

Getting the skinny on digital cameras

“THEY SAY THE CAMERAS ADD TEN POUNDS, BUT HP digital cameras can help reverse that effect. The slimming feature ... is a subtle effect that can instantly trim off pounds from the subjects in your photos!” So says the Hewlett-Packard website. The slimming feature is an on-camera tool that slims your subject without noticeably distorting the proportions of the photograph, meaning, as HP puts it, “anyone can appear more slender—instantly.”

I’m not sure which part of this makes me the most upset. Is it that once again a company has taken advantage of our society’s insecurities in order to further their economic growth? Is it the fact that HP is defiling my beloved medium of photography? Or do I just feel sorry for the people who’ve spent hundreds of hours developing this trite and insulting piece of technology?

Perhaps I shouldn’t be so shocked—using body image to sell a product is nothing new. If anything, camera manufacturers were just a step behind, though it seems they’ve now caught up. I’m curious as to whether there really is a demand for such a product and wonder when the competition will release the first cameras with under-eye bag removers, belly-roll hidiers, skin cleaners and wrinkle smoothers. Perhaps they’re just cashing in on aging baby boomers hoping to look as good as they used to; maybe they’re going for the younger, more technologically savvy crowd, with their wavering self esteem and never-ending hope of looking like Twiggy.

No matter who it’s intended for, technology like this calls into question the purpose of photography altogether. Newspaper photography in particular is meant to document the occurrence of events as they happen in order to communicate them accurately to the public.

Photography for the general public serves the same purpose. You may not consider the pictures you take with your point-and-shoot camera as a document or a story, but they are a testament to events that occurred nonetheless. Altering your pictures on your camera (or after the fact) alters their version of reality—and the past is defined only by our record of it. But what the hell, we love to look back and think we were ten pounds thinner than we actually were, and we’ll graciously accept the compliments on our appearance that we’ll get over a casual photo-browsing session with friends and relatives.

Yet it still amazes me that we would be willing to allow our aesthetic values to be determined by the people who can profit from it the most. It’s not the aesthetics of the photograph that matter so much as our own self-perception. We’re buying into the idea that we require technology in order to look good enough to be seen by ourselves and others. We know we’re being manipulated and in a way, we like it.

However, it must be kept in mind that eating disorders are becoming more and more prevalent in younger and younger children. According to recent research done by Capital Health, one in five preteens is at risk of an eating disorder. Perhaps this latest get-thin-quick method isn’t directly hazardous to your health—who knows, maybe it will soon become a standard feature on all cameras. But we can only hope that it’s quickly discarded.

KRYSTINA SULATYCKI
Photo Editor

Newspapers do matter!

KUDOS TO EDMONTON JOURNAL INVESTIGATIVE journalists Charles Rusnell and Karen Kleiss for scooping yet another huge story in our city—the shameful sanitary state of Edmonton’s restaurants, as well as Capital Health’s equally shameful negligence in doing anything about it.

In an age of increasing media concentration and decreasing journalistic standards, it’s nice to see that there are still a few writers out there who care enough to ask the hard questions, do a little research and get to the bottom of something that the public has every right to know about.

Now if you’ll excuse me, my undercooked RATT-burger with translucent tomato awaits.

ADAM GAUMONT
Opinion Editor

WE HAVE TO BRING DARK ROASTED FREEDOM TO THESE COLOMBIAN SWINE!



IN LIGHT OF RISING TIM HORTONS PRICES, CANADIANS GET ON BOARD WITH THE WAR ON TERROR

CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Veep clarifies SU’s tuition position

Re: “SU interest in student loan changes,” 28 September.

I thought I’d take the opportunity to clarify my position from the aforementioned article. Given the quotes that were chosen, readers may have been left with the impression that the worsening deficiencies of the student loan system are being driven by increases in all the other costs besides tuition.

While escalating costs of living are a serious problem, and while the loan system has not at all kept pace with inflation in living costs, the major pressure on the loan system for the last 15 years has been rising tuition, which has driven up debt loads and prevented aid from being allocated to assist students in dealing with rising living costs.

The changes we are proposing to the student finance system would ideally compliment a significant tuition rollback. Once tuition is addressed and is affordable for all students, Alberta can better distribute student aid by targeting the overhead costs of an education, which remain a significant barrier for many students.

DAVID COURNOYER
VP External

‘Stuff’ cruelly overlooked in sorority segment

Although Lacinia Desjarlais’ article cleared up a few negative stereotypes about the Greek system, she still failed to bust all the myths (re: “Going Greek: An inside look at campus sororities,” 28 September).

Since she is too cheap to shell out \$600 to make some friends, she obviously fell victim to the myth that fraternities and sororities are only a way to buy friends.

The confusion is that Greek organizations are not just a group of friends; they are a group of friends that do a whole lot of stuff. A lot of the time that stuff costs money, so when you pay dues you are actually buying all that stuff that they do.

This stuff usually includes weekly dinners, formal dinner tickets, registration for campus-rec sports, social events like parties and fraternity-sorority exchanges, use and upkeep for the chapter house, participation in Greek events, support from the international organization including leadership training, supplies, conferences and access to other chapter houses across North America.

Although the dues may seem like a lot, you get a lot out of it. Most Greek organizations even have several scholarships of varying amounts that usually cover the cost of dues. This is not any different from paying to play on a sports team; the only reason it costs so much is because

Greeks do a whole lot more than just play sports. Your decision to join should not be based on how much you are willing to pay to hang out with some people but on whether you want to do everything that the fraternity or sorority does.

PETER BUIJS
Arts IV

Palmer’s skepticism infectious

This is a response to Robin Palmer’s excellent, witty and-on target comments regarding a questionnaire sent out to University students and, I assume, some faculty as well (re: “I’ll take one flu over a cuckoo test,” 28 September).

The public is simply not included in the planning process, except occasionally as the subject of these surveys. There is an assumption in governments that if you have a “plan” for something—including something as unprecedented and potentially disruptive and deadly as a global pandemic—then it will magically be followed by people who have had no prior knowledge given to them and who have not been given a chance to figure out what they need to do to get themselves and their families through this thing without dying. It is, in a word, a disconnected and compartmentalized mess with no public involvement or participation at all.

The idea of asking people

nonsense about vaccines is truly misplaced. The job of leaders is to be honest with the public—that there will be no vaccine for this because there cannot be any vaccine until 1) the virus is identified (and it does keep mutating), 2) the manufacturers are geared up to produce it, 3) the countries that succeed in making it decide to share with others and 4) there is a distribution system and sufficient delivery equipment to actually get the vaccine to people. The estimate on the time frame for this from people who are being honest is—get this—ten years.

So, yes, Robin Palmer, the survey you saw is absurd, inexcusably misleading and wasteful. I had hoped my country of origin was perhaps doing this better than we are in the US.

MARGOT WHITE
University of New Mexico

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