

Can Men and Women Truly Be Friends?

By Brett

[This piece, written in the Winter of 2002 has been edited and provided for publication to Babble-ONline in anticipation of a response that I have directed at my very own idea. The response will follow this article.]

Harry Burns tells us that men and women can't truly be friends. For him, "it's the sex thing." What is it really? Is it really possible for men and women to truly be friends? I'm certainly no expert on the subject, but a little reflection reveals a lot. The topic might not be important to some people, and indeed, at first, the topic can't be tackled without defining what a "friend" is. I guess one can have friends on varying levels, in which case it would be ridiculous to say that men and women can't truly be friends. Sure, if a man and a woman share some common interests, they're bound to go to a hockey game together or exchange ideas about music. I have lots of friends like that, both male and female. I'm sure you do too. There's a difference between a friend like that and a friend who truly listens; a friend you truly care about; a friend you recognize as someone who makes a significant contribution to your life.

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Letter from the Editor

Here's to four more years of endless humor in the Whitehouse! Let's see if we get something as fun as the last guy's impeachment.

While some of you have recently struggled with the question of who to vote for, the *Babble-ON* writers have busied themselves with far more metaphysical questions. What are the dynamics of male-female relationships? What is the essence of urban vernacular? What should I cook for dinner tonight? It's this kind of steady inquiry that keeps us busy writing for hours and reading for minutes. But that's just the nature of entropy. A lot goes in, a little comes out.

In support of the controversial article by Mr. M see the artwork to the left for an exercise. Can you focus on the artwork or is the nudity too distracting? Was your initial reaction one of shock or of pleasant form and content? This piece's provocative nature has the potential to derail the viewer. Do friendships work the same way? Read on.

Dan

Koob's Korner

By Koob

In this edition of Koob's Korner, I will present what I think to be some of the most underrated movies of our generation. The following is a list of 25 movies from the past 25 years which were all largely ignored by the Academy Awards and were not particularly successful at the box office, yet they all are great films and are worth checking out. Of course, as with any list such as this, there is a personal bias. These films just happen to be ones that I have seen, are all American films and they definitely lean more towards certain genres of film and certain actors. I also practically skip right over the 1980's. I'm sure that there are tons of other overlooked films out there that I have not seen, but I think the films on this list are a good start for anyone looking to watch something a little different than the typical Hollywood film.

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Urban Vernacular of the Sub-Economic Quadrant of America:

Differences in Communication

By Amanda Hall, MSW

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It's All About the Food

A recipe by Matt Ellinwood

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Dictator of the Month:

Karimov

By Dan Fritz

Once upon a time, no one cared about Uzbekistan except the approximately 25 million people who lived there. Then came the “War on Terrorism” (which, tangentially, morphed into the “War on Terror”), and suddenly it and its head-of-state, Mr. Karimov, were the United States’ best friend, with strategic positioning against Afghanistan.

Like any of our favorite Dictators of the Month, Karimov has done and continues to do an excellent job of capturing and executing people he doesn’t like, while passing referendums to keep himself in power indefinitely. But that’s okay—he’s aiding in the fight against *Terror!*

Past DOMs

- Taylor
- Milosevic
- Saddam
- Mugabe
- Pinochet
- Ceausescu
- Pol Pot



The Criminally Comical Trials of
Mattlock

By Calderwood and Fritz



Tower of Babble-ON's
"Before-and-After" Corner

By Susan Fritz

Chicken Shack-ing Up on the Roof

Oz News

News from the Land Down Under

Sally Box reporting

Delta Goodrem (pop singer, very 15 year old girl) is devastated her boyfriend Mark Philippoussis (tennis player) dumped her for Paris Hilton.

Yes, I’m Writing This at Work

By Grant Calderwood

“Like The Ram Getting Ready To Jam The Lamb,” I hover over my keyboard. Time has passed quickly the last four years, and if you equate it to college we have almost completed another entire turn. For all of you lawyers, your time has been spent in school, but for those of us who have stayed in the work force for one reason or another, I ask myself on occasion and I’m certain some of you do to, has the last four years been as fruitful as the previous four? I now work with data, and I love it. Every day I come in and there is a different special project, some unanswerable question of basically, where did this money go? I use all the tools at my disposal, conveniently located on my laptop and two feet away on my phone to pull together information that was previously unheard of at this firm. Referring to the quote, I feel good, self actualized good when the queries are written and running. And if the spirit takes me, I can go grab a sandwich out of the conference room, sit down in my really really expensive chair, turn my back to the screen and stare out at the deer and turkey walking through the woods just beyond the floor to ceiling windows. It is not as glamorous as, say, rubbing makeup on Gisele’s butt (that is another story), but it makes me smile once in a while, kick over my chair and propagate some work-inappropriate jokes. As I’m sitting here, and yes I am writing this at work, one thing really bothers me: I’m comfortable. Of course you can see the conclusion, why am I comfortable, when was I ever comfortable in college, boo hoo hoo my job is not fulfilling, but really, if this were an email you would have stopped reading by now. And all of that is just to say that I will have a much better day, by taking the time to put together some silly rhyme that will make you groan and probably moan but will give me a chance to self actualize and over dramatize. Thank you Babble-ON. ☒

Urban Vernacular of the Sub-Economic Quadrant of America:

Differences in Communication
By Amanda Hall, MSW

This writer is on the front lines of a South Bronx Middle School for children with emotional and behavioral problems. She is also very stupid.

As I dive (or am I falling?) deeper into the culture of the young, urban teenager, I realize that I am no longer an outsider completely. Oh, sure. I am a female. I am white*. The young people with whom I work have surmounted my age to be somewhere in the fifties (I am 27). And, yet, I find myself enveloped by this culture in which I work. Some may say this is an obvious progression of things. I mean, are not we all influenced by our daily surroundings? Do we not inject colloquialisms into our vocabulary? Still, I did not expect this to happen to me. Alas, it has.

Let me give you an example of what I mean: I have learned over time that tough kids from the “street” do not enjoy a hug in the morning (a lesson I learned the hard way). They respond more to tough talk and threats. To my kids, telling them that you are going to punch them in the face is a sign of caring. It’s hard to believe, but it’s true. One child in particular was eating breakfast one morning, and I asked how his meal was in a sweet voice. In no uncertain terms, he told me to, “Fuck off, Miss.” (At least he was polite.) Later in the day, I found him running the halls. He had frustrated me that day, and I just let loose. When he said hello, I replied swiftly, “I am gonna kick your ass.” He smiled, put his arm around me, and said, “I like Miss Amanda. She’s good people.” I know that this was not a ploy to get out of trouble as he has cursed at me previously in the hallway.

I tested my new theory in a couple of other situations with great success. Putting a child in a pseudo chokehold to lead him to the lunchroom was easier than holding his hand (as he laughed instead of yanked away from me). Telling a kid to sit his ass in a chair was responded to more effectively and with more reverence than to politely request that the child be seated. “I am going to call your mother,” has been replaced by, “don’t make me take you outside and beat the shit out of you.”

For those of you young readers in horror right now, I promise you that this rough communication is a sign of deference to the children’s way of showing care and concern. The kids never take it seriously, and they find it amusing and endearing. I now have a young kid who comes up to me every day and yells, “I’m gonna beat your ass!” before giving me a big smile and a bear hug. It’s a non-threatening way of connecting with someone that grew up in a “kill or be killed” world. THERE’S NO CRYING IN BASEBALL!!

The only drawback is that, as I stated before, it has begun to permeate my everyday living. I do not think it was terribly effective when I went to the deli counter and said, “If you don’t slice this meat thin, I gonna knock your teeth in!” My grandmother called me aghast when she received my note stating, “Happy Birthday, You Old Bitch! I Miss Your Ugly Face!” The DMV did not appreciate my reply to their request for an eye test: “I see just fine, Nigga! These eyes be seeing your nappy hair 20/20, my son!”

**I use the term “white” because ultra liberal types find the formerly PC “Caucasian” to be a misnomer, since we are not all from the Caucasus mountain area. PS liberals are sissies.*

For those of you who want to stay abreast, here are some new words for you:

Mooskie (n): A girl you sleep with but don’t want any commitments from. “My mooskie’s comin’ by, and we gonna kick it, yo!”

Mohmastic (n): A girl you are dating; a steady. “I’m catching a flick with my mohmastic!”

Soft (adj): Someone who “pussies” out of fighting. “Pop off, son. You soft! You can’t never take me!”

Bo (Adj): Shortened version of bogus. Lame. “I don’t want to take this test. It’s bo, yo!” ☒

Halo: Combat Evolved
OR Combat For Those Without
Another Viable Option
Either way, Halo is something special
By James Schneider

Some of you know that Halo 2 – H2 – is now out in stores. November 9 was etched on the calendars of at least the four million purchasers of the original game. With many perfect reviews from Gaming Web Sites and Magazines, more will get in on the action than ever before.

But, what started the craze?

The original Halo was released as the flagship title when the Xbox platform was unveiled a couple years ago. It featured a few highly repetitive maps and many of the standard FPS (first person shooter) weapons, like pistols, assault rifles, pistols and rocket launchers. For gamers sleeping under a rock, or hiding like the Unibomber, superficially little has changed since Wolfenstein 3-D or Doom.

Aliens, called Elites, Jackals, Grunts and Hunters are among the enemies you face. Okay, okay, so they aren’t Satan Spawn bellowing up on Mars’ surface from Hell. And they aren’t Nazis. But it’s not like we haven’t faced aliens before. More pertinently, all the goofy names make me feel like I am burrowing my lurker.

So, what makes Halo, the original, an exceptional game, even in the wake of H2 and Doom 3? (As I write Doom 3, I think of a movie where they are playing Quake 43.) Gotta be the shields. Gotta be the multiplayer play. Gotta be that anyone stupid enough to buy an Xbox is going to be limited.

Xbox is not a platform that is kind to game developers. In addition to the coding that might go into making the title playable on a PC, or previously working technology, there are many lines of additional code to learn. Some estimates say it took 18 months of learning the Xbox code before a single line of additional code could be written. All this means there is a lag in gaming between when a title starts being developed and when it hits stores.

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...Koob's Korner, page 1...

1. The Warriors (1979) – d. Walter Hill – A surrealistic look at gangs in NYC and in particular, the title gang trying to get home to Coney Island after being wrongly accused of a murder. Great appearances by such gangs as the Baseball Furies (guys who where baseball uniforms and fight with bats) and of course, the Gramercy Riffs, perhaps the baddest film gang of all time. “Can You Dig It?!”
2. The Wanderers (1979) – d. Philip Kaufman – Another great gang movie about NYC, but this one takes place in the early ‘60’s and is more of a coming of age story as well. Great gangs such as The Baldies and The Wongs. The title gang is a group of Italian friends who are just trying to survive in the rapidly changing times. Great soundtrack featuring Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons and of course “Wanderer” by Dion.
3. The Thin Blue Line (1988) – d. Errol Morris – This documentary by Academy Award winning director Errol Morris blew me away when I saw it and although I only saw it once, it definitely left a lasting impression on me. The film reenacts the murder of a Dallas police officer and through interviews and investigation of the evidence, begins to present a case that perhaps the wrong man is sitting on death row for this murder. Unfortunately, it is only available on VHS as of now.
4. Drugstore Cowboy (1989) – d. Gus Van Sant – Matt Dillon plays Bob, the very superstitious leader of a small band of drug addicted friends who rob drugstores in order to support their habits. The film follows them through their ups and downs as they have run-ins with the law and talk about “going clean”. Truly a great look at a fascinating subculture. Look for a very young Heather Graham in one of her first film roles. “No hats on the bed!”
5. Falling Down (1993) – d. Joel Schumacher – Michael Douglas plays a disgruntled former defense industry engineer who snaps while sitting in a traffic jam and proceeds to go on a rampage throughout LA doing some things that we all wish we could do sometimes. Some great, darkly humorous scenes such as when he “marks down” the prices in a Korean grocery store and when he gets denied breakfast in a fast food restaurant. Good performance by Robert Duvall as the LA cop working his last day before retirement who begins to track the case.
6. A Bronx Tale (1993) – d. Robert DeNiro – DeNiro’s directorial debut has him directing himself in a supporting role as a hard-working bus driver who is worried because his son starts hanging around with the local mob boss. We follow his son Calogero, or “C”, from his time as a young boy who witnesses a murder to his teenage years where he has to make some tough decisions about the type of life he is going to lead.
7. Carlito’s Way (1993) – d. Brian DePalma – Al Pacino plays Carlito Brigante, a Puerto Rican ex-con who is trying to escape his old lifestyle and go legit, but his past associates, including his lawyer/best friend played brilliantly by Sean Penn, keep dragging him back down into situations that spiral completely out of control.
8. What’s Eating Gilbert Grape? (1993) – d. Lasse Hallstrom – Johnny Depp plays the title character, a small town teen with dreams of escaping his small town life, but who has to put his own ambitions on the back burner in order to take care of his mentally challenged brother (played to perfection by Leo DiCaprio) and his enormously obese mother. Gilbert sees his chance at escape in the form of Becky (Juliette Lewis), a young girl whose trailer breaks down in Gilbert’s town
9. Hoop Dreams (1994) – d. Steve James – Absolutely riveting documentary about two up and coming high school basketball players growing up in the projects of Chicago and the different paths that they take in order to reach the next level and play basketball in college.
10. Natural Born Killers (1994) – d. Oliver Stone – This very misunderstood film by Oliver Stone received absolutely zero Academy Award nominations. A brilliant social commentary about our media saturated culture and its love of violence and scandal. Stone takes us on a fast-paced roller coaster ride of a movie as we follow the exploits of Mickey and Mallory Knox and the media frenzy that they create.
11. Crumb (1994) – d. Terry Zwigoff – A cinematic portrait of the controversial comic book artist R. Crumb, who drew Keep On Truckin’, Fritz the Cat, and played a major pioneering role in the genesis of underground comix. We gain some insight into the strange mind of a man who many consider to be a genius through interviews with his very bizarre family, his wife and his ex-girlfriends.
12. Heat (1995) – d. Michael Mann – How can a movie featuring both Al Pacino and Robert DeNiro be underrated? Ladies and gentlemen, I give you “Heat”. An absolutely epic crime saga about two men –one a cop and one a criminal – who are not so different from one another as they might think. Both are completely obsessed with their respective professions and this obsession leads to troubles for both of them. Also some very intriguing subplots with a great supporting cast that includes Val Kilmer, Ashley Judd and John Voight. *See the rest next issue....* ☒

...Halo, from the previous page...

So, everyone of the millions of people who bought an Xbox probably feels like their 150-200 dollar purchase should go somewhere. So, they relentlessly obsess about this game. They have their friends over for LAN parties and get them hooked. Soon, everyone thinks this game is great, and everyone is purchasing an Xbox just so they can play Halo themselves. I blame and celebrate Microsoft’s pervasiveness for these facts.

Now that I’ve psychoanalyzed what makes this game *the game*, let me delve a little further into what makes the game special.

Strategy. Sure, many games have elements of strategy but the difference between playing Halo like you have unlimited lives and playing to maximize your ratio of kills to lives, well that’s special. If you can pick out certain places on a map to defend, then you are thinking more like a military strategist – ordering troops to guard different posts – than you are mindlessly going trigger-happy in and out of the gouge.

Couch Feeling. Nothing says Halo more than sitting next to three other guys and gir--- haha, guys --- and playing for hours upon hours. Shouting every time you die and celebrating every time you “pwn” someone else. I guess you can get a similar sensation sitting next to each other playing Starcraft on computers in the Stouffer lab, but, you know, it’s not quite the same.

Bragging Rights. Most people don’t understand the kind of dedication that goes into this game. For those who do, there is no greater satisfaction than showing them that they actually aren’t all that good at it. Repeat, NO GREATER SATISFACTION than demoralizing them. Okay, one greater one. Or two. Whatever.

So, why am I here? I am also one of the console-converted. I used to play the PC version of Unreal Tournament religiously. Actually far more frequently than religion would dictate. I’m nasty with a mouse! And I would be the last person to want to set up a LAN party between Zergs and Humans. (Did I get that right?) So I guess it’s a function of the gads of free time afforded to an anthropology major. And, like college activities which involve excessive binge drinking, it is acceptable while you’re doing it with similar sick individuals. Count me in for both!

Halo is not the most original first-person shooter ever, but, in popularity (4 million titles sold) and in replayability (I have logged at least 600 hours on the original game in six months), it may be one of the most enduring games. That’s not even mentioning the fact that people were still fanatically playing Halo three full years after it launched. Wow.

Halo2 is prettier than any game I’ve ever seen, but you got to be able to do something for me, besides look good, so I’m not sold on you yet. Halo is like a warm pair of your own underwear, fresh out of the dryer. Halo2 is like a pair of toite silk boxers that you might wear for a mid-afternoon romp. Or, um, any time of the day. So, for now it’s boldly stepping into someone else’s game, and, Halo: Combat Evolved, thanks for the inspiration, the fun and the example that you have set for future games. Killtacular! ☒

Audible Feast

A poem by Dan Fritz

I love the clink of a quarter falling into a payphone. The quarter falls with plinko tinks and lands in a pile of cold, hard cash. It's a delicious sound, like the soft crunch of a boot on gravel or the background crinkle of a record playing in a dimly lit room.

These sounds are so savory you want to lick your lips and take a bite.

It's like the quiet sound of burning tobacco shreds of an inhaled cigarette nestled between two sumptuous lips.

It's like the popple and crack of dry wood burning on a deep fall night.

It's like the babble of water slipping over cobbles in a forest stream.

It's like wind in the tree leaves, unguntly whooshing.

It's like fingers slapping the strings of an acoustic guitar.

Your ears beg for more.

It's like the sound of rocks tumbling in an earthquake, as it builds and builds and rumbles.

It's like the thunderous peel of a lightning strike!

It's like a rain cloud

that finally bursts

and showers

fat raindrops

upon

the roofs,

the torrents come down so forcefully.

It's like a summer garden hose that lazily drips in a puddle after being hung up.

Then there is the calming silence that beckons you to sleep.

Sleep a deep sleep. Fall away into peacefulness.

And rest.

And linger. ☒

... Can Men and Women Truly be Friends, page 1...

Because it would be counterproductive at this point for me to try and actually organize my thoughts, let's just jump into dating. Personally, I believe that if people start dating someone with the belief that they may actually find a true friend, they'll probably wind up disappointed. The mechanics of a date are too complicated and I feel that they impede any attempt at true friendship. The less you know of the person, the more this effect is compounded. Once the "date" label has been slapped on an encounter, the pretense of sex is too great to overcome. In that situation, you can't truly be yourself. You might think you are, but in actuality, you are only being yourself within a set of parameters. How many times have you felt constrained by ideas you've heard from friends or read in books about what you should and should not say on a date? You know, most of the suggestions in those books or magazines work. Unfortunately, you aren't truly being you. Because you've been told countless times never to talk about an ex fling, your audience, who has invariably read the same dumb articles you have, will be conditioned to find it inappropriate if you do. Well, that's exactly why those books and magazines work. How the hell do you break out of it then?

It's impossible to have a true listening experience during a date, because you always have your best hat on. By concentrating so intently on doing the right thing, it's impossible to make any sort of important connection with the other person. The date conversation turns into a chess match. You're so busy contemplating what you want to say next or how to significantly counter your counterpart's previous move, that it's impossible to truly pay attention to what the other person really says, who they really are. Inevitably the dinner table becomes the chessboard, your words the pieces, the conversation is a series of moves that ultimately is undermined by the pretense of mating, the game's ultimate objective.

Unfortunately, simply being aware of the problem doesn't provide an easy solution. You could simply suggest that a person should be true to themselves, concentrate on the other person, and open up. However, once the date label has stung the encounter, this becomes impossible. If you were to try to engage in a truly meaningful conversation, it would still come off as pushed. You'd be forcing the issue, because the true friend connection takes two. On one hand, you are aware of the aforementioned problem with dating.

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It's All About the Food

*A recipe
by Matt Ellinwood*

Cauliflower is in season, and it can be delicious with roasted chicken or pork. For this recipe, you will need cauliflower, garlic, chili pepper flakes, extra-virgin olive oil, Italian parsley, capers, and champagne wine vinegar.

Figuring about one head of cauliflower per person, and about 1 head of garlic per 3 heads of cauliflower, trim the cauliflower just below the base of the florets, and finely chop the garlic. Finely chop the parsley and set aside. Very coarsely chop the capers and set aside.

Add the garlic to a small sauté pan and cover generously in olive oil. Season with salt and put on low heat. When the oil is hot and the garlic has "bloomed," or is hot but has not yet begun to brown, add the chili flakes. Be careful to anticipate how spicy this will make the marinade, and do not overdo it on the chili flakes. Stir the flakes until saturated in the oil and then add the capers. Allow the capers to fry gently in the oil for just a few minutes, and then take off of the heat and add the vinegar. Stir the mixture. You will want to use enough oil and vinegar to match the amount of cauliflower you are cooking, and also plan on more oil than vinegar.

As you bring the garlic up to temperature, you will want to cook the cauliflower florets in a large pot of boiling water, seasoned salty like the ocean. Cook the cauliflower until done but still firm and move to a pan. Plan to finish blanching the cauliflower as the garlic and oil mixture is ready for the vinegar.

Toss the hot cauliflower with the warm marinade and the parsley, and season with salt to taste. Serve hot.

☒

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Your channel is open, and you are ready to really get to know someone. Sadly the other person still remains shackled in these notions of being the “super me.” Listen as best as you want, but you probably aren’t really getting pure transmissions from the other person. You could possibly have what appears to be a meaningful interaction, but you’ll never really know. You can’t tell whether that person had their “dating” mask on. Even under the unique circumstance where two people have abandoned conventions and actually met at a point spiritually, the urge to deny the encounter’s authenticity, because of the baggage and expectations that accompany the idea of “date,” would crush the beauty of any possible foundation for a true friendship.

All of this is not to say that you can’t have dated someone and never be some sort of friend. But haven’t you noticed, you usually become much better friends with that particular person once you’ve removed them from your dating sphere? Haha, yeah I know. I wouldn’t have said it, if it weren’t true. Once again we arrive at the question of what a friend truly is. To wade through this muck any further without some semblance of a definition for this friend idea would be pointless. At face value, the question of whether men and women can truly be friends is easily answered with a “yes.” We hang out. We interact. All of this is wonderful shit, it really is, but I hang out with scores of people. Narrowing it down even further, I can say there is a select group of individuals with whom I spend the majority of my time. These are some great people, but examining even more closely, I’d say my question pertains to a friendship even more exclusive than the one that defines your interaction with your normal party group. To clarify, there is a level of friendship that only a select few people can ever attain. It’s the friend who stays up with you until 5 am, on a high roof or in the low grass under an empty sky, talking about just things and truly listening. It’s the friend who lights up a cigarette when they don’t smoke; the friend who brings two bottles of cold beer; the friend who, like you, has a story and can remember exactly where they were when you hear that certain song on the radio. Time spent with these people make you realize what it means to truly be alive.

It is worth mentioning that due to the allure of these types of encounters, people can easily fall victim to fabrication. Sad as it sounds, I’m sure that there are people who insist that they’ve had meaningful conversations with other people, but still, even though the mood and setting were right, they never ever broke the bounds of their identity trap. It’s almost as if they’ve stayed up late talking to someone to satisfy the desire to do so for the sake of having done it. Yet I want to strongly differentiate between an encounter like this that consists of two people simply using each other and the one that I described above which almost doesn’t need words to be as special as it is. The true friendship moment can’t be mistaken for a cathartic lust/whine fest where the two people pose as nothing more than sounding boards. They could just as easily be talking to teddy bears, but because teddy bears don’t offer the social reassurance that people can, they use each other to listen, but they’re not really listening. They’re just taking turns blowing off desires, disappointments, and whims. I’ve known guys who view that as an endurance race and stick it out so they can eventually stick something else. It’s not a real friendship; it’s still a game. Even with no sex being a forgone conclusion, some will remain in these conversations only to fortify a positive impression in the other person. Some of these people subconsciously could care less about a genuine friendship, and unknowingly just talk tactics in order to assure them points with that particular person or that person’s friends. Because human life has devised so many hoops, chutes, hurdles and titles, people focus intently on satisfying the ideas and projections of external forces. Enslaved by constructs, it’s impossible for many of these people to not view other people as a functional means to their end. Blame the media too. It glorifies the types of genuine encounters that are so hard to find and in doing so, causes people to try so damn hard to replicate them. These people want that scene in their life movie too. Unfortunately for them, this type of conversation requires you to turn off the camera.

Now that you have a better understanding of what I mean by “friend,” it makes more sense to proceed. First, it’s hard to get there, because of the sex thing, and in this case, equal blame is shared among the sexes. Remember that time when you had fun talking with someone of the opposite sex, and all of a sudden they got a hot interest in someone else, and you fell off the face of the planet. You also probably remember doing that to someone else too. It happens. It’s natural to want to talk and get to know people that we think we can be in relationships with and then sort of disregard them or pay less attention to them when our eyes are narrowly focused on dating someone else. This seriously hinders man/woman friendships. It’s just the way it is. So what happens when you get lucky enough to make a breakthrough with that man or woman? The potential exists for a beautiful friendship. However it can vanish as quickly as it appeared. This doesn’t seem to happen (or happen as frequently) with a man to a man or a woman to a woman. Indeed it truly is the sex thing. Being that these types of true friendships are few and far between, it’s just natural that you want to get as close as possible with the person. Even amongst friends and crowds, the human experience can be pretty lonely, and that fact stresses the importance of having friends that you can really talk to. Once you’ve had a connection on a great friendship level with another person of the opposite sex, why would you want to settle for a romantic relationship that does not include that sort of intense interpersonal chemistry?

While things seem grim, the small possibility of having a great friendship with someone of the opposite sex makes this all worth writing about. Can you help yourself? Well, I’ve noticed some trends. People can cheat the sex thing. Some clever folks will try and reach these levels with people who are already married or taken. Knowing beforehand that the person is unattainable makes your encounter less like a game and more real. There’s no guard to put up or lines to spit out, because there’s no possibility of sex in the long run. Without a goal to win, there is no game. It’s refreshing to have conversations that don’t feel like a game. Finally, what do you do if you’ve developed a great friendship with someone else, want to take it somewhere else, but that other person doesn’t want to? It seems inevitable, and many late night conversations run into these crossroads. If your affection or desire is not reciprocated, it’s better to back up, breathe in and get some perspective. Realize that cool friends like that don’t appear so often in your life. Unfortunately, the creeping feeling of disappointment and failure will never dissolve, permanently marring the relationship and its memory. *(see next article)*

Rambling Reflections on a Naïve and Romantic Answer to an Absurd Question: A followup to the thinkpiece on whether men and women can truly be friends.

By Brett

Only because I was recently confronted with the question of whether men and women can truly be friends, do I return to tackle a topic that I carelessly explored two years ago.

The problem becomes apparent in my initial paragraph, where I already admit that a satisfactory definition of friend is unattainable. I tried to define friend, but the definition was inadequate – because it is elusive, impossible. I seem to differentiate between certain “real” and certain “fake” situations, and obviously I have been indulging in too many Cameron Crowe flicks.

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Certain experiences of disillusionment made me suffer at the time from a longing for real “conversation,” but part of the longing survived for its own sake, because it could never be fulfilled and therefore constantly pressed on.

I can pull out certain threads and quotes from emails/manuscripts that I used to write which showed the intense desire to find a spiritual channel of communication. I insisted upon this “genuine human communication;” a language that would move beyond words and inspire feelings – almost telepathic. It would make two people into one entity by hurdling the whole notion of subjectivity. Two people would literally “feel” the same thing – a mystical yet visceral connection. This metaphysical wet dream is precisely something that can only occur when one is sleeping, but even there it is distorted. Indeed, the location of this “friendship” is simultaneously nowhere and infinity.

Consider two passages stemming from a period when I bought into the myth that two people could ever totally understand each other:

“I want to have a meaningful relationship on the innermost human level with other human beings and realize what it means to truly be alive.” (Thinkpiece from August 2001)

“I realize that my focus on my inner self is highly abstract.. and it is very difficult to know anyone's inside, since all we see are their actions, and that's EXACTLY where I derive my ideal of the "genuine human communication" from.. a genuine dialogue.. the chance to understand two inner selves.. that's what I'm looking for.. I think it's possible...” (Email to friend October 2001)

So, back to the original idea – can men and women truly be friends? The answer is a resounding no, but not because it has anything to do with sex. The type of friendship that I attempted to outline simply does not exist. It chases the extraordinarily romantic idea that “love” or some sort of feeling could be expressed, and as a result, allow two people to transcend their “selves.” After neuroscience has decrypted humans to their basic code, then maybe technology could overcome what language and thick skin currently prevents. Sadly, it is impossible to ever know anyone else, and any passionate longing for such a situation only makes someone more aware of how utterly impossible it is. It's better to unburden oneself of such 20-something nascent nausea and reconcile with the boundaries of humanity, even if such a mindset makes the concept of “true love” one of its concessions.

Such solipsistic mental masturbation can be viewed as self indulgent and perhaps negative. To say that everyone should strive to remain an island would be a misrepresentation of my goal. Again, I quote my good friend in saying that “in fellowship we will do great things.” Friendship is important, but the type of friendship that I seemed to desire cannot be had with anyone, let alone with people of the opposite sex. And with those peculiar interactions, yes, sex installs yet another barrier, but I won't busy myself with that argument at this time. While initially my program sounds depressing and pessimistic, it can be quite liberating. If people realized that true love and “genuine human” relationships/connections are mere fabrications, they wouldn't trouble their own relationships with silly questions and doubts about whether their own bond has some sort of preordained, supernatural destiny. People would not be investigating their own relationships for a component that can never exist. No, in fact people become more human when they accept the limits of humanity. Precisely the impossibility of answering this question on the basis that the question itself can never be defined should dissolve its relevance in the greater scheme of male/female interactions. In other words – “Can men and women truly be friends?” The answer is – “Who the fuck cares?” ☒

Mega Trivia
From the Hallowed Halls of Academia
By Garrett Calderwood

- **The** VW Toureg was named after a small, pre-industrial farming tribe in west central Africa, and the name is not pronounced correctly.
- Dog bites rank second behind sexually transmitted diseases as the most costly health problem in the United States.
- One-fourth of the people who lose their sense of smell also lose their desire for sexual relations.
- The brand name Nike is derived from the Greek word for victory.

☒

Letter to the Editor

In response to: "Can Men and Women Truly be Friends," Volume 2, Issue 4

By Ryan Meyer

The male-female "friendship" in its truest form DOES NOT exist. It is the figment of every naïve female's imagination.

No male in his right mind actively seeks to cultivate a relationship with a female without the express purpose of getting in her pants. Period.

I could just stop there and that would be well enough said, but I will elaborate for the sake of discussion:

In the male mind, there is no such thing as let's get together and just hang out. Perhaps in a group setting, mimicking more of the "herd" approach, males and females interact in a "friendly," social setting. However, this interaction in and of itself is not the goal for the male. The male is constantly evaluating his prospects, always surveying the group for a potential hook-up, which may come in the form of any of the following: the drunk-dial, the "I'm-here-for-you-when-you-break-up-with-your-current-boyfriend-and-need-a-shoulder-to-cry-on" make-out, the post-breakup hookup, the "study buddies" who bump uglies (for those of you in the college crowd), etc, etc. The point is, ladies, that no male associates with you simply for friendship. You may think it starts out that way, and maybe things do indeed develop slowly, but somewhere in the back of your guy "friend's" mind he has already pictured bedding you down. Otherwise he would not have even spoken to you in the first place. It is simply a means to an end, and that is why I argue that the male-female friendship in its truest form does not exist. Males have other males who are friends, and maybe girls you think that you have "just a friend." But consider yourself warned: Your "friend" will eventually try and hookup with you OR one of your other female friends. That is the other reason males associate in a "friendly" fashion with females; they use this "friendship" to hookup with other females. Girls, take a quick mental inventory of the males you call "friends".....see you know I am right.

This is not to say that the hookup is inevitable. Lord knows the females have plenty of power to veto the hookup, and can quickly crush their "friend's" ultimate goal. I certainly did not mean to offend any of our devoted female readers by the above paragraphs, rather I set out to make them more aware of the situation, and give them just a peak into the fabulous, one-track mind of the male.

In the words of the illustrious Diabolical Biz Markie, a man so ahead of his time..."Then when I asked, 'Do ya have a man,' she tried to pretend; She said, 'No I don't, I only have a friend....'" Ahh the truth behind those simple words.

☒

Hot Recipe

Contributed by Grant Calderwood

Shrimp Fra Diavolo with Linguine

- 1 pound medium-large shrimp (31 to 34 per pound), peeled and divined, if desired
- 1 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes (to taste)
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ tablespoons salt
- ½ cup cognac or brandy
- 4 tablespoons minced or pressed (through a garlic press) garlic (about 12 medium, 8 large, or 5 extra-large cloves)
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 cup medium-dry white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc
- ½ cup minced fresh parsley leaves
- 1 pound linguine or spaghetti

1. Bring 4 quarts water to a rolling boil in a large pot
2. While the water is heading, heat a heavy bottomed 12 inch skillet over high heat until the pan is very hot. Meanwhile, toss the shrimp, .5 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes, 2 tablespoons oil, and 3/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Add the shrimp to the skillet and quickly spread in a single layer. Cook without stirring until the bottoms of shrimp turn spotty brown, 30 to 45 seconds. Off the heat, stir to turn the shrimp, then add the cognac. Let stand off the heat until the cognac warms slightly, about 5 seconds, and return the pan to high heat. Wave a lit match over the skillet until the cognac ignites. Shake the skillet until the flames subside, then transfer the shrimp to a medium bowl and set aside.
3. Off the heat, cool the now- empty skillet for 2 minutes. Return the skillet to a burner and reduce the heat to low. Add 3 tablespoons oil and 3 tablespoons garlic. Cook, stirring constantly, until the garlic foams and is sticky and straw colored, 7 to 10 minutes. Add the remaining .5 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes, ¾ teaspoon salt, sugar, tomatoes and wine. Increase the heat to medium-high and simmer until thickened and fragrant, about 8 minutes
4. Stir in the reserved shrimp and accumulated juices, remaining 1 tablespoon, garlic, and parsley and simmer until the shrimp are heated through about 1 minute longer. Off the heat, stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon oil.
5. While the sauce simmers, add the linguine or spaghetti and remaining 1 tablespoon salt to the boiling water. Stir to separate the pasta and cook until al dente. Reserve 1/3 cup pasta cooking water and drain the pasta. Return the drained pasta to the now-empty pot, add about ½ cup sauce (without shrimp) and 2 to 3 table spoons reserved pasta cooking water, and toss to coat. Divide the pasta among warmed individual bowls, top with a portion of the sauce and shrimp, and serve immediately. ☒

Rave Review

"*Babble-ON* is quite simply put, the best rambling uncensored newsletter of all time. I applaud the effort and patience it takes to create such a contemporary masterpiece. Run! don't walk to newsletter.fritzcomics.com to read the latest issue and while there dare not deny your senses the enthrallment created by perusing the delicious collection of past issues."

-Newsletter Fan

