

The Perils of Media Pervasion, Paul Walker, and Care Bear Thongs

Dallas Schmitz

"In the beginning, the universe was created. This has made many people very upset and is generally regarded as a bad move" - Douglas Adams, A Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy.

I'm sitting on a couch at a random house party, digging my nails into my jeans and avoiding human contact. How did I get here? I've been busy this semester and promised the men-folk I'd hang out with them tonight, but I figured we'd hang out and watch Family Guy or something. Instead I'm listening to "Get Low" by Lil' Jon for the ninth time and watching everyone in a crowded living room dry hump each other. Covering the cracked white paint on the walls are various posters-Bob Marley (hung for the sole reason that he is smoking a joint in the picture), a "Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas" movie poster detailing the drugs consumed in the film, and, wittiest of all, a picture of a giant golden pot leaf. People are dancing all around the couch I'm brooding on, and a woman spilling out of a tank top too small for my newborn cousin steps on my foot.

"Sorry!" she says. The smell of cigarettes and orange vodka Jell-o shots causes my face to turn pale.

"Don't worry about it," I say, and she turns away, revealing a Care Bears thong pulled high out of her low rise jeans. That's a real product? Who are these people? I begin to work through the barricade of flesh to tell my friends I'm leaving. They're spread out all over the party, either in line for the keg or attempting to find a girl, but I'm stuck behind the Great Wall of Foreplay.

"Excuuuse me, I'd like to get by now," I say, doing a Garth impression. They respond with a mixture of dead glares, weird stares, and utter disdain. I guess they haven't seen "Wayne's World." I go to the door and leave Dance Party USA without saying good-bye to my friends and begin the four mile walk home.

"It's no good pretending that any relationship has a future if your record collections disagree violently or if your favorite films wouldn't even speak to each other if they met at a party" -Nick Hornby, High Fidelity.

"It's my birthday soon!" Anna says. Her eyes brighten with excitement. God those eyes are brown.

"Did you ask for ponies and vacuums?" I ask, and turn away from the dish machine. "I hear girls love those sorts of things."

"I decided not to re-enact your sweet sixteen party, Dallas." Ah, flirtations at work are fun. Then the bombshell: "So, I watched "The Fast and The Furious" the other night. That's, like, my favorite movie!"

"Your favorite movie?" I'm flabbergasted. "I can understand liking that movie-I don't, but I can understand it. It's your favorite?"

"Paul Walker is just such a good actor!" She says, and I see she means it.

Oh Lord. This is not the one for me.

"I was told there was nothing left. No reason, no conscience, no understanding; even the most rudimentary sense of life or death, good or evil, right or wrong" - Donald Pleasance, "Halloween."

I've hooked up with few females in my life, but I first kissed three different ones during various viewings of the movie "Halloween." I remember that fact better than I remember any of them. What I really remember is how creepy John Carpenter's score is. It actually adds a sense of fright to a film about an oddly proportioned man in a rubber mask who walks slowly. Now that I think about it, I'm fairly sure that two of the girls were blonde. I remember Kate the best out of the three, I think because we also once made out while Weird Al was playing in the background. At one point we both had to stop and laugh.. Another strange occurrence-I felt a breast while watching the first "Robocop." I remember making her move her head because it was blocking the TV screen, and I've always liked the way Robocop walks. She was a brunette.

"If I could do just one near perfect thing I'd be happy-they could write it on my grave or when they scatter my ashes" - Belle and Sebastian, "If She Wants Me."

Today is a good day, one in which the words come easily. As I finish the essay, I look at the half-empty Summit Oktoberfest beer to the left of me and wonder what the "Marzen Style" printed on the bottle means.

My expectations make it tough for me to write. I know rough drafts are supposed to be shit, but I want to be a prodigy, damn it,

one of the children from "The Royal Tenenbaums," not just another writer who needs mud boots to trudge through their initial work. The voice of Stephen Tyler and the smell of congealing Godfather's pizza help me keep my focus on the essay, and I scroll back up and down what I've already written with shaky, nervous hands. Do I want to write "there is a knock on the door," "I hear a knock on the door," or "someone knocks on the door?" I change the sentence back and forth several times and mutter curse words at the bright fluorescent screen. Finally I decide they are all terrible and re-write the entire paragraph.

The goal is to be a voice for the disenfranchised, someone who can tackle the slacker malaise that plagues my generation. But if I were an original voice, I'd probably have a life goal more unique than the cliché I just related. The hard part is accomplishing something more akin to Kevin Smith's "Clerks" than a Pauly Shore movie. Being a representative slacker means, by definition, that I don't do anything... Doesn't it?

"There's a time and a place for everything, and it's called 'college'" -Isaac Hayes, "South Park."

I open the door to my apartment and the smell of pot is so strong it's probably bringing out the green in my eyes. A haze of smoke covers the entire kitchen, clouding the Styrofoam takeout boxes and the cardboard cutout of Ernest (of "Ernest Goes to Camp" fame") my brother bought me for Christmas last year.

What in the big blue hell is going on? No matter how often I come home to this, it always takes me by surprise. I walk downstairs and see my roommates, Trent and Joe, playing "Madden" football in Joe's room. That is, playing "Madden" poorly. Funny how lowered reaction times effect videogame football. Joe's lanky frame is sprawled on the edge of his brown bedspread with his mouth open, and I can see a trickle of saliva beginning to worm its way down his bearded chin. Trent is sitting on a bag of "Nacho Cheesier!" Doritos. He has one hand holding his shaggy blonde hair out of his wide, blue eyes, and is using the other to tell his quarterback to hike the ball.

"How are you guys doing?" I ask, realizing the futility of reiterating that I don't like my possessions to smell like they were just shipped back from Amsterdam. Trent looks up from the TV, despite the fact that he had just dropped back to pass.

"Oh, you know, suuuuuuuuper fly," he says in a mock

gangster voice with a giggle underneath. He takes a hit off his bong. "I'd offer you some, but I know you won't do it. So.... Do you want some?"

Jesus Christ. I try to shower, but it's of no real use as marijuana permeates every inch of my apartment. I stay in there for ten minutes, watching the colors from our cheap shower curtain bleed onto the floor. The blue and red blend into a strange looking brown on the side of my foot, and I exit the shower feeling no cleaner than I entered it. When I return to the boys, they're watching my "Chappelle's Show" DVD and laughing so hard I can barely hear it.

"Hey, have you guys seen the skit that..." I begin.

"Sssshhhh...." Joe says. "He's going to say 'I'm Rick James, Bitch!' in a little bit." Yes, it's nice they like some of the same shows as me, but I wouldn't mind discussing them as well. I watch the show for another half an hour in silence, with only the braying of the Stoner Twins to keep me company, and then call it a night.

"I'm on a hovercraft to Paris with my former best friend... We're not alone, but no one speaks English, so we're free to look into each other's minds and see what we're thinking, like we always used to" -Harvey Danger, "Private Helicopter."

"Hello?" I pick my phone up on the fifth ring. I'm deep into my blue recliner, relaxing after the first day of classes, and I wait until "Reno 911" breaks to a commercial to answer.

"Hey, I have a question for you," Jon says. I like Jon. We're similar in that we both occasionally have days in which we talk more to the TV (or a computer, or a stubborn stain) than we do to other human beings. "I almost got hit by a bus on campus today and my only reaction was to think of that scene in "Meet Joe Black" where two cars nail Brad Pitt before he even hits the ground. It's that weird? I mean, this bus came really close."

"I don't think it's that weird. I have stuff like that all the time. I already know the song that will remind me of my grandpa's death, and he's alive and well," I say.

"What song?"

"'Jack the Lion,' by Harvey Danger. It's about a respected old man dying in a hospital."

"What if he gets hit by a car?" Jon asks.

"I dunno... 'Piece of Shit Car,' by Adam Sandler, I guess. But you know, this has been bothering me lately, too. It seems like I

never relate to anything unless there's a media equivalent. But life is so disparate from movies. What do you think? I want to know that I've felt something original, just once."

"You remind me of Zach Braff in 'Garden State' right now," Jon says.

Damn it.

"Life isn't about endings, is it? It's a series of moments" - Martin Freeman, "The Office (British Version)."

I'm sitting in the movie theater, watching "Big Fish" and smiling. Not because the movie is great, though it is. I'm smiling because I'm the only one in the entire theater. When there are other people in the room, I always sit in the back. But now I'm in the middle and look back at the gloriously empty rows behind me. I watch light from the screen flicker across the coarse fabric of the seats. As much as I sometimes bitch about the seeming omnipotence of media, here there are no misunderstandings, no awkward conversation, no differing opinions or references too subtle. It's only me with my thoughts and actors performing just for me. Someday I might create something this worthwhile, or at least have friends who experience things like I do, but today I let Ewan McGregor pine for love and understanding. Before the show it felt as if my brain were wrapped in wet blankets, and now my head is so light I'm not sure it's still attached. Today I'm just thankful to experience something thoughtful and expressive. Between shows I walk two stores down and eat Chinese. If the movie theatre is my vacation cruise, the King Buffet is the free bar. I'm eating by myself again, wearing headphones so no one tries to make small talk. I lean back, sated, so full it feels I should do the Al Bundy "unzip my pants and slouch" routine. I check the time and smile. I have time to let my Kung Pow digest a little. The next show starts in fifteen minutes.