

Kidnapping not an international affair

IT'S BEEN OVER FOUR MONTHS SINCE MADELEINE McCann disappeared from a holiday apartment in Praia da Luz, Portugal on 3 May, 2007, but for some reason, we're still forced to hear about her.

The latest news: her parents are now professing their innocence and denying any involvement in their daughter's suspected murder after Portuguese authorities named them as suspects. Of course they deny it. I can't imagine that anyone expected this couple—who've been flying all around Europe since their daughter's disappearance—would suddenly confess to killing her. But why is this news?

The story goes that Gerry and Kate McCann were eating at a nearby restaurant the night Madeleine disappeared from her bed, though they had been repeatedly checking in on her and their two-year-old twins throughout the evening.

Now, I can't imagine the nightmare of discovering that your daughter is gone, but this constant Madeleine McCann coverage is nevertheless annoying because there are so many more important things to write about. That's right: there are more important things in the world than a missing four-year-old.

I do sympathize with her family's situation—but this is not an international tragedy. The millions of women and children involved in human trafficking as sex trade workers is an international tragedy. What makes this one little girl so special that the Pope, David Beckham, and JK Rowling would feel compelled to pitch in to keep the hunt for Madeleine in the public eye?

This is Elian Gonzalez syndrome all over again. Madeleine is unbearably cute, and the YouTube video montages will break your heart—especially once the heart-wrenching music starts playing in the background. But there's something sick and voyeuristic about the fact that so many people are constantly watching these things.

Many viewers make comments along the lines of "I love you, Madeleine!" or "Come back to us!"—people who will likely never know Madeleine, yet who still feel some kind of personal attachment to her after seeing how happy she looked building a sand castle.

One of these videos even professes that, "By now, everyone knows who this little girl is, and her story has touched everyone's hearts," but I disagree.

The nine-year-old prostitute in Thailand probably doesn't care about Madeleine. What about all the other families worldwide that have had children abducted?

It's great so many people care about her fate, but let's face it: if she'd been an ugly troll rather than an adorable princess, no newswire would still be running her story off of its homepage.

Then again, if she were more homely, she may not have disappeared in the first place—I'm willing to bet kidnappers don't go for the ugos.

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA
Senior News Editor

50 ain't worth a dime

TODAY IS PROBABLY THE BIGGEST DAY OF THE year for rap music fanatics. Kanye West releases *Graduation*, and 50 Cent drops *Curtis*, in the biggest album vs album match-up in years. Most of the hype stems from 50's statement that he'll quit music if Kanye outsells him, and, with that in mind, I hope Kanye takes today with ease.

Born Curtis Jackson, 50 Cent's whole deal has always been that he survived being shot with nine bullets and doesn't promote gun violence—he only tells his life story. Sadly, if he's being honest about his life, 50's lived one big gangsta cliché: bullets, bling, bitches, and crack all lead up to a big pimpin' lifestyle.

True or false, such a life doesn't mean 50's earned the right to sell us boring rap, and a third album of his slow, Stallone-like delivery will inspire only the most dedicated members of his current fanbase of twelve-year-olds. They don't want anything new anyways—they want their fantasy clichés packaged nice and neat. But unlike Kayne, who at least makes diverse, intriguing records, 50's willing to give them exactly that: the stale gangsta cliché, reheated once more.

PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Editor

LETTERS

Art isn't confined to single media or format

Victor Vargas' article (Re: "The Internet is ruining your future arts career," 6 September) on the arts and the Internet is devoid of merit.

It certainly is true that there's a glut of media on the Internet these days, ostensibly because "programs like Photoshop make producing art so easy." I invite Mr Vargas to take his technical know-how and produce work equal to the best on display at deviantArt.com or in Worth1000 contests. I wager that he would fail miserably, as would the rest of us. Why is that?

Photoshop, webcams, and blog editors are merely tools. If their invention and dissemination make art so easy, surely the camera or paint ought to have done the same ages ago. After all, painting is just putting a brush in some wet pigment and then smearing it on paper. Nothing could be simpler. Unfortunately, there are reasons why some of us will become Rembrandts and others will draw stick figures forever: talent and training.

The sheer volume of online art doesn't guarantee that any of it's good. Consumer demand isn't satisfied by a surplus of pap; it's created by having a better product. Let's be clear: if four years of education in the Arts faculty do not enable you to produce work superior to that of the average blogger, either your education is a failure, or you're [talentless], and you don't deserve any special recognition or compensation for your efforts. Go flip burgers.

If, on the other hand, you have something of worth to offer, you should be writing newspaper and magazine articles, not blog entries.

In fact, the vast majority of the world's best contemporary art is not to be found on the Internet, but is either between the covers of books, on the silver screen, or hanging on gallery walls. Not to mention architecture, landscaping, interior design, and advertising. All of these things pay, and will continue to do so.

One can no more "access the sum total of all human artistic creation" using the Internet than one can visit Paris by searching for pictures of the Left Bank on Google.

STEPHEN POTYONDI
Arts IV

Ready and willing to pay for some bear droppings

I was absolutely outraged to hear about the shutdown of Bear Scat. Now in my third year, I have used Bear Scat consistently over the last few years to schedule, add, drop, and receive notice of available classes.

It has been valuable in ways I can't even begin to describe. I recommend it to all first-year students confused about their courses. The only other option is confusing and complicated for a first-time student, and even now it remains a challenge for me.

The proposal of 75 cents per student to keep it running is spare change. Many students have thousands of dollars in tuition, \$500 or more in textbooks, plus other mis-

cellaneous classroom fees. What is 75 cents? That isn't even enough to purchase a drink in HUB. It's not even half of bus fare! In my couch, I'm sure there is 75 cents that I'm more than willing to give.

If the statistics are correct—that three in five students are using this service—couldn't we ask students to find that spare change for a good cause?

As to the question of who should pay, the University or the Students' Union, my answer is as follows: the students should pay.

Does it matter if the University uses the student's tuition or if the Students' Union uses their fees? It's our money either way. It's the SU's job to use the students' fees the way the students choose.

I choose Bear Scat, with no doubts that a plebiscite would show the same results for many other students.

As for the University, they already have our money spent on Bear Tracks. While Bear Tracks may be official, it's slow and tedious.

Bear Scat is a program a thousand times more efficient and user-friendly. Unfortunately, with Bear Tracks in existence, the University would never pay for Bear Scat. This leaves our Students' Union—advocates for the students. Getting the students what they need, what they want.

SU, step up. Be my advocate. Be our advocates. I'll even pay a whole \$1.50, just in case someone

else doesn't want to pay. I choose to fight for Bear Scat, and I need my voice, my SU, to help me speak louder.

APRYL HEWLETT
Education III

Shout out for shy people

Kudos Kat Hutter for your article (Re: "Not everybody blends in on campus," 6 September).

I'm privileged enough to be at the University of Alberta, but it's hard being in my third year and still gripping with being extremely shy towards the new people that I'm surrounded by in each class.

None of my friends from high school are in my faculty either, so I'm pretty alone in classes. But your article gave me a new perspective: we aren't all normal, and that's alright.

BETHANY HOFFMAN
Human Ecology III

U of A needs to step up its opting-out game

I was quite interested to read about McGill's innovative approach to handling dedicated unit fees in last week's *Gateway* (Re: "McGill DFUs create deficit," 6 September).

In any school, you can expect that there'll be a diverse spectrum of political and moral views, so it makes sense that students fees should be

allocated in ways that reflect their personal convictions.

For organizations which are essentially political and partisan in nature—like the QPIRG, or, in the U of A's case, the APIRG—it shouldn't be hard to opt out of funding them, especially if the agendas they advocate run against the individual student's values.

I think it would be responsible for the U of A to follow McGill's example and allow students to opt out of some of these fees online.

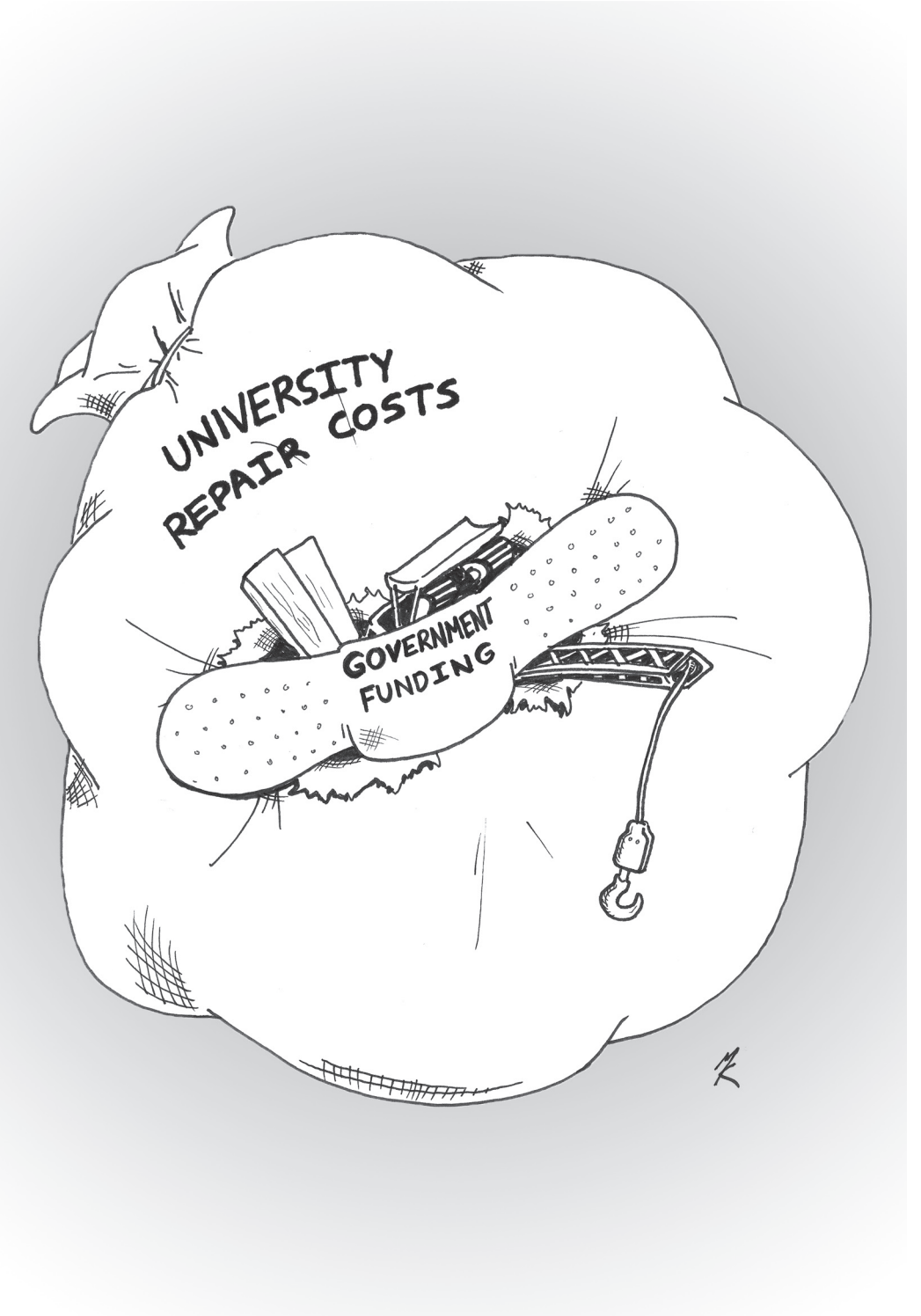
Many people don't know you can opt out of APIRG fees, and doing so is so much trouble that few students have the time to do so, even if they don't agree with the organization's aims.

MICAH BROWN
Economics IV

Letters to the editor should be dropped off at room 3-04 of the Students' Union Building or e-mailed to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca.

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Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student identification number to be considered for publication.



MIKE KENDRICK