet 'Le Tesson' 2005 (\$69).
Domaine Jobard-Morey 'Les Narvaux' 2005	\$53.99*	Very Good	Seriously ripe fruit, with some toast, nutmeg and cinnamon, but also a bit of funk that gives it a real, earthy sense. Some cream on the lemon-lime finish.
Pierre Matrot Premier Cru 'Perrières' 2005	\$62*	Very Good	Great acidity, some toast and real fruit, but relaxed and comfortable. The finish really pops. This reminded both of us, in some ways, of still Champagne.
Thierry et Pascale Matrot Premier Cru 'Charmes' 2005	\$69.95	Very Good	People who love American Chardonnay would likely love this. Nutmeg, lemon, burnt sugar and a kind of oiliness that makes it rich and soulful, with some weight. Quite juicy. We also liked the regular Thierry et Pascale Matrot 2006 Meursault (\$34.95).
Ballot Millot & Fils 'Les Narvaux' 2005	\$34.95	Good/Very Good	Pleasant and easy to drink, with the vibrancy of a fresh-picked lime.
Château Labouré-Roi 'Clos de la Baronne' 2005	\$49.95	Good/Very Good	A bit heavy and over-oaky on the front, but it becomes more concentrated in the mouth and then finishes long and lean. Interesting.
Maison Champy 'Les Grands Charrons' 2006	\$54.95	Good/Very Good	Crisp, clean and mouthwatering, with a lingering oaky, cinnamon finish. Some weight.

Note: Wines are rated on a scale that ranges: Yech, OK, Good, Very Good, Delicious and Delicious! These are the prices we paid at wine stores in New York. \*We paid \$49.95 for Girardin, \$67.99 for Fichet, \$47.99 for Jobard-Morey and \$59.95 for Matrot, but these prices appear to be more representative. Prices vary widely.

## Arbitrage

### The price of a box of Godiva chocolates



City	Local currency	€
Brussels	€65	€65
London	£63	€72
New York	\$98	€76
Frankfurt	€89	€89
Paris	€99	€99
Hong Kong	HK\$1,390	€139

Note: Valentine's Day Romantic Heart Box, 40 pieces; prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.

### WSJ.com

The grapes of rapture  
Watch John and Dottie taste  
and talk about Meursault, at  
[WSJ.com/Lifestyle](http://WSJ.com/Lifestyle)

# Bartender apps: Just add iPhone and stir

SEVERAL YEARS AGO a friend gave me a Bar Master—a faux flask in silver-toned plastic housing a computerized database of drinks. I never used it much, perhaps because I have a horror of carrying faux flasks of silver-toned plastic. But it is a delight to use the technology that has superseded it: A variety of cocktail “apps” have been written for the iPhone, and they make the old Bar Master look like a Kaypro running MS-DOS.

Professional bartenders wouldn't have been caught dead with a Bar Master, but

## How's Your Drink?

ERIC FELTEN

the iPhone cocktail apps are robust enough that they are a regular feature on the phones of many excellent barmen. “Almost every bartender I know is using his iPhone as a database. It beats having to have a small library of books to thumb through and consult at work,” says Jamie Boudreau. A prominent bartender who makes drinks at Tini Bigs in Seattle, Mr. Boudreau has contributed recipes to one popular drinks app, Cocktails+. He adds (with a comic-evil laugh) that an advantage of using the iPhone as his reference library is that “I can be discreet about looking up a recipe, which makes me look like a wizard who knows the recipe for every drink.”

Comprehensive databases are a great help if you know exactly what you're searching for. But if you're just browsing, hunting for something tasty to try, how do you narrow your selections down to a manageable lot? One iPhone app, Cocktails Made Easy, solves that problem admirably. For starters, there is the app's basic concept: The recipes are limited to those that can be made using a liquor cabinet stocked with just 14 bottles. Thanks to my writing this column for over three years, my collection of liquors has metastasized, taking over cabinets and crowding out books, china, knickknacks and anything else that would vie for shelf space at home. And even with such a



Dylan Cross for The Wall Street Journal

vast menagerie of libations, I am constantly running into drink recipes that require the use of alcohols I have yet to acquire—hmm, where am I supposed to stash the Maltese prickly pear liqueur? There is something to be said for a catalog of those recipes that can be made with the spirits one actually has on hand.

One of the best features of the app allows you to note which bottles you have in your own “cabinet.” Click on My Bar and the app delivers all the recipes in the database that can be made with the ingredients actually at your disposal. You'll still need extra, nonalcoholic ingredients, but if you're down to half a bottle of tequila and a smidgen of crème de cassis, for instance,

**Union Club Cocktail**  
(by Jamie Boudreau, found at the Cocktails+ iPhone “app”)  
**60 ml bourbon**  
**15 ml maraschino liqueur**  
**15 ml Campari**  
**45 ml fresh-squeezed orange juice**  
Shake with ice and strain into a stemmed cocktail glass. Remember, maraschino liqueur is not the juice from a jar of cherries.

you'll be able to identify the few cocktails—such as the Chimayó (tequila, apple cider, lemon juice, and crème de cassis)—that you can make without a trip to the liquor store.

But the Cocktails Made Easy app, which is based on the recipes in “Difford's Guides,” a series of British bar books, has one perplexing peculiarity: Like the bartender of a clip joint, it keeps trying to water down your drink. Many of the straight-up cocktails, such as the second of two recipes for a Dry Martini, call for adding a quarter or even a half jigger of chilled mineral water to the mix (though one is instructed to omit the water if the ice you are using is wet with meltage). The idea here is that part of the balance and mouth-feel of a drink comes from dilution, the ice that melts when you are shaking or stirring the cocktail. “Difford's” seems to think that you don't get enough dilution when your ice is good and cold, and proposes to make up for it by tossing in some extra water. All I can say is, please don't. If you're giving your drinks a proper, lengthy shaking or stirring, you will get all the dilution you need.

The Cocktails Made Easy app is a great deal at \$2.99, and probably the best bet for casual mixers. At \$9.99, the competing Cocktails+ app is overpriced: It is short on photos (which are standard with most iPhone cocktail apps), and it lacks some basic interactive features. For example, unlike the

Cocktails Made Easy app, Cocktails+ doesn't let you add your own comments to the listings, and so you aren't able to note any tweaks you may have made to favorite recipes. Even so, Cocktails+ is the app I turn to most often. The drinks come primarily from classic cocktail guides, such as the 1930 “Savoy Cocktail Book,” and so you are spared most of the recent forgettables that clutter some other apps. The 5800+ Drink & Cocktail Recipes app includes half-a-dozen variations on the Watermelon Shooter; happily, there isn't a single Watermelon Shooter at Cocktails+.

Which is not to say that there is no room for trendier quaffs at Cocktails+. A recent revision of the app introduced a section devoted to new drinks created by a small selection of name-brand bartenders. The above-mentioned Mr. Boudreau is one, and the database includes a host of his hyper-modern, chem-lab concoctions. But working my way through his slate of iPhone drinks, I found that it was the straightforward ones that I liked best. His Union Club cocktail (named after a gambling joint Wyatt Earp opened in Seattle in 1899) is a simple matter of shaking up bourbon, orange juice, maraschino liqueur and Campari. It is modern, with a funky complexity, but it is solidly in the cocktail tradition represented by the bulk of the database.

Be sure, however, not to confuse the inadvertently hilarious Cocktails app (from a company called Swiss-Development) for the Cocktails+ app (from a developer called Skopioptech). Based on a German-language cocktail Web site, Cocktails is only nominally in English, and a testament to the limitations of automated computer translation. Take the recipe for a fruity, creamy Saint-Tropez. The directions are a triumph of bone-crushing German syntax: “Carefully Grenadinesirup the glasses back down on the run. Now the Blue Curacao aufschichten above. Now the milk foam and the air masses as a hood to give the cocktail.” Don't forget the garnish—cherries, orange slices “then add decorative Minzblätter.” And what drink isn't better with a little decorative Minzblätter?

# Helping a red-wine lover see the white

BY DOROTHY J. GAITER  
AND JOHN BRECHER

**I WANT TO START embracing white wine. I love red wine, especially Merlot, and have always been indifferent to white. My New Year's resolution was to be more open to white wine. Are there any white wines that red wine lovers also happen to like?**

—Jim Kernochan, New York

Give Viognier a try. It's a grape from the Rhône Valley of France. We often recommend Viognier to red-wine lovers because it has the kind of weight and presence we think they might like. Viognier is often best at cool room temperature, like a red, which might also make it a smoother transition.

*I know that Open That Bottle Night is once a year. May I suggest that for 2009, you have Open That Bottle Night each month? With the economy being what it is, we could all use a bit of good cheer more than once a year.*

—Jeff Daniher, Cincinnati

Open That Bottle Night 10, when all of us around the world finally pop open that wine we've been saving too long for a special occasion, will be celebrated on Feb. 28. OTBN is a yearly event because we understand that sometimes it takes group support to open a very special bottle of wine. We've always said that the real point of OTBN, though, is that our most cherished

bottles should be opened all year long for no reason except that life is worth celebrating every day. We don't do this often enough ourselves, but, when we do, we wonder why we don't do it more often. Consider this:

Our daughters both came home from college for holiday break and we had a wonderful time for a month. On the night before they both left, we decided to eat dinner at our favorite family place, a little Mexican joint where we've spent many nights together over the years. As we drove there, the snow picked up, blowing directly toward the windshield. When we finally got to the restaurant, it was closed for vacation. Because of the weather, we decided we'd better go home, though we had no plans for dinner.

Dottie volunteered that she had some frozen salmon and began to cook. The girls resumed their positions before the television to watch Tivoed episodes of “What Not to Wear” and “Take Home Chef.” John checked out the wine cellar and quickly spotted a special wine: Robert König 2000 Rheingau Assmannshäuser Frankenthal Spätburgunder Kabinett Trocken. Germany is known for its white wines, but it makes a small amount of distinctive Pinot Noir—called Spätburgunder—and a hotspot for it is around Assmannshäuser, along the Rhine. A few years ago, we were so eager to taste this local specialty that we traveled there, girls in tow, to try the wines. We re-



Heidi Younger

member the wines and the warmth of the winemakers; the girls remember the horseradish, mustard and mayonnaise in tubes. We brought back far too many bottles, as we always do.

Spätburgunder is generally fairly light, with more charm than body, and it's not usually a wine we'd suggest for long-term cellaring. We hadn't drunk this wine because—well, because it's one of those special wines that never get opened. John looked at the bottle. The fill was good, but the wine was quite light in color. He decided it would be perfect with the salmon. When he showed the bottle to Dottie, we both immediately started talking about our

trip and that winery. And we both realized that we probably should have opened it some time ago.

We served the wine at cellar temperature. When we poured it, it had a brown and rosy tinge—another indication that the wine might be past its peak. The nose was terrific: ephemeral, true Pinot fruit; plenty of earth; and, for a red, the most surprising smells of lychee and oranges. The nose also had a little funk, lest we forget it was Pinot Noir.

To our surprise, the wine was delicious, pretty much perfect. It seemed to have virtually no body at first, just taste, and the taste was a lovely balance of elegant, pure fruit and earth. It seemed less a liquid than an idea, so it touched us in very special places.

As it opened and warmed, it actually gained a little bit of backbone and minerality. In a world of too many Pinot Noirs that love to strut, this wine was confident enough to lie back and be admired. It was simply beautiful.

Sometimes special wines are even more enjoyable when they're not treated like a big deal, with much anticipation and a feast planned around them. Maybe that's because they—and we—can just relax. They can simply taste good without all sorts of hopes and expectations surrounding them. Long after the formal OTBN is over this year, open a special bottle for no reason at all—which may be the best reason of all.

# Home cooking, Moroccan-style

BY SHIVANI VORA

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*  
Marrakech, Morocco

IT'S A SUNDAY afternoon in Marrakech, and my husband Mahir and I are sitting down to lunch. Our meal includes chicken tagine with preserved lemons, a large sea bass coated with herbs and stuffed with vermicelli, and a half-dozen salads, including carrots with parsley and pureed eggplant with tomatoes. We're not at a restaurant but in a home kitchen in the city's Laksour neighborhood, and we've spent the last four hours preparing this spread alongside Amal Kaf, a Moroccan housewife who cooks such meals for her family every day.

Our experience is just one example of the city's growing number of cooking classes for tourists, who are taken to vast indoor markets to buy fresh ingredients and then return to hotel or restaurant kitchens or to private homes to learn traditional Moroccan cooking methods. Marrakech now has about a dozen options for tourists who want to learn about local gastronomy, with choices running the gamut from an hour-long introduction to an intense week of classes. Most are group sessions held at riads—old homes and palaces converted into small hotels.

On a recent trip I was looking for an authentic and unusual experience. Through a travel agent, I arranged to learn about Moroccan food by spending a half-day cooking at a private house.

"Home cooking is at the heart of our culture," says Choumicha Acharki, the host of "Ch'hiwate Choumicha," a popular daily Moroccan cooking show. "Spending time with family and socializing with friends all happen over a home-cooked meal."

Such "everyday" food consists of assorted salads and tagines—dishes named after the earthenware vessels in which they're stewed—made with chicken, vegetables, seafood, lamb or beef. There are several dozen varieties of this most significant Moroccan dish, but chicken with olives and preserved lemons and lamb with prunes are the most common.

Ms. Kaf, 38 years old and married to Aziz, an import-business owner and tour guide, wants to teach us the two tagines she makes most frequently: a variation of the popular chicken version that's stuffed with rice; and a whole sea bass filled with noodles and on a bed of vegetables with a light gravy.

The day starts with a visit to the lively neighborhood market. Two rows of about two dozen stalls in a piazza-like square make up the space. The area is minuscule compared with the markets in the city center, but it has a more intimate, personal feel. The vendors and shoppers know each other well and ask after one another's families.

"In Morocco, it's common to shop everyday for our meals," Ms. Kaf says. "The concept of storing ingredients for multiple days doesn't exist." She selects a fish after a rapid exchange in Arabic with the fishmonger on which is the best quality sea bass. We then make our way to the poultry stand two doors down where she picks a live chicken that's quickly killed with a dunk in scalding water. Then we stop at her regular produce man's stall, where she stocks up on vegetables includ-



Clockwise from above, Amal Kaf prepares fish in her home kitchen; a class at Souk Cuisine; a chef at Dar Les Cigognes; a class at Dar Liqama; M'hancha pastry at Souk Cuisine. Top right, a Marrakech spice market.



ing four mini-eggplants, two bunches of carrots and several bunches of coriander and parsley.

When we return to the Kafs' spacious kitchen on the basement level of their three-story home and lineup what we'll be using, I'm surprised to learn that the majority of the dishes are built around the same few ingredients. Garlic and olive oil form the base of most recipes; cumin, paprika and *ras al hanout*, a blend of several dozen spices such as nutmeg and peppercorn, take center stage when it comes to spices. Every dish is also punctuated with a touch of saffron, while coriander and parsley are the dominant herbs. "These are blended together in various ways to create different flavors," says Ms. Acharki. "Ideally, Moroccan food should be subtly flavored and never too spicy."

We don't work from recipes but instead follow Ms. Kaf's verbal directions. She explains that Moroccan women don't rely on written recipes when cooking. "We grew up learning how to cook from our mothers and grandmothers so the concept of a formal recipe doesn't exist in most families," she says. "We cook by feel."

We spend the next three hours cooking. We start by washing and

chopping produce and herbs and boiling vegetables for the six salads: carrot, eggplant, zucchini, tomato, pepper and potato. The three of us season them with coriander, parsley and healthy pours of olive oil. Next, we boil noodles and mix them with champagne mushrooms, the juice of one lemon and the staple seasonings and stuff the mixture in the

fish. Ms. Kaf sews the bass together with a needle and thread to make sure the filling doesn't spill out. She then seasons white rice with the herbs and spices and tucks it inside the cavity of the chicken.

It's a relaxed, informal setting. We sip several cups of sweet mint tea that Ms. Kaf prepared early that morning as we work and ask plenty of questions along the way. We also nibble on preserved lemons, which she makes every few months and keeps in a windowsill jar.

When it's time to cook the tagines, she opts for oversized aluminum trays over the heavy clay pot many Moroccans still use. "The trays cook the dishes in the same way but are easier to work with because they are lighter," she says.

With our lunch in the oven for an hour, her husband Aziz takes us on a five-minute drive to the local bakery to buy just-baked *kesra*, a flatbread served as an accompaniment to most meals. We also make a stop at a fruit stand to pick up tangerines for dessert.

Finally, it's time to enjoy the food. The freshness of the ingredients shines through in each bite, and though most of the recipes repeat items, the flavors fuse together uniquely in each dish.

We end our visit by swapping emails and phone numbers. Ms. Kaf insists that I write or call with questions anytime I'm making Moroccan food back in New York City.

A few days later, Mahir and I are walking at the edge of Djemaa el Fna, Marrakech's famously bustling main square. Many of the owners of the restaurants around the square try to lure us in with promises of eating stellar local cuisine. "Come in, come in," one shouts out to us. "We'll show you what real Moroccan food is all about."

We look at each other and smile. Thanks to Ms. Kaf, we already know.



## Marrakech really cooks

THOUGH IT'S POSSIBLE to sign up for one of Marrakech's many cooking classes when you arrive, it's better to book in advance, as they tend to fill up.

Here, some of the city's schools.

### Heritage Tours

This travel agency sends clients to private houses in the city for a one-on-one cooking lesson with the person in charge of preparing meals—usually the housewife or, for wealthier families, a hired cook. Rates start at \$250 per person.

[www.heritagetoursonline.com](http://www.heritagetoursonline.com)

### Dar Les Cigognes

This romantic, 11-room riad holds informal, hour-long classes in its intimate kitchen. Preference is given to hotel guests, but classes are open to outsiders based on availability. Rates are 200 dirhams (about €18) per person.

[www.lescigognes.com/en](http://www.lescigognes.com/en)

### La Maison Arabe

Marrakech's best-known cooking school holds classes in a new kitchen at this 26-room riad in the city center. There are two four-hour workshops a day, seven days a week. Rates are 1,600 dirhams per person.

[www.lamaisonarabe.com](http://www.lamaisonarabe.com)

### Riad Merdoudi

Day-long classes are personalized based on interest: They could focus on making everyday food, but more advanced cooks can try more difficult dishes such as a pastilla, a sweet and savory layered pie made with eggs, pigeon and almonds. Rates are €110 per person.

[www.riadmerdoudi.com](http://www.riadmerdoudi.com)

### Dar Liqama

Operated by Rhode School of Cuisine in England, Dar Liqama holds week-long courses at an upscale villa 10 minutes from the city center. The group prepares a three-course meal at each session. Rates start at \$2,395 per person and include accommodation.

[www.rhodeschoolofcuisine.com](http://www.rhodeschoolofcuisine.com)

### Souk Cuisine

Opened in late 2005 by Gemma van de Burgt, a Dutch woman who fell in love with Marrakech, this open-air cooking school holds daily six-hour classes, which can accommodate up to 12. The class starts with a shopping trip to Marrakech's central market for ingredients. Rates are 400 dirhams per person.

[www.soukcuisine.com](http://www.soukcuisine.com)

—Shivani Vora

# Icelandic dining after the collapse

The island nation's restaurants still offer joys; sampling puffin, reindeer, horse and moose

BY RAYMOND SOKOLOV

**I** AM SITTING all by myself with a 360-degree view of this grey little town in midwinter. There are white caps in the harbor eight stories below, but the best view from a table in Panorama's minimalist dining room is on the plate in front of me. Three squares of arctic char, crisp skin on top, lightly undergrilled ruddy flesh underneath. Perfect. Fresh. And why not? We are virtually a skipped stone's distance from the Arctic Circle here in the world's northernmost national capital. But the real beauty part of my lunch is invisible.

You have to taste the off-white pool under the fish to see what chef Eyjolfur Gestur Ingolfsson has been sneaking into the dish.

It looks like nothing more than mashed potatoes. And partly it is. But as you work your way around the apparently uniform purée, your palate tells you that the potato gives ground first to celery root, which then yields to a light tan foam.

Foam is a telltale sign of up-to-the-minute cuisine, a trademark of the Catalan world-beater Ferran Adrià. And Panorama is not shy about being up to date. On its Web site it declares: "We follow the latest trends in the culinary world." Although foam may be a bit old hat farther south, Panorama actually transcends trendiness with this dish. It matters, too, that foam in Icelandic is *frotha*.

Unfortunately, there has been nothing frothy about Iceland since the currency, the once high-flying krona, crashed to roughly half its value last fall. Banks were nationalized. Unemployment zoomed. And while I was in Reykjavik, the government fell, after weeks of noisy demonstrations in front of the world's oldest parliament, the Althing. In my hotel around the corner from this small squarish building of black volcanic stone, I had to put on noise-limiting earplugs to block out the clash of cymbals, the blare of foghorns and other insistent cacophony from the square below at night.

The money crisis explains why Panorama and Reykjavik's other bubble-spawned luxury restaurants are so sparsely patronized now. Icelanders aren't throwing cash around, and tourists don't flock here to luxuriate in the five hours of faint winter light each day. But for anyone interested in sampling some intelligently cosmopolitan treatments of exotic ingredients, the time is now. Restaurants like Panorama or the very chic Vox in the Hotel Nordica or the marvelous bistro 3 Frakkar are, in effect, on sale for those of us lucky enough to arrive with dollars or euros. Iceland just a few months ago was arguably the most expensive city in the Western world, with airport cabs costing \$140. Now prices have come down, if not to earth, at least to a level competitive with other capitals of developed countries. Just about every boutique on the elegant shopping street Laugavegur had a sale sign in the window. (*Utsala*, the word for sale and a rare Icelandic-English cognate, was the



Above, butter-fried arctic char with celery root, langoustine, ratte potatoes and horseradish foam, at Panorama; right, smoked puffin breast with mustard sauce, at Thrir Frakkar; below (left), the columned interior of Vox and (right) the restaurant's sautéed reindeer with walnuts, wild mushrooms, beetroot and onions.

first Icelandic word I learned.) And Paris and Barcelona don't offer diners cutting-edge preparations of moose, puffin, reindeer and whale.

At the top of the food chain, you can now tie into some paper-thin petals of roseate, pounded moose carpaccio at Sjafarkallarin (Seafood Cellar) or a plateful of langoustine tails lightly tossed in butter. I never thought I would be served too many langoustines, but what seemed like a dozen of the dainty things turned a treat into a trial. The waitress relentlessly pushed overpriced wine on me (all wine in Iceland is overpriced, because of import duties), and I reluctantly concluded that Sjafarkallarin was a kind of pretentious trap.

Vox might strike some people as even more pretentious, but for me it was a beautiful adaptation of modern culinary principles by



executive chef Gunnar Karl Gíslason to local foods.

I started with an elaborate and well-thought-out sauté of puffin cubes with sunchokes and hazelnuts in a cream sauce tintured with truffle and leek oil. Puffins thrive in such abundance in Iceland that, it is said, you can easily find yourself alone with a million of them on an isolated beach. So guilt would have been irrational as I enjoyed the chef's artful cross-ruff of textures—the chewy puffin playing against the more brittle sunchoke and hazelnuts, with an overall sea-saltiness prevailing

amid the Gallic refinement of the sauce. The puffin hunter's name, Siggi Hennings, was on the menu.

Vox produces its own wonderfully crusty peasant bread, churns its own butter and crowns its attention to Icelandic alimentary possibilities with reindeer tenderloin, slow-cooked (*sous-vide*) to a perfect juiciness.

Icelandic law permits hunters to take only 300 reindeer a year (there are no farmed reindeer in Iceland). So those dark-red cylinders of faintly gamy meat (really more in the line of grass-fed file mignon) taken at Jökuldals og Fell-

ahaidum says the menu (and who would doubt it?) are the Kobe beef of the North. Vox serves them standing on end, apparently the local style for the same cut of beef.

Vox is the obvious candidate for Iceland's first Michelin star, according to a proud Vox waiter who recognized me on a flight to London. Iceland is a small place. Before you know it, you start noticing faces you've seen before. You learn to order a double espresso in the local parlance (Espresso *tvofaldur*). And for the quintessential Icelandic food experience, you walk up from the bird-flocked lake in the center of the city to a sweet residential neighborhood filled with plain houses framed in corrugated steel and painted in lovely matte colors, to a place where three roads meet. The bistro in the charming old red house with the lace curtains has a very Icelandic name, Thrir Frakkar. Three corners (from the location) but also, in a strained pun, three coats (as in frock coat).

You don't need to know any of this, but it helps in understanding the relaxed attitude of the place (its logo shows three men in floppy overcoats).

Thrir Frakkar is where you want to go for Icelandic traditional food with a modest nontraditional spin. Chef Úlfar Eysteinson's puffin is cured and pungent, comes in purple strands, arrayed in a nouvelle starburst. If I could go back tomorrow, I think I would order the horse steak again. Here was meat with personality, plated modestly with potatoes, carrots and turnips. Lean and unforgettable.

As was the cunningly Icelandicized dessert, a *crème brûlée* based on skyr, the mildly sour, ubiquitous soft cheese that will remind first-timers of a thick yogurt. In the *crème brûlée*, its sourness countered the sweetness of the sugary sheet on top. And that's not all. On the same plate was a big mound of whipped cream and a smear of light custard sauce rippling with red fruit jam—a dairy symphony. And for a touch of the sunbaked south, Chef Eysteinson drops an orange Colombian physalis berry (Cape gooseberry) complete with papery ecru leaves, on top of the whipped cream.

Does this sound too cute for you? Then head down to the harbor in a gale and wander among the docks until you stumble on Saegreifinn (The Sea Count), a shack specializing in putrefied Greenland shark and *hardfiskur*, fish chips that will permanently perfume your luggage.

They reminded W.H. Auden of toenails. But if you don't get around to buying some from Saegreifinn, and forget to pick up a sheep's head, complete with eye and tongue, at the central-bus-station canteen, the Icelandic deli at the hypermodern airport sells them both along with puffin pâté.



Photos: Kristinn Ingvasson for The Wall Street Journal



WSJ.com

Post-boom cuisine  
See a slideshow about  
Icelandic dining, at  
WSJ.com/Food

# Lingua franca: French pop stars are daring to sing in English

By Gabriele Steinhauser

**W**HEN THE public television network France 3 chose electro-pop singer Sébastien Tellier to represent France at the 2008 Eurovision Song Contest, the response from politicians was swift—and angry.

François-Michel Gonnot, a parliamentarian from Nicolas Sarkozy's center-right UMP party, demanded that the Ministry of Culture look into the matter, declaring in a letter that he was "shocked" by the selection and expressing his hope that the broadcaster rethink its choice.

Other members of parliament followed suit, suggesting that a performance by Mr. Tellier, a shaggy-haired, full-bearded singer with a penchant for big sunglasses, might even be unconstitutional. Infuriated bloggers soon joined the fight on the Internet, filling online discussion boards with acrimonious debate over Mr. Tellier's selection.

What prompted all this outrage? The lyrics of Mr. Tellier's song, "Divine," are almost entirely in English.

"It was crazy," says Marc Tessier du Cros, the head of Mr. Tellier's label Record Maker, almost a year after the Eurovision controversy. "He was considered an anti-French guy."

The uproar died down eventually and Mr. Tellier changed a few more words of the song into his mother tongue for the Eurovision performance. But he's not the only French musician choosing to defy his country's tradition of linguistic patriotism. A growing number of French pop artists are writing and performing in English—and reaching larger audiences.

Bands like AaRON, Cocoon and The Dø (pronounced "The Dough") are rising to the top of the French charts with songs sung in English. More established artists, like singers Émilie Simon and Camille, who originally found success singing mainly in French, are also releasing new songs and albums in English.

But while an English song might help French artists sell their albums abroad, back at home, where the law requires that



Olivia Merilahti of The Dø



Sébastien Tellier

at least 40% of all songs played on radio or television are in French, singing in English can pose serious problems. Major music labels, which are all too aware of the quota system, often tell aspiring artists to stick to French if they want quick success.

"French radio [stations] are very closed," says Mr. du Cros. "If you sing in English, you compete against Madonna and Beyoncé. If you sing in French, you compete against Johnny Hallyday."

It was with this attitude in mind that Mr. du Cros, in 2000, founded his own label to promote artists who sing in a language other than French. "We target small audiences in many countries rather than a big audience in France," he says. "Artists have to sing in the language they feel is right."

The French debate over English lyrics is part of the country's larger struggle with the forces of globalization—whether in the world of business or pop culture. There is the France that acknowledges English is now key to most successful business careers, and that introduces the language at ever-earlier stages in its educational system. And then there is the country that refuses to accept English as the language of international communication and forces companies and advertisers to translate every document and slogan into French.

In the middle of it all are a new generation of artists and their fans, mostly in their teens, 20s or early 30s, who have grown up in a world where English is the language of modern pop music. They spent their youth listening to global stars like Michael Jackson, Prince or Alanis Morissette. They no longer discover new music via radio or TV. For them, the favorite tune on their iPod playlist

might have come from the band's site on MySpace, a YouTube video or an MP3 from a friend's memory stick.

With the feathery earrings, straight fringe and short summer dress Olivia Merilahti wears in the music video to the song "On My Shoulders," the lead singer and song writer of the The Dø wouldn't seem out of place in the trendy bars of Williamsburg, New York; Islington, London or Friedrichshain, Berlin. The band's indie sound and hipster look play well with a generation that is used to buying the same periwinkle T-shirt at American Apparel and sipping the same vanilla latte at Starbucks in Los Angeles, London or Lyon.

As a teenager growing up in Paris, Ms. Merilahti, the daughter of a Finnish mother and French father, practiced her English by looking up the words she didn't understand in the lyrics of Queen, Mariah Carey or The Offspring in a dictionary. "It's my musical language," says Ms. Merilahti. "It's what I've been listening to all my life."

Yet, when she met Dan Levy, her partner in The Dø, in 2004 and they started recording in his small studio, her expectations for commercial success weren't high. "So many people said, 'You'll never hit number one, you'll never even be in the charts if you sing in English,'" she remembers.

But then Oxford, the maker of school notebooks, chose one of the group's songs for a commercial in the fall of 2007. Within days, the number of clicks on The Dø's MySpace site began to soar and when they released their CD "A Mouthful" a few months later it was the first English-language album by a French band ever to top the charts in France.

The Internet has radically changed the way music is promoted, sold and distributed. With the help of YouTube, MySpace and other social networking Web sites,



Camille



artists can promote their own sound and image, often bypassing large record labels and radio stations that are still regulated by the quota system.

At the same time, France itself has become more multicultural. An influx of immigrants and expats have changed the country over the past half-century, even as more French citizens spend extended periods of time in other countries.

Since the 1980s, the number of students going abroad through Erasmus, the European Union's university-exchange program, has increased more than 20-fold. No other EU country, apart from Germany, sends as many of its students abroad as does France, most of them to English-speaking countries. And that doesn't even count those who choose to spend a year or a semester at colleges and graduate schools in the U.S., Canada or Australia.

For many of them, being French and proud of it is no longer inextricably linked to the language of Voltaire and Hugo. "France is still hoping that it can be something special again," Clément Barbier, a 22-year-old student from St. Etienne in the east of France, says about his country's language-protection and song-quota laws.

While he likes the idea of his government supporting a certain diversity in musical expression, "the way it works out in France now is rather stupid," says Mr. Barbier, himself member of an English-singing amateur band. "It is silly support for nationalistic symbols that are outdated and no longer linked to reality."

For many artists it's not only the prospect of reaching larger audiences that makes English their language of choice. The music they play is no longer entirely French in its origin.

Rather it has soaked up influences from other styles and cultural experiences, especially from



Simon Buret of AaRON

PHOTOS: AFP

the U.K. and the U.S. When that happens, English seems native to the song, even if it's not the artist's mother tongue.

"Most of the time, I start with the music, you know, with the melody," says Émilie Simon, who writes songs in French and English. "And I have these words coming. It's very simple: If the words come in French, it's because the song has to be in French. If the words come in English... I just follow the music of the words that come to me."

Ms. Simon is currently recording her third studio album and also composed songs for the European soundtrack of the movie "The March of the Penguins." Around a year ago, she moved from Paris to New York City—to find inspiration. And what she absorbs, she says, goes beyond the language. It's part of a larger experience that will ultimately leave its mark on her new songs.

"I see everything as part of the same thing, like colors, you use them and you paint: You need some French, you need some English and you need some strings," she says, explaining her songwriting process. "In the end, what counts is the big picture and what it says and how you feel when you listen to it."

Another artist who has mastered the skill of painting with



Émilie Simon

sounds, words and instruments is Camille, a French singer who goes only by her first name. After releasing two successful albums in French, her new CD "Music Hole" is almost entirely in English.

At a recent concert in the famously multilingual city of Brussels, most of the audience was French-speaking. But when Camille took the stage—whether she was singing about "Canards Sauvages," wild ducks, or the "Money Note," in which she pokes fun at the allure of pop divas—words and languages soon lost their meaning.

They became sounds of their own, mixing with the voices, claps and stomps of Camille and her background singers.

(At the end of the set, the singer and her band gathered at the front of the stage and sang a melody around three English words that have become a kind of global catch-phrase: "Yes, we can.")

"In my generation, you had to speak English," says Mr. Tellier, who admits that his own, heavily accented English might have benefited from some extra studying at school. "For us, English was a good thing."

Thinking back to the commotion before his Eurovision appearance, Mr. Tellier can't help but be a little amused. He couldn't have hoped for a better promotion for his song, which, despite a positive reception from critics, performed poorly in the actual contest.

Mr. Tellier doesn't believe that singing in English makes him any less French. Rather, making his music accessible to a larger number of people is a way of communicating what he calls "the French spirit."

"For me it's impossible to make English music, because I'm French," says Mr. Tellier. "My conclusion was: To be a good French guy, I have to sing in English."

—Lam Thuy Vo contributed to this article.

WSJ.com

Lost in translation  
See video of Émilie Simon  
and other French pop stars  
who sing in English, at  
[WSJ.com/Europe](http://WSJ.com/Europe)

## French pop: Écoutez, et répétez

HERE, SOME NEW albums by French artists recording in English.

### Sexuality

Sébastien Tellier

"Look away/They try to find the Milky Way/They love to drink it every day," Sébastien Tellier sings in "Divine," his Eurovision Song Contest entry. But Mr. Tellier's third studio album "Sexuality" is less about obscure lyrics than about his sound, dominated by synthesizers, electronic melodies and Mr. Tellier's soft voice. Think '80s disco with a touch of Air, the French electronica duo.

### A Mouthful

The Dø

Not even a bite of French made it into "A Mouthful," the first album from Franco-Finnish duo "The Dø." But the album still made it to the top of France's pop charts. The album also includes a song in Finnish, "Unissasi Laulelet" ("You sing when you sleep").

### Music Hole

Camille

Camille's "Music Hole" is filled with unusual sounds. On the album's 12 tracks she switches effortlessly from English to French, from claps to snaps and stomps. The album includes a selection of 11 video clips in which the singer demonstrates the seemingly endless possibilities of extracting sounds from her own body.

### Live à l'Olympia

Émilie Simon

This live recording from a 2006 concert in Paris brings you the best of Émilie Simon's earlier works. In "Fleur de Saison" ("Flower of the season") she softly breathes her French lyrics into the microphone before changing into a fast-moving electro-pop song. "In the Lake" questions a lover's commitment as moods and weather change; singing it in English, Ms. Simon sounds a little like Madonna with a French accent.

### Artificial Animals Riding On Neverland

AaRON

Philippe Lioret's film about the loss of a twin brother, "Je vais bien, ne t'en fais pas" ("I'll be fine, don't worry"), uses Simon Buret and Olivier Coursier's first single, "U-Turn (Lili)," as its title song. The same dreamy melancholy runs through AaRON's self-titled album, from "Mr. King," where Mr. Buret bemoans the death of his goldfish, to the band's second single "Tunnel d'Or" ("Tunnel of Gold"), the only French song on the CD. Heavy piano chords and a symphony orchestra set the mood throughout the CD's 11 tracks.

—Gabriele Steinhauser

# A passage to Tinseltown: Hollywood and

BY ALEXANDRA ALTER

**T**HE DIRECTOR IS American. The stars are from India. And the movie, which is scheduled to open this fall, has Hollywood special effects and Bollywood song-and-dance.

The horror film "Hisss," currently wrapping up shooting in Mumbai, is a result of a growing collaboration between Hollywood and the Indian film industry.

Money, stars and scripts are flowing in both directions, giving rise to a new genre of crossover cinema. Among the projects in development: Screenwriter Paul Schrader, famous for such films as "Taxi Driver" and "Raging Bull," is working on a thriller with an Indian producer. Sylvester Stallone will appear in "Kambakkht Ishq," or "Incredible Love," an action-filled comedy shot in Los Angeles and starring Akshay Kumar. Indian film mega star Shahrukh Khan is producing and starring in a superhero film that will be co-written by American and Indian screenwriters and digitally souped up by American special-effects technicians.

Crossover projects have been percolating for several years but are heating up with the success of "Slumdog Millionaire." The rags-to-riches tale shot in the slums of Mumbai has become a surprise Oscar darling with 10 Academy Award nominations, including best picture.

Hollywood studios, in need of new funding sources during the credit crisis, have sought financing, and new growth opportunities, in India. Indian conglomerate Reliance ADA Group struck a deal to invest \$500 million in Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks through its Reliance Big Entertainment unit last year, and has announced plans to finance films for production houses linked to Brad Pitt, Jim Carrey and Tom Hanks, among others. Reliance also invested in movie theaters across the U.S.

The new movie style is not being led by the West. It blends Indian themes and story lines with American cinematic styles. Some of the collaborations send American talent to work in Mumbai; others bring Indian producers, directors and actors to the U.S., and the resulting movies cover a range of styles from animation to action.

Reliance is funding a hybrid film, "Broken Horses," an English-language gangster movie scheduled to begin shooting in New Mexico this summer, with an American executive producer, Mark Johnson, and an Indian writer and director, Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

Mickey Rourke, fresh off his comeback in "The Wrestler," is considering a lead role, his spokeswoman and Mr. Chopra said.

Mr. Chopra, an acclaimed Indian filmmaker, says he hopes "Broken Horses," his first English-language feature film, will catapult him onto the world stage and pave the way for future U.S.-India hybrids.

"It's the right time for these two giants to shake hands," Mr. Chopra says, adding that Hollywood stands to benefit from India's large movie audiences. "We have stars like Aamir Khan, who has more eyeballs than Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, anybody."

The films face big hurdles. Ameri-



JT Morrow

can audiences may not warm to Indian-style kitschy, song-and-dance numbers and melodramatic staples. In 2007, Columbia Tri-Star funded and produced "Saawariya," which failed to capture a wide audience in India and flopped in its limited U.S. release, earning \$885,574 in American theaters. Executives at Sony Pictures, which owns Columbia, declined to say how much the film made in India but noted that they more than recovered their investment. Last month, Warner Bros. released the Bollywood kung fu movie "Chandni Chowk to China," featuring the rising star Mr. Kumar, on about 125 screens in the U.S. and Canada, making it the largest North American opening of a Bollywood film. So far, it's grossed just \$916,214. "Slumdog Millionaire," by contrast, has grossed more than \$69 million in the U.S. so far.

Indian audiences are equally particular. American action films such as "Spider-Man 3" have done well in

India, but locally made movies still account for 95% of Indian box-office sales. The Indian film industry makes more films than any other, with 1,200 releases in 2007, compared with roughly 600 that year in Hollywood.

Big splashy Bollywood films are often made for a few million dollars, and the most expensive productions run up to about \$20 million, compared to \$100 million for a major Hollywood movie.

Hollywood screenwriter Mr. Schrader—whose 21 writing credits include "Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull," "American Gigolo" and "The Last Temptation of Christ"—is aiming for both Indian and American audiences with his current project, "Xtrme City," an action movie blending American and Indian styles in what he calls "cross-cultural entertainment." Mr. Schrader says he began thinking about working in India when an Indian producer approached him in New Delhi after he

gave a film lecture there last October, though nothing came of that offer.

In his current project, the plot follows an American who travels to Mumbai to help his father-in-law negotiate a business deal with a "bhai," or gangster. The hapless Americans are thrust into Mumbai's organized crime scene.

Indian director and producer Anubhav Sinha signed on to produce the film, which will have dialogue in English and Hindi. Mr. Schrader is working on the script and says he plans to cast an Indian star and a Hollywood star in the lead roles. He declined to give names, but said he aims to cast one of Bollywood's top four actors, megastars who draw financing and pack theaters. Shahrukh Khan, Abhishek Bachchan and Aamir Khan are among India's most sought-after leading men.

Mr. Sinha, a former mechanical engineer who started directing in the early 1990s, says he and Mr. Schrader discussed crafting a film that would appeal to both American and Indian audiences, and decided to follow Mr. Schrader's vision in hopes that it will resonate in both cultures. "We sat down to discuss who we should target, and I said, 'Paul should make a Paul Schrader film,'" Mr. Sinha says.

When Govind Menon, an executive at India's Split Image Pictures studio, wanted to make a horror film based on the ancient myth of a snake goddess who takes human form, he went to Hollywood to recruit directors. He figured an American would bring a fresh twist to the tale, which has already inspired dozens of Bollywood films, he says. He hired independent film director Jennifer Lynch because he admired her work on the 2008 thriller "Surveillance."

"My feeling was, if Sergio Leone can make a cowboy movie in Spain without knowing any English, then

an American director can make a movie in India without knowing any Hindi," Mr. Menon says.

Ms. Lynch, who wrote the screenplay, is in the final stages of shooting "Hisss" in Mumbai. The movie features American actor Jeff Doucette, who played a priest on the TV show "Desperate Housewives," as the villain, and well-known Bollywood actors Mallika Sherawat and Irrfan Khan, who appeared in "The Namesake" and "Slumdog Millionaire." It has an American makeup and special-effects team. And it's being produced by Mr. Menon's Split Image Pictures.

During a recent shoot in a busy Mumbai suburb, Ms. Lynch yelled out directions from the roof of a building while the film crew captured a crowd running down a narrow lane, fleeing the veiled snake woman. For crew members who don't speak English, people on the ground translated her directions. "Are we communicating directly and efficiently so we can have this in two minutes?" Ms. Lynch yelled. Her hands were stained red from smearing fake blood on the actors.

Indian star Irrfan Khan, who plays a detective trying to solve the mystery of why people are dying from snake venom, ran down the street through the crowds, toward the camera, and climbed a fence, according to Ms. Lynch's directions.

Mr. Khan said Ms. Lynch has transformed the well-chronicled myth. "The theme has been done to death," he said. "But she is bringing a lot of new elements to it."

Besides American cinematic touches, Ms. Lynch has brought a level of organization that's lacking in most sprawling Bollywood productions, the film's actors and producers say. Ms. Lynch scouted her own locations and had each scene mapped out on storyboards—a rarity in Indian cinema.

Mr. Menon said the success of "Slumdog" will likely change how they market the film, which will cost about \$4 million, a medium-size budget for India. "There is a lot more interest in this film after 'Slumdog,'" Mr. Menon said.

"Hisss" is scheduled for a splashy release in India this fall, with a smaller North American release, but Mr. Menon says he hopes an American distributor will pick up the film and market it more broadly.

Indian cinema has flourished since its inception nearly 100 years ago. In the 1930s, Indian filmmakers produced epics based on Indian mythology and sprawling, romantic musicals; violent gangster movies and action films became popular in the 1960s and 1970s. In recent years, Indian films have grown more diverse, with smaller, independent films starring unknown actors cropping up along with star-studded epics.

India's domestic film industry, including movie ticket sales, DVDs and online movie purchases, is growing 15% annually and is projected to hit \$4 billion by 2012, up from \$1.9 billion in 2007, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Meanwhile, Hollywood domestic ticket sales fell slightly from last year to \$9.6 billion, and attendance is down 5% from 2007, according to Media by Numbers.

Before collaborating with the Indian film industry, American produc-

## Some of the stars of Indian film



### AKSHAY KUMAR

Starring in "Chandni Chowk to China" and the upcoming "Kambakkht Ishq"



### KAREENA KAPOOR

Starred in "Asoka" and will star alongside Akshay Kumar in "Kambakkht Ishq"



### ABHISHEK BACHCHAN

Son of Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan. Starred in "Guru" and will star in "Delhi-6"



### SHAHRUKH KHAN

Starred in "Om Shanti Om" and "Devdas" and will star in upcoming films "Ra.1" and "My Name is Khan"

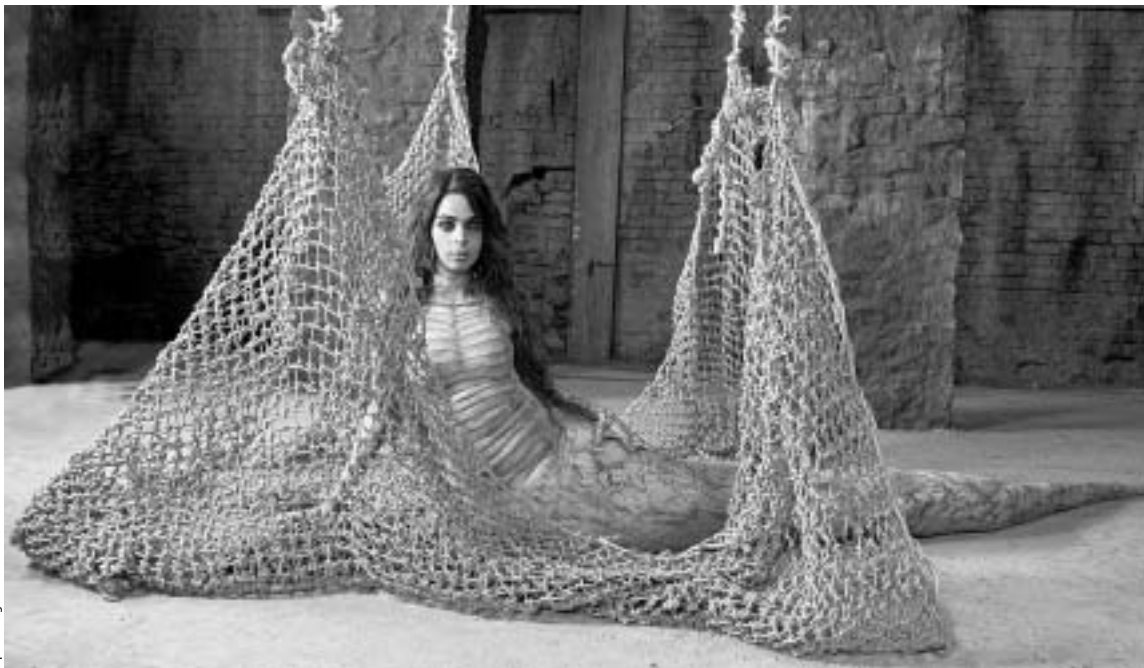


### AISHWARYA RAI-BACHCHAN

Starred in "Devdas" with Shahrukh Khan, married to Abhishek Bachchan, currently in "The Pink Panther 2"

Photos: Getty Images (2); Reuters (2); AFP/Getty Images

# Bollywood do lunch



Split Image Pictures



Warner Bros.



Eric Bellman/The Wall Street Journal

Clockwise from top, Mallika Sherawat in the forthcoming 'Hiss'; the film's director, Jennifer Lynch; Akshay Kumar and Deepika Padukone in 'Chandni Chowk to China.'

tion companies went after Indian audiences by making their own Bollywood films in recent years. Sony Pictures released "Saawariya" in India in 2007. Sony is producing, co-financing or acquiring at least six other Indian films for 2009, says Deb Schindler, president of Sony's international division. Last month, Sony released a horror film, "Raaz, the Mystery Continues," which made some \$3.2 million in India in its opening weekend.

Others have followed. 20th Century Fox set up a joint venture, Fox Star Studios India, in Mumbai last September, and signed famed filmmaker Vipul Shah to a multi-picture deal. Walt Disney released its first Bollywood animated feature, a joint production with Yash Raj Films, last fall, and is currently developing four films, including two live-action movies. Warner Bros. recently released the Hindi film "Chandni Chowk to China" in India, Europe and the U.S. This year, the studio plans to produce two conventional Bollywood movies filled with song and dance routines, and two "Tollywood" films, so called because they are shot in South Indian dialects, Tamil and Telugu, says Richard Fox, head of Warner Bros.' international division.

Indian company Reliance is betting on a growing appetite for Bollywood films in U.S. theaters: Through its Adlabs theaters arm, Reliance has invested in 240 movie screens

across the U.S. At one of its theaters in a shopping complex in North Bergen, N.J., an area with a large South Asian population, a handful of the latest Bollywood films play alongside current Hollywood fare such as "Inkheart," "Notorious" and "Hotel for Dogs." In the lobby, coming-attraction posters advertised "Billu Barber," a musical comedy starring Shahrukh Khan and Irrfan Khan, and "Delhi 6," a drama starring Abhishek Bachchan. One recent evening, families of South Asian-descent crowded in to see "Luck by Chance," a satire about a struggling actor trying to make it big in Bollywood. Across the hallway, a smaller audience turned out to see "Raaz, the Mystery Continues," a Hindi horror film produced by Sony Music and distributed by Sony Pictures Releasing International.

In "Raaz," the narrative suspense is regularly interrupted by characters bursting into song. The film also features high-tech special effects, dialogue in "Hinglish," a mixture of Hindi and sporadic English, and scenes that until recently would have been taboo by Indian cinema's conservative standards, including kissing and brief nudity.

## WSJ.com

Behind the curtain  
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The Independent Film Channel plans to start showing Hindi films regularly this spring, and is also shooting its own crossover production—a Bollywood musical about making Bollywood musicals—in Mumbai this March. "Bollywood Hero," which stars former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Chris Kattan as well as Indian actors, is scheduled for IFC this August.

Saavn, a New York-based company launched in 2004 to bring Indian movies to America, distributes Bollywood movies and songs on about 100 cable operators including IFC, mobile carriers and Internet services such as Time Warner Cable, AT&T and iTunes. At Saavn's Madison Avenue offices, the company's chief executive met one recent afternoon with executives and consultants to discuss the logistics of hosting Indian cinema's biggest awards show, the Zee Cine Awards, live in New York this year. The show draws a global audience of 250 million to 350 million people, and has been held in Mumbai, Dubai and London but never in the U.S. Zee Cine TV said it has narrowed its choice to New York and a handful of other cities.

"This is the year," for New York, Rishi Malhotra, a consultant for Saavn, told the others in the conference room. "There's a lot of talent integration East and West."

—Eric Bellman in Mumbai contributed to this article.



From left, Ginnifer Goodwin, Jennifer Aniston and Jennifer Connelly in 'He's Just Not That Into You.'

## Star-power vs. platitudes in childish romantic comedy

PRESIDENT OBAMA has asked us to set aside childish things, but he hasn't said a word about adolescent things, so here we are with "He's Just Not That Into You."

This romantic comedy was spawned by the self-help manual of the same name, and indirectly inspired by an episode of "Sex and the

City." The film explores but mainly celebrates the extended adolescence of American men and women who, in their 20s, 30s and even 40s, continue to befuddle themselves and one another with the bottomless mysteries of relationships. What did he/she mean, as opposed to what he/she said? When will he/she call/text/Twitter? And how could I have been so dumb?

## Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

The possibilities of the dating game are endless and the potential for pain is great, yet the permutations of the movie's plot are predictable and repetitive. At the same time, for the same reasons, the production's commercial prospects are bright. It's a star-encrusted vending machine that dispenses nuggets of conventional wisdom in zesty flavors.

The cast includes Ben Affleck, Jennifer Aniston, Drew Barrymore, Jennifer Connelly, Ginnifer Goodwin, Scarlett Johansson and Justin Long. They're in alphabetical order. If the characters they play were arranged in order of immaturity, Ms. Goodwin's Gigi would top the sorry list. She's an obsessive-compulsive romantic who takes all of the movie's bloated running time—129 minutes!—to absorb its basic message: Judge guys by what they do, not what they say.

As a consequence, the poor baby keeps waiting by her pink Princess phone for Mr. Wrong to ring and make her life right. (Her Princess is tethered to the only land line in a wireless world where, as noted in the script by Abby Kohn and Marc Silverstein, cellphones and caller ID have had a deep impact on dating patterns.)

Gigi's endless neediness is frightening, but her plight is played for laughs, like almost everything and everyone around her. The comedy

can be sharp from time to time, especially in a few mock-documentary, straight-to-the-camera interviews when supposed veterans of the relationship wars offer wry advice to the chronically lovelorn. And Jennifer Aniston sustains a nicely astringent tone as Beth, a marketing executive at a spice company—all occupations are generic—whose need to tie the knot threatens to destroy her great relationship with Neil (Mr. Affleck), a marriage-averse photographer.

For the most part, though, "He's Just Not That Into You" feels like a sitcom that resolves each mini-dilemma before going to commercial. The film's director, Ken Kwapis, has done far better work than this; his extensive TV credits include the pilots of "The Office," "The Larry Sanders Show" and "The Bernie Mac Show."

So, too, has Jennifer Connelly distinguished herself in such dramatic roles as a drug addict in "Requiem for a Dream" and John Nash's wife, Alicia Nash, in "A Beautiful Mind." Unfortunately her character here, another spice merchandiser named Janine, seems to have lost her mind. Janine hates lying—we get that—and her husband is a casual liar; we get that too. But Ms. Connelly's ferocious wrath might better have been reserved for a revival of "Medea." Instead of lightening up she darkens down.

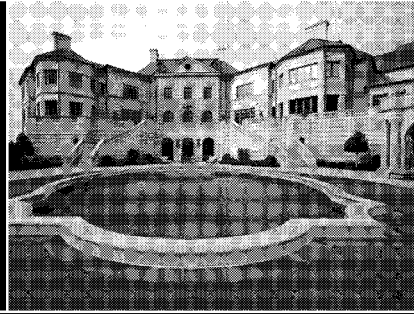
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### Opening this week in Europe

- Coraline Portugal
- Frost/Nixon Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Turkey
- He's Just Not That Into You France, Germany, Iceland
- Hotel for Dogs Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden
- Slumdog Millionaire Hungary
- The Curious Case of Benjamin Button Finland, Romania
- The Pink Panther 2 Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, U.K.
- The Wrestler Croatia, France, Spain
- Valkyrie Denmark, Greece
- Vicky Cristina Barcelona U.K.
- Waltz with Bashir Finland, Norway, Spain

Source: IMDB

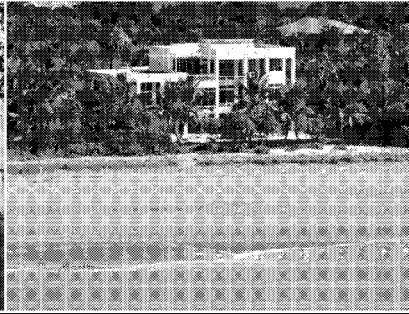
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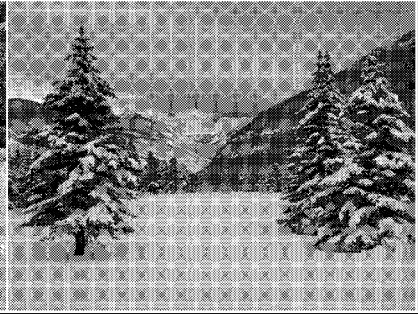
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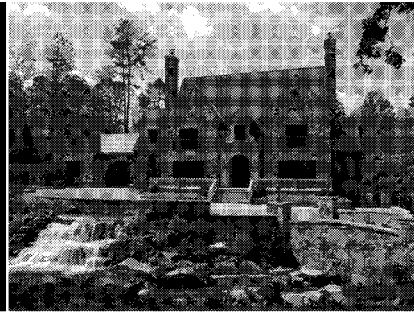
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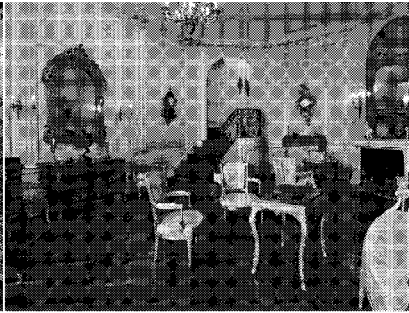
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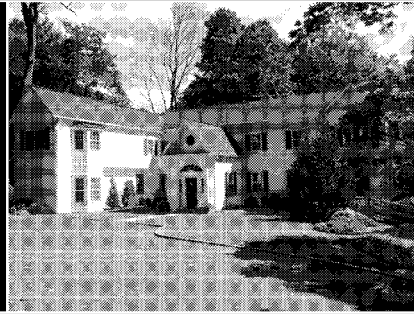
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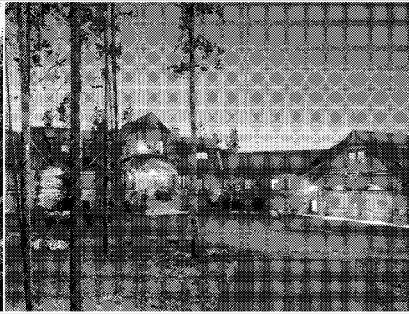
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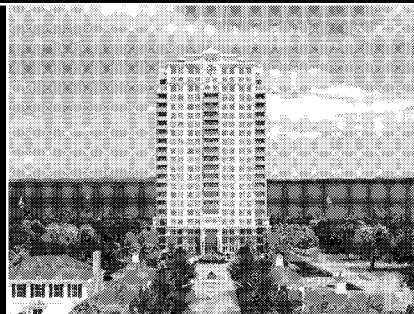
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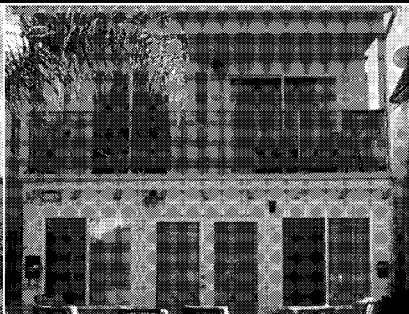
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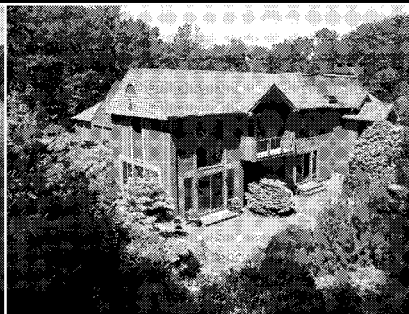
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❖ Sports

# Icing that putt—literally

**T**HE OBVIOUS SOLUTION to winter, for Northern golfers, is to board up the house and flee south to Florida or the desert Southwest. I have visited both areas in the last couple of months, and let me tell you, this solution works.

Last month in Jupiter, Fla., I played in a tournament at the Dye Preserve Golf Club. The sun was warm and the sky was blue, as advertised. Many of the competitors in this event were life-lottery winners

## Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

who have managed their affairs so adroitly that they move to Florida whenever it gets cold and play golf three or four times a week, with scratch handicaps. God bless 'em.

Meanwhile, back on Planet Reality, it's minus-10 degrees outside as I write these words and the only reason I'm not feeling more bereft is that I managed to play golf last weekend, on a frozen pond in Stow, Mass.

Purists might argue that what we played was not real golf, but by that sensibility neither was the scraping game played 300 years ago over sheep-mowed pastures in Scotland using bent sticks and featherie balls. The Scots were making it up then, and we were making it up last weekend, but both with the same premise: hit the ball, find it, and hit it again, all the while scheming and adapting to circumstances so as to get your ball in the hole in fewer strokes than your opponent.

"It's actually golf-like, don't you think?" asked John Schorum of Stow, the outing's chief organizer.

Absolutely, I replied—pure golf. The only difference was that, for convenience's sake, the holes weren't sunk below the surface; they were 3-liter wine bottles filled with sand, which you had to hit to "hole out." The greens surrounding the bottles had been lovingly groomed with snow-blowers and brooms, and putts rolled at something like 20 feet on the Stimpmeter. (By comparison, the speediest U.S. Open greens measured by Stimpeters roll roughly two-thirds as fast.)

Mr. Schorum, who is an account executive for a big health-insurance company, and his wife, Eve, an accounting executive, have been setting up this course each winter for five years, on the pond behind their house, and hosting an associated party. This year there were 15 guests. Set-up takes hours of work, especially since Mr. Schorum likes to add a few designer touches, such as sinuous fairway borders straight from the Floridian vernacular of golf-course architect Joe Lee. In most years the course comprises two par-three holes, of around 70 to 90 yards, and two par fours, from 140 to 200 yards. The snowy rough this year was 3 to 4 inches deep. Balls, painted day-glow orange or yellow, that are successfully located in the rough (one searches for the tell-tale entry craters) may be lifted and placed without penalty.

The most satisfying part of ice golf, like playing with hickory clubs or in other nonstandard conditions such as in gale-force winds, is figuring out what you can and cannot hope to accomplish. It quickly became apparent, as Mr. Schorum advised it would, that the ideal ap-



Steve Johnson putts toward the wine-bottle pin during a round of ice-pond golf in Stow, Mass.

proach shots do not bound onto (and thus quickly off of) the greens, but rather plug into the rough near the edge.

Chipping is the money shot in ice-pond golf, since balls once on the green have a tendency not to want to stop. Also, rub of the green (or bad luck, as it is known outside golf) is extreme on the ice. Putts do break, although it's usually impossible to predict which way.

Still, by the end, we got the hang of it. Our team of three, in best-ball competition, finished our final circuit of four holes in two under par, thanks to a couple of long putts that unaccountably swerved toward, rather than away from, the bottles. After a few celebratory drinks around the warming fire in the middle of the pond, we retreated inside for more wine and a superb lasagna dinner.

Ice golf is not new. Seventeenth-century paintings from the Netherlands depict an already-old game called "kolf," played on ice, which some historians consider a predecessor to Scottish golf. One of the participants in last weekend's gathering, Tim Owen, grew up in Saskatchewan, Canada, where locals annually gathered in deepest winter for an ice-golf tournament using hockey sticks and purple tennis balls. (In homage, he used a hockey stick and regular golf ball last weekend, with mixed success.)

I myself once participated in the World Ice Golf Championship, on a course routed around towering icebergs in Uummannaq, Greenland, well above the Arctic Circle. This tournament was more a publicity stunt than a bona fide championship, but the scenery was terrific and the golf genuinely fun. You'd be

## A man of infinite jest

BY JEFFREY A. TRACHTENBERG  
**I**N HIS 11TH NOVEL, "Fool," author Christopher Moore retells "King Lear" through the eyes of a quick-witted, foul-mouthed, impudent, self-described fool who stays one step ahead of the galls. Mr. Moore, 51 years old, aims to find the inherent humor in the story of a reckless old king driven crazy by self-delusion.

Mr. Moore talked to the Journal about his work.



Lynn Grady

**Q: Do you view yourself as a humorist or satirist?**

I write comedy. Sometimes it's satire, sometimes it's humor. Dave Barry is a situational humorist who observes and creates humor. What I do is always in the context of fictional characters. I think it was Mark Twain who said the French write satire, Americans write humor, and the Brits write comedy. But defining your genre is for others to do.

**Q: How do you find your subjects, which have varied from Jesus's lost years in "Lamb" to vampires?**

It's really what interests me at the moment. It could be marine mammal science, the life of Christ, or in the case of this book, Shakespeare. My next big novel will be about French painters,

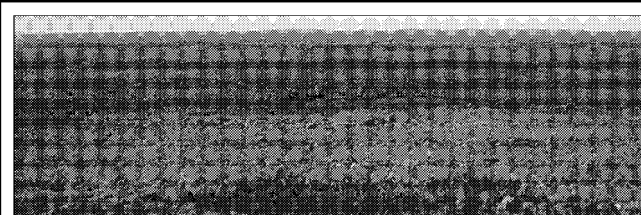
probably in the 19th century. I'm going to spend two months this fall in Paris, and I'm learning to paint. You get to be a dilettante while being paid for it.

**Q: Is it more difficult to write a book based on a character created by somebody else?**

Tom Stoppard's play "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" was a real inspiration for me. It's one of the gold standards of derivative fiction. He took two characters with no significant role in the play and then followed them through new adventures. The fool in "King Lear" is a very minor character, the least powerful person in the court. The switch in my book is that he's working all the actions behind the scenes. That was the challenge, to make him the story's motor.

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## ❖ Top Picks

# Visions of apocalypse and transcendence

### Berlin ■ art

At the beginning of the 20th century, Imperial Germany had one foot in a golden age and another in the Bronze Age. Marked by the humanism of its museums and universities, and the militarism of its rulers, and fueled by the enormous wealth of its sudden industrial might, the country was, in retrospect, heading off a cliff. Among the first to sense trouble were Germany's modernist artists, like Ludwig Meidner, the Berlin Expressionist, who woke up one day in 1912 and saw his world in ruins. In a series of hallucinatory works known as "Apocalyptic Landscapes," Meidner used Expressionism to create a vision of Berlin undergoing the destruction of mechanized warfare.

"Apocalyptic Landscape (Spreehafen Berlin)," from 1913, transforms Berlin's then-thriving harbor into a war zone experiencing something like urban carpet-bombing. The painting is the inaugural work of an outstanding exhibition at Berlin's German Historical Museum called "Cassandra: Visions of Catastrophe 1914-1945," which documents an uncanny prophetic streak in German modernist art.

During World War I, as the casualties mounted, and as the home front began to suffer food and fuel shortages, a feeling of calamity set in among ordinary Germans—a curious, complicated feeling that determined the rise, but also anticipated the fall, of Nazism. "Cassandra," using major and minor works by major and minor figures, illustrates the response to that feeling in two or three generations of German artists, who were forced by history to take on the additional mantles of journalist, activist, moralist and mourner.

Every important German artist from the period is on view, including Max Beckmann, George Grosz, Otto Dix, Max Ernst and Käthe Kollwitz. I was grateful to see their work in this context—especially the magnificent Beckmann painting, "Soldier and Bird-Woman" (1939), which gives its Homeric theme a dose of Wehrmacht-filled menace. But I was even more grateful to discover compelling works by



lesser-known figures, like German-Jewish artists Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1969), an inspired collagist who survived the war, and Felix Nussbaum (1904-1944), a gifted painter who did not. In "Triumph of Death" (1944), a chamber-version of the Bruegel panel, painted in hiding in Nazi-occupied Brussels, Nussbaum decorates his scene's detritus with

impassive modernist faces, which serve witness to the destruction of a world they once tried to shock. Death would indeed triumph over Nussbaum, who was deported to Auschwitz not long after finishing the painting.

"Cassandra" recalibrates our understanding of German art. Instead of re-experiencing the sub-categories of modern-



© Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Left, 'The Drummer' (1934), by Hans Feibusch, in Berlin; above, a 12th-century Shiva Nataraja, on show in Zurich.

ism, we experience something larger and much more authentic. By documenting how artists—great, good and in-between—saw the future, "Cassandra" helps us understand the fullness of the past.

—J.S. Marcus

Until Feb. 22  
 ☎ 49-30-20304-0  
 www.dhm.de

### Zurich ■ art

The Museum Rietberg, located on a wooded hill in the heart of Zurich, is unique among Europe's great collections of non-European art. Unlike Berlin's Ethnological Museum, or Paris's Musée du quai Branly, the Rietberg does not owe its existence to Enlightenment ideas about science, but to Romantic ideas about art. Built on the grounds of the former estate of Otto and Mathilde Wendsdonck, whose mid-19th century villa was home to a legendary salon, the museum complex has a lush, poetic quality. Walking around the idyllic setting, we

are always aware of a Western idea of artistic transcendence, even though the works on display were often created by cultures without any formal concept of art at all. The conflict between "Western" and "non-Western" ideas is at the very heart of a stupendous exhibition at the museum, called "Shiva Nataraja—The Cosmic Dancer," which shows around 40 versions of the Hindu deity, assembled from the world's leading collections in Europe, America and India.

Western visitors, with a view of the human form dating back to the Renaissance, and a Judeo-Christian religious tradition, are bound to see the many examples of the figure with a humanistic bent. Shiva—who, Hindus believe, dances on a cremation site, determining the pace of life and death with his dance—may recall for us Leonardo da Vinci's four-armed depiction of human proportions. We experience anthropomorphic works like the 12th-century, copper-alloy Shiva from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, or the 10th-century version from New York's Asia Society, as testimonies to the glories of mankind and the human form. Meanwhile, according to curator Johannes Beltz, there is a local Tamil priest who comes to the museum to worship the Shivas.

The curators emphasize the contradiction between the sculpture-like god of India and the god-like idea of sculpture inherent in the Western tradition by skillfully, even ingeniously, arranging dancing Shivas both in and out of vitrines. One minute, Shiva is a freestanding god in a religious procession; and the next, he is a work of art on display in a museum.

—J. S. Marcus

Until March 1  
 ☎ 41-44-206-31-31  
 www.rietberg.ch

### Munich ■ art

Collecting contemporary art is as tricky as picking stocks—especially when it comes to finding enduring winners. German art lovers and collectors Michael and Eleonore Stoffel might have disliked that comparison. But the paintings and sculptures they assembled over the past three decades, some of which are on show at the Pinakothek der Moderne in an exhibition called "Passionate Provocative," look like a solid blue-chip portfolio.

Michael Stoffel, a lawyer who died in 2005, and his wife Eleonore, an art historian, collected from the early 1970s until Eleonore died in 2007. The collection now belongs to the Bavarian State Painting Collections. Interested mostly in German art, they were initially drawn to emerging artists such as Gerhard Richter (born 1932), Sigmar Polke (born 1941), Jörg Immendorff (1945-2007) and Georg Baselitz (born 1938), who today constitute the cultural canon in Germany.

Many of the paintings are political in nature, such as Immendorff's "Cafe Deutschland" from 1980. The work, in deep brown and red colors, shows the interior of a large discotheque-like room with musicians and what look like dancing cave-men. In one corner of the picture, an eagle, Germany's national symbol, sits in a brooding mood, as if reflecting on the country's depressed state after the economic miracle years ended.

Martin Kippenberger's (1953-1997) sculpture "Badewanne" (Bath Tub) shows a bath full of cigarette stubs with a human fist rising out of them. The 1989 latex sculpture triggers spontaneous giggles since the apparently drowning man or woman, who can't be seen, is making a gesture either of celebration or of provocative stubbornness.

—Goran Mijuk

Until March 1  
 ☎ 49-89-2-3805-360  
 www.pinakothek.de

## The world of Saint Laurent and Bergé

THE LATE YVES Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Bergé juggled styles, centuries and continents to create a famously riveting and eclectic personal collection of art and design.

Mr. Bergé first met Mr. Saint

### Collecting MARGARET STUDER

Laurent at the burial of legendary fashion designer Christian Dior in 1957. They later became life-long friends and business partners. For decades they bought what they liked, unfettered by fashions or strategies.

This month more than 700 objects from their life of collecting will be offered at auction over three days (Feb. 23-25) by Christie's at the Grand Palais in Paris (total estimate: €200 million-€300 million). Mr. Bergé says in the auction brochure that "the collection grew, in constant collaboration, with no design other than the unrivaled pleasure it brought."

The sale will offer items from the ancient world to the 20th century, including paintings, sculptures, furniture, decorative arts, silver, glass, daggers and jewelry. Estimates range from €6,000-€8,000 for a sculpted golden fish "Carpe d'Or" (1987) by Claude and Francois-Xavier Lalanne, to €30 million-€40 million for Picasso's "Instruments de musique sur un guéridon" (1914).

Here, a look at some of the more unusual offerings.

Antiquities include an Egyptian anthropoid sarcophagus lid from circa first century A.D.; the mysterious figure on the lid wears a thick wig of curls overlaid with vulture wings (estimate: €50,000-€70,000). From the first-second century A.D. is a powerful Roman marble figure of a minotaur estimated at €300,000-€500,000.

The sale is a cameo collector's dream with a wealth of offerings, including a carved onyx 16th-century bust of a bearded warrior—once part of the famed cameo collection of George, 4th Duke of

Marlborough (1739-1817)—estimated at €8,000-€12,000.

It is hard not to fall in love with the animals depicted in this auction. There is a wonderful 17th century prancing bronze horse estimated at €20,000-€30,000; a German 16th-century silver-gilt cup in the shape of a seated bear (€80,000-€120,000); an expressive bronze rat's head and a rabbit's head sculpted in the 18th century for a Chinese emperor's summer palace (each estimated at €8 million-€10 million); and an incredibly cute Boston terrier named "Toy" modeled in bronze by François Pompon in 1930 (€15,000-€20,000).

As one would expect from a couturier, there are old master paintings in the collection that show the beauty of fabrics and the ladies who wear them. One example is Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' portrait of the Countess de la Rue from 1812 (estimate: €2 million-€3 million). Another is "Young woman feeding her parrot" (circa 1680) by Dutch master Pieter de Hooch (€200,000-€300,000).



Christie's

One of the items on sale in the Yves Saint Laurent-Pierre Bergé collection: Eileen Gray's Dragon Chair (1920-22), estimate: €2 million-€3 million.

Among the modern art standouts is the abstract sculpture "Madame L.R. (Portrait of Madame L.R.)," a rare work in wood by Constantin Brancusi (€15 million-€20 million).

The sale is also rich in Art-Deco furnishings. One major work on offer is Irish architect Eileen Gray's "Dragon Chair" (circa 1920-1922), estimated at €2 million-€3 million.

### WSJ.com

Collection of a lifetime  
 See a slideshow of items from  
 the Christie's auction, at  
 WSJ.com/Lifestyle

## Cupid, Take Cover

By Jennifer Graham

Behold Cupid, the dimpled cherub of yore: a pink-cheeked, golden-curved purveyor of love, affection and heart-shaped Whitman's Samplers. He's everywhere this month, and suddenly, so are people who want to wing him.

"Cupid," reads an e-card from American Greetings. "For years, he's been a pain in your rear end. Now it's time to return the favor." Recipients can shoot arrows at Cupid's backside.

The interactive card is among American Greetings' anti-Valentine's Day collection, an ironic offering from an industry that profits greatly from Feb. 14.

Even in a cautious economy, the National Retail Federation expects U.S. consumers to spend more than \$14 billion this year on Valentine's cards, meals and gifts. Valentine's Day trails only Christmas in card sending, and it is the busiest holiday for the U.S. florist industry.

But there's increasing grumbling about Valentine's Day, a vaguely defined occasion that forces people, at arrow-point, to declare their deepest emotions, and maybe even to manufacture some that aren't there. Some call it FAD, "Forced Affection Day." True, there are those who bemoan the commercialization of Christmas, or the seemingly contrived nature of Mother's Day or Administrative Professionals Week. Yet Valentine's Day is the only American celebration with a resistance movement. It is comprised of singles who resent the incessant emphasis on romantic love, parents who

anathema to so many? Blame the public schools. It's there that compulsive Valentine exchanging begins, innocently enough at first. In grade school, teachers insist that children provide a Valentine for everyone in the class. Alas, no such protection exists beyond high school, and boys and girls graduate into a life where, sometimes, yours is the only desk in the office without a bouquet.

"Valentine's Day has so much baggage attached to it, this cliché feeling of disappointment," says

Sasha Cagen, author of a book celebrating single life. She went to a high school in Rhode Island where students sent carnations to one another on Val-

entine's Day, "and, if you didn't get one from a boy, you felt bad."

A sense of humor helps. Melissa Monachello, a publicity manager for a book publisher in Philadelphia, once sent her single friends sympathy cards that read, "You are not alone in this time of sorrow" for Valentine's Day. Now engaged, she is sending normal Valentines to family and friends this year, but she and her fiancé are not doing anything special on Feb. 14, figuring it's the other 364 days of the year that matter. "It's kind of silly when you think about it," she says of Valentine's Day.

Even marriage does not assure a lifetime of angst-free Valentine's Days. Meredith Wollins Paley, vice president of public relations for the women's clothier Talbots, says that "on a whim" the company posted a "tell us your worst Valentine's gift" contest on its Web site. On the first day, more than 2,500



Masterpiece / By Joseph Epstein

## A Yiddish Novel With Tolstoyan Sweep

Robert Lowell called Ford Madox Ford's "The Good Soldier" the best French novel in the English language. Similarly, might one call I.J. Singer's "The Brothers Ashkenazi" the best Russian novel ever written in Yiddish. The book has the grand sweep of Tolstoy, with a vast and wide-ranging cast of characters, a strong feeling for the movement of history, and the drama of men and women trapped in the machinery of forces much greater than themselves.

Israel Joshua Singer, born in Bilgoraj, Poland, in 1893, was the older brother by nine years of Isaac Bashevis Singer. Their father was a Hasidic rabbi, their mother the daughter of a long line of famous non-Hasidic rabbis. I.J. Singer spent his early years in the shtetl of Leoncin and his adolescent years in Warsaw, where he became caught up in the Jewish enlightenment movement. As a young man he worked as a journalist in Kiev, where his early attraction to socialism was punctured by the brute realities of the Russian Revolution. In 1934 he moved to the U.S., where he worked for the Jewish Daily Forward. He published seven books in all, of which "The Brothers Ashkenazi" (1936) is the best known.

The tension between religious and secular life among Jews born into orthodoxy gave both Singer brothers an inexhaustible literary subject. In much of Isaac Bashevis Singer's fiction his characters stray from religion and then, after leading lives of dissipation, degradation and disappointment, return to it and find some contentment.

For I.J. Singer things are more complicated. He did not think much of either traditional religion or the secular life of his time. Politics taught I.J. the bitter lesson that, however much the extreme left and the extreme right might disagree, the one common ground upon which they met comfortably was anti-Semitism. The Jew as scapegoat in the dark world of Eastern Europe is more than a leitmotif in "The Brothers Ashkenazi"; it is the underlying moral of the novel. "Don't you know," the wives of the striking Jewish workers cry out to their husbands during a bitter strike in Lodz, "it always ends up with Jewish heads bleeding."

"The Brothers Ashkenazi" begins not long after the Napoleonic wars, with the arrival of German and Moravian weavers in the Polish town of Lodz. At first excluded, the Jews gradually insinuate themselves into the town. They began as small-time entrepreneurs, setting up minor factories or sometimes working in their homes with handlooms, grinding out a living. A handful of Jews worked for

large German factories, as agents, buyers, managers.

**'The Brothers Ashkenazi' is a pitch-perfect work from I.J. Singer.**

One such is Abraham Hersh Ashkenazi, who soon is presented by his wife with twin sons, Simha Meir and Jacob Bunem. Abraham Hersh hears

the prophecy from his rabbi that his sons will both know great wealth. This prophecy, which will come true, is a disappointment to their father, who would have preferred they be pious and learned.

The brothers turn out very differently, in talent and in temperament. Simha Meir, the first born by a few minutes, is from an early age clever, conniving, concentrated on the main chance. His brother is physically more gifted—strong, handsome, charming. Simha Meir is aflame with ambition; Jacob Bunem is dedicated to easy living.

At the center of the novel is the climb of Simha Meir—who abandons his religion and becomes Max Ashkenazi—to dominance over the weaving industry of Lodz. In the background plays the rivalry and estrangement between the brothers: Simha Meir, in an arranged marriage, is betrothed and marries the love of his brother's life. Later Jacob Bunem marries into a family of vast wealth, a cause of consternation to Simha Meir.

Conflict is the order of the day in Lodz: between brothers, between owners and workers, between rabbis and miscreants, between Russians and Poles, between Gentiles and Jews, between Polish and Lithuanian Jews. Under capitalism man exploits man, an old saying had it, while under communism just the reverse obtains. So it is in Lodz; no matter who is in command, the city is a breeding ground for exploitation.

"Simha Meir had the guts of a pickpocket," Singer writes. "In Lodz this was the highest compliment." We learn that "justice isn't

a commodity in Lodz," and that "Lodz admired nothing more than wealth." With hundreds of dab touches Singer personifies the city as the sinkhole of men set loose without any guiding principles or goals apart from that of gain.

When credit dries up and inflation hits, Singer notes that "even the whores in brothels and the doctors who later treated their venereal diseases were paid off with IOUs."

Such idealism as Singer allows in the novel is given to a few naïve revolutionaries. Nissan, the son of a poor rabbi, exchanges his father's devotion to Torah for his own to Marxism. He lives to see the revolution he fought for turn into a pogrom, with the corpses of Jews hanging from trees. At one point, Nissan thinks: "Maybe man was essentially evil. Maybe it wasn't the fault of economic circumstances, as he had been taught, but the deficiencies of human character."

Strikes, World War I, the Russian Revolution, the invasion of Lodz first by the Germans, then by the Russians—Singer describes all with pitch-perfect artistry and pace. Lenin makes a cameo appearance, as Napoleon does in "War and Peace," and so do the hapless Czar Nicholas and his Czarina Alexandra. The world turns topsyturvy, with only Max Ashkenazi's dream of industrial and financial dominance remaining constant, until it, too, is blasted, when, having moved his factory to Russia, he is imprisoned in the new Soviet Union, from which he is saved by his long-despised brother. On the brothers' return to Poland, reconciled at last, Jacob Bunem is killed, in an act of anti-Semitic bullying, by an ignorant Polish officer.

The novel ends on a pogrom, which sends all the city's Jews fleeing: to America, to the new Zion in Palestine, to less cruel countries than Poland. "Lodz," Singer writes, "was like a limb torn from a body that no longer sustained it. It quivered momentarily in its death throes as maggots crawled over it, draining its remaining juices." Max Ashkenazi, intent on personal reform, which he is unable to attain, dies soon afterward.

Masterly, pitiless, this great novel forgoes a happy ending to render instead a just one: The city of Lodz and the characters it spawned get all they deserve.

Mr. Epstein is the author of "Fred Astaire" (Yale University Press).



resent the necessity of procuring 24 Disney princess cards with red lollipops attached, and devoted couples, married and not, who resent the compulsion of it all.

These days, it is also made up of businesses eager to capitalize on that resentment. Most major U.S. cities have at least one restaurant or bar throwing an anti-Valentine's Day gathering, such as the "Cupid is Stupid" party at Santa Fe Station in Las Vegas. Crunch Fitness locations across the U.S. are offering anti-Valentine's Day boxing classes, where participants can bring photographs of their ex-amours to help them work out "post-relationship aggression." Jimmy Beans Wool, a knitting-yarn company, used to highlight a red yarn each February, but now says on its Web site that it's rebelling and substituting blue this year.

How did a day devoted to love, affection and chocolate become

women responded with tales of receiving electric nose-hair trimmers and cemetery plots. "Apparently, Valentine's Day is less romantic than greeting-card companies would have us believe," she says.

As in all categories of social unrest, there's even a petition to get rid of the day. The one at [www.petitionsonline.com](http://www.petitionsonline.com) reads, in part, "Valentine's Day is the most evil day of the year." There are, as of this writing, 66 signatures.

Should someone succeed at abolishing Valentine's Day, they will be in good company. The Roman Catholic Church, unable to verify the history of Saints Valentine (there were at least three), struck St. Valentine's Day from its official calendar in 1969. All three Valentines were martyred. The anti-Valentine movement goes way back.

Ms. Graham is a writer in the suburbs of Boston.

# time off



© The British Museum

## Amsterdam design

"Protest! Campaign Posters from 1965" illustrates 40 years of prominent social issues with a selection of historic poster designs.

Nederlands Verzetsmuseum  
Until March 29  
☎ 31-20-6202-535  
www.verzetsmuseum.org

## art

"Wayang Superstar" shows Javanese Wayang puppets by Ki Enthuis Susmono, who has revived the genre in Indonesia by adding figures from modern culture to his repertoire.

Tropenmuseum  
Until June 28  
☎ 31-20-5688-200  
www.tropenmuseum.nl

## Antwerp photography

"Erwin Olaf—EyeCandy 1984-2009" exhibits photography and video installations by Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf (born 1959).

FotoMuseum  
Until June 7  
☎ 32-3-2429-300  
www.fotomuseum.be

## Barcelona photography

"My Cuba: Rodrigo Moya, 1964" shows 80 black-and-white photographs of Cuba taken in 1964 by Mexican photographer Rodrigo Moya (born 1934).

Casa Amèrica Catalunya  
Until March 27  
☎ 34-93-2380-661  
www.americat.net

## art

"Rabascall: Production 1964-1982" presents a selection of 150 works by Spanish artist Joan Rabascall (born 1935).

MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona  
Until April 19  
☎ 34-93-4120-810  
www.macba.cat

## Berlin

### photography

"Annie Leibovitz—A Photographer's Life—1990-2005" exhibits 200 personal and professional images by the American photographer (born 1949).

C/O Berlin  
Feb. 21-May 24  
☎ 49-30-2809-1925  
www.co-berlin.info

## Brussels

### art

"From Van Dyck to Bellotto: Splendor at the Court of Savoy" includes works by Jan Brueghel, Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony Van Dyck, alongside Italian masters from the 15th to 18th century.

BOZAR  
Feb. 20-May 24  
☎ 32-2507-8444  
www.bozar.be

## Copenhagen

### opera

"Dead Man Walking" is an opera by Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally, based on Sister Helen Prejean's work with death row inmates in American prisons.

Det Kongelige Teater  
Feb. 21 and 22



© Michel Comte/Management

A 1996 photograph of Carla Bruni for Vogue Italia by Michel Comte, on show in Düsseldorf; below, "Conception Synchrony" (1914), by Stanton Macdonald-Wright, in Rome; top, a ceramic ewer (1616, with 19th-century metal spout), in London.

☎ 45-3369-6933  
www.operaen.dk

www.nationalgalleries.org

## Düsseldorf

### photography

"Michel Comte—Retrospective" presents 300 works by Swiss portrait and fashion photographer Michel Comte (born 1954).

NRW-Forum Kultur und Wirtschaft  
Until May 10  
☎ 49-2118-9266-90  
www.nrw-forum.de

## Edinburgh

### photography

"25 Years of Photography—Celebrating the Anniversary of The National Collection" shows historic and modern Scottish photography.

National Gallery Complex  
Feb. 14-April 19  
☎ 44-1316-2462-00



Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

## Krakow

### art

"First Step... Towards a Collection of Western Contemporary Art" includes pieces by Nobuyoshi Araki, Miquel Barceló, Francesco Clemente, Eric Fischl, Mike Kelley, David LaChapelle, Andy Warhol and others.

National Museum in Krakow  
Until Aug. 31  
☎ 48-12-2955-500  
www.muzeum.krakow.pl

## Limassol

### science

"Ancient Greek Technology" exhibits working replicas of ancient Greek mechanisms such as the hydraulic wheel of Perachora, Penelope's loom, ancient clocks and others.

Evagoras Lanitis Center  
Until March 10  
☎ 357-25-3421-23  
www.lanitisfoundation.org

## Liverpool

### art

"French Impressionists" features works by Renoir, Monet, Degas and Rodin on loan from the Nationalmuseum Stockholm.

Lady Lever Art Gallery  
Feb. 20-May 31  
☎ 44-151-4784-136  
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

### fashion

"Fashion V Sport" presents contemporary sportswear, streetwear, accesso-

ries and shoes by Dries van Noten, Stella McCartney, Armani, Vivienne Westwood and others, exploring the relationship between contemporary fashion and global sportswear brands.

Walker Art Gallery  
Until May 13  
☎ 44-151-4784-199  
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

## London

### history

"Shah 'Abbas The Remaking of Iran" explores 17th-century Iran through the legacy of Shah 'Abbas I (reigned 1587-1629). On show are objects which have not been seen outside Iran, including Qur'ans, mosque lamps, paintings, carpets, calligraphy, porcelain and silks.

The British Museum  
Feb. 19-June 14  
☎ 44-20-7323-8299  
www.britishmuseum.org

### design

"Hussein Chalayan" shows 37 unusual outfits by Turkish designer Hussein Chalayan (born 1970).

Design Museum  
Until May 17  
☎ 44-20-7403-6933  
www.designmuseum.org

### art

"Van Dyck and Britain" features more than 130 exhibits, including 60 works produced by Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) during his stay in Britain as court painter for King Charles I.

Tate Britain  
Feb. 18-May 17  
☎ 44-2078-8788-88  
www.tate.org.uk

## Oslo

### art

"Edvard Munch: The Sick Child. The History of a Masterpiece" analyzes the painting "The Sick Child" (1885-86), one of the best known works by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863-1944).

The National Gallery  
Until May 3  
☎ 47-2198-2000  
www.nationalmuseum.no

## Paris

### art

"Holidays...What an Adventure!" includes posters, calendars, postcards, stamps, photographs, bathing suits, films, maps and an interactive virtual installation on the history of the French holiday industry.

Musée de La Poste  
Until March 7  
☎ 33-1 4279-2424  
www.museedelaposte.fr

## medals

"Honor and Glory: Treasures from the Spada Collection" presents a selection of 600 insignias and medals from the 15th to 21st-century decorative arts.

Musée National de la Légion d'Honneur  
Until March 15  
☎ 33-1-4062-8425  
www.musee-legiondhonneur.fr

## Rome

### art

"Futurism: Avanguardia-Avanguardie" includes iconic art by Georges Braque, Picasso, Umberto Boccioni, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and others.

Scuderie del Quirinale  
Feb. 20-May 24  
☎ 39-06-6962-71  
english.scuderiequirinale.it

## Stockholm

### design

"Hans Krondahl—Textile Work" exhibits a selection of colorful woven tapes, pattern designs for textiles and fashion work by pioneering Swedish textile designer and fabric artist Hans Krondahl (born 1929).

Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde  
Until April 19  
☎ 46-08-5458-3700  
www.waldemarsudde.se

## Vienna

### photography

"Photography and the Invisible" exhibits 200 photographs and illustrated books celebrating the use of photography in 19th-century science.

Albertina  
Until May 24  
☎ 43-1-5348-30  
www.albertina.at

### art

"Alphonse Mucha" exhibits 250 works, including paintings, posters, advertisements, and book illustrations by the Czech Art Nouveau painter (1860-1939).

Belvedere  
Until June 1  
☎ 43-01-7955-70  
www.belvedere.at

Source: ArtBase Global Arts News Service, WSJE research.