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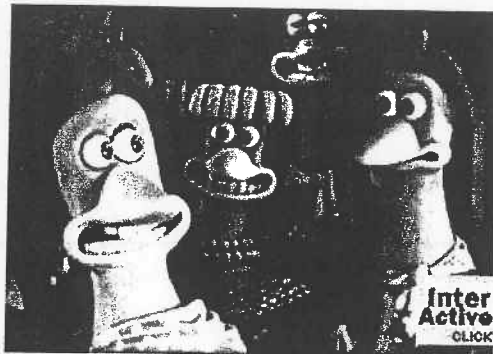
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## Feature Comforts



### A History of Clay Animation: Part 1

Rocky, left, is an American rooster hiding out in a British hen house in *Chicken Run*. Ginger, in the green hat, thinks he can help all the fowls flee the farm. For more on clay animation — from Gumby to Rudolph to the PJs — click on the photo. (Dreamworks)

By Mark Bloch

abc NEWS.com

July 10 — Nick Park and Peter Lord's latest creation is like a goose that laid a golden egg. Except the goose is actually a hen and it's made of clay. Well, the egg is clay. But it's becoming clear: These feats of clay are worth millions.

*Chicken Run* has become the first feature-length work of clay animation to fill movie theaters, grossing \$17.5 million its first weekend and over \$45 million in the two weeks since. That's a lot of Play-doh.

But the success begs the questions: Why hasn't clay animation been tried more often? And why did two previous attempts at full-length clay features stall at the box office?

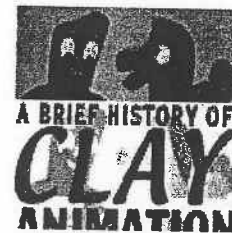
### THE SCULPTOR'S NIGHTMARE

Vortiginous Aberrations of a Modern Aegle  
LENGTH: 90 MIN. FEEL: FRODO, 16 CENTS PER HOUR.



The sculptor's nightmare is a horror film that is a masterpiece of clay animation. It is a story of a sculptor who is haunted by the figures he has created. The film is a masterpiece of clay animation, and it is a must-see for anyone who loves clay animation.

For one thing, clay does not fit the model of the Hollywood dream factory. In "traditional" animation, like *Aladdin* or Bugs Bunny cartoons, the images are painted on clear celluloid sheets, known as "cel" animation, one frame at a time. This type of animation can be broken down infinitely into tiny



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molded into armatures with latex coverings.

The earliest surviving use of the technique is *The Sculptor's Nightmare*, a spoof on the 1908 presidential election. In the final reel of the film, a slab of clay on a pedestal comes to life, metamorphosing into a bust of Teddy Roosevelt. Mack Sennet and D.W. Griffith, two important pioneers of early cinema, appear in the live-action portion of the film.

In 1917, the first female animator of any kind, New York's Helena Smith Dayton, used real doll clothes and human hair to add realism to her clay depictions of fairy tales and classic literature, including *Romeo and Juliet*.

### The B-Movie Guru

Jump forward a few decades to find another special-effects master interested in fairy tales. Ray Harryhausen made clay dinosaurs as a kid, then got his first job as a model animator on George Pal's *Puppetoons*.

Later, assisting Willis O'Brien (the genius who in 1933 turned an 18-inch-tall cat fur-covered model into *King Kong*), Harryhausen worked on *Mighty Joe Young* in 1949.

In films like 1958's *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and 1963's *Jason and the Argonauts* (which includes the famous animated skeleton sequence that took 4 1/2 months to create), Harryhausen perfected his craft. In 1992, he received a special Oscar for inspiring an entire generation of animators and special-effects artists.

Harryhausen's first employer, the Hungarian Pal, created the *Puppetoon* series for Paramount. "The NAACP thought they were racist," says Frierson, "and they are. He mistakenly thought he was doing folk tales."

Pal used 100 carved wooden replacement heads to animate the characters. So not only did racial tension ensue, but also a controversy over just what is clay animation: If the heads are carved wood, is it still clay animation?

### He's Green, He's Gumby

Meanwhile, with movies being replaced by television throughout the 1950s, Warner Bros. cut back on its cel cartoon output by a third, stopping completely by 1969. A less sophisticated made-for-TV style, by Hanna-Barbera, had taken over. The time was right for

clay's first superstar: Gumby.

"The whole motivation for making Gumby was to give children something of real value," says the green guy's creator, Art Clokey. "Gumby was expressing my love for children by telling stories from the heart."

NBC gave Clokey a contract to produce a series from 1956-1963. Gumby and his orange horse Pokey became icons.

Not many people realize that Clokey was also the creator of another curious series of that era: the moralistic *Davey and Goliath*. "The Lutherans saw Gumby on WPIX in New York and called me," Clokey says. "It was shown more than Gumby, actually. The church gave the films to the stations for free. It was an act of service to society."

### Gumby's Long Shadow

Clokey, now 76 years old, is still zealously engaged in clay animation. Gumby has his own personality cult and was immortalized in an Eddie Murphy skit on *Saturday Night Live*. *Davey and Goliath* references



When *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* debuted in early December 1964, few could have predicted that the show would still be broadcast at holiday time three decades later. (rankinbass.com)

and several other holiday classics. Premiering on NBC in December 1964, the *Rudolph* special promoted the appliances of sponsor General Electric with a soundtrack LP featuring narrator Burl Ives. *Rudolph* and *Frosty* were big hits with kids, and the Rankin and Bass specials remain holiday perennials.

have recently popped up everywhere from *The Simpsons* and *Mad TV* to the work of Todd Haines, director of the glam rock chronical *The Velvet Goldmine*. (Haines also made the now-banned *Karen Carpenter Story*, a very dark comedy told with hand-held Barbie dolls.)

Finally, the prolific team of Arthur Rankin Jr. and Jules Bass produced *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *Frosty the Snow Man*



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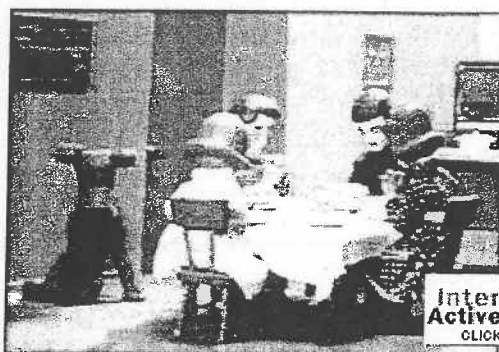
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## Clay Has Its Day

A History of Clay  
Animation: Part 2

The family that clays together, prays together. Art Clokey, creator of *Gumby*, also made *Davey and Goliath* for the Lutheran Church. Click the photo for more on clay animation, from its start to its current incarnation in *Chicken Run*. (Art Clokey)

By Mark Bloch

abc NEWS.com

July 13 — When experimental filmmaking “busted out” in the 1960s and early ’70s, clay animation was not immune to the change. But with the changes came questions about just what constitutes “clay” animation.

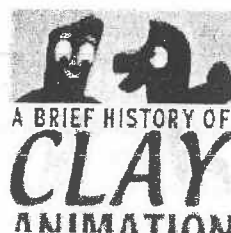
In 1971, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences widened its “Best Short Subject” category from “Cartoon” to “Animated Film,” and that cleared the big clay road.

Three years later, filmmaker Will Vinton, influenced by the flowing clay forms of the Spanish architect Gaudi, won that Oscar, in collaboration with his friend Bob Gardiner, for *Closed Mondays*.

And the plot was certainly not the usual kiddie fare. “It was the story of a wino wandering into an art museum,” says Vinton.

A lot of other animators were taking their cue from cel animation, which used the film frame like a theatrical stage. But filmmaking was evolving, and Vinton decided to take advantage of those changes in *Closed*

— sidebar

Clay and  
Computers

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*Mondays*. "Cuts, extreme close-ups, dramatic camera angles hadn't been made use of in animation." He figured it was time.

Vinton soon completed the world's first feature-length clay animation, *The Adventures of Mark Twain*. He calls the 72-minute film "the zenith of pure clay animation: 100 percent clay. We were purists in those days."

One of Nick Park's earlier films, besides the popular *Wallace and Gromit* series, was *Creature Comforts* which also won an Oscar for Aardman. Its characters were later used to sell candy in England. (Aardman)

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But while clay had begun to distinguish itself as more than an expensive cousin of cel animation, Vinton recalls that *Mark Twain* "never found its audience."

### So Much Larger Than Life

While Vinton remains proud of such high-brow fare, his production company is best known for the *California Raisins* commercial, which featured dried fruit grooving to the beat of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine."

"I knew it would be a great ad campaign, a fun idea, but I had no idea it'd be a *phenomena*," says Vinton. "I still get introduced as the Raisin King."

Recent decades have produced an innovative proliferation of pure clay in the service of cutting-edge TV programs as well as commercials and music videos. Frank Zappa's 1979 *Baby Snakes* capitalized on clay's inherent characteristics, such as sagging and stretching, which other animators find troubling.

In 1968, Joan Gratz began painting with clay and used her innovative technique in a 1990 United Airlines commercial. In 1992, she won an Oscar for her seven-minute short *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase*.

Clay had some memorable moments in the '80s. Vinton Studios won an Emmy in 1987 for clay portraits of stars Cybill Shepherd and Bruce Willis on the hit series *Moonlighting*. *Pee-wee's Playhouse* commissioned Aardman to create the late 1980s *Penny Cartoon* series, then animator David Daniels in 1987 for a pair of shorts using his "strata" technique.

Daniels is also known for his 1987 video *Big Time*

for singer Peter Gabriel. Meanwhile, Gabriel (on his award-winning *Sledgehammer* video), Bette Midler and the Spice Girls all utilized clay — and the talents of Aardman — to make their music visually unforgettable.

Even Gumby became a rock star. *Gumby 1* — requiring \$3.2 million and 30 months of shooting, starting in 1989, Art Clokey's 87-minute project is fun and faithful to the original. But the world's second pure clay feature went straight to video.

## Heavy-Duty Cheat

The famous *Saturday Night Live* feature *Mr. Bill* does not belong to this survey in a technical sense. But it bears mentioning because it is an extreme example of other changes in the world of clay.

*Mr. Bill* is made of Play-doh, not clay, and isn't animated. "It's a heavy-duty cheat," says Michael Frierson, author of the 1994 book *Clay Animation: American Highlights, 1908 to the Present*. "It's running the camera in real time. There's no comparison."

But filmmaker Walter Williams says his *Mr. Bill* is relevant because it is a *parody* of animation. "I got the idea while watching one of the newer versions of the *Popeye* cartoons and thinking there was so little movement compared to the original cartoon animation ... next you'll be seeing the hands moving the character around ... then accidentally dropping him."

So Williams got his big break via *SNL*'s home movie contest, and kept producing for the show until 1980, when the original cast left. A 15th anniversary *SNL* survey found *Mr. Bill*'s popularity was exceeded only by that of the late John Belushi and Gilda Radner.

*The Mr. Bill Collection* of videos sold better than any other *SNL* compilation. As Mr. Hands tortured and maimed Mr. Bill throughout the late 1970s, his falsetto cries of "Oh Nooooooooo" became a household word.

Certainly *Mr. Bill* is not clay animation, but what about film like 1993's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*? Like the films of Ray Harryhausen, discussed in Part One of this history, Tim Burton's film utilized clay as one of many techniques but was billed as "stop-animation." Like George Pal's *Puppetoons* and even *Chicken Run*, *Nightmare* used molded "replacement parts" that are swapped for others as needed, as opposed to re-shaping plasticine as the action develops in pure clay animation.

“Each frame is sculpted.” Will Vinton explains, “It’s very tedious, very realistic. It is extraordinarily expressive because it doesn’t repeat and recycle mouth shapes, for instance.”

But when a film like *Nightmare* earns \$50 million at the box office and another \$22 million in rentals, with *Chicken Run* gaining fast, Hollywood is taking notice and purity matters less.

### Look No Further

Today one does not need to look far to find direct descendants of clay animation. Latex figures of Elvis Presley, Bruce Lee and Frank Sinatra sell Brisk Ice Tea. *The PJs*, created by Vinton Studios, is a current series.

Then there is *Celebrity Deathmatch*. It premiered in the fall of 1997 as a fantasy fight between Charles and Marilyn Manson on MTV, then moved to a Super Bowl halftime special, *Deathbowl 98*. Now, it’s a weekly show on the cable network. Each episode features three bouts of today’s hottest celebrities up against each other in a violent clay slugfest that marries Mr. Bill’s spirit with the technology of *Gumby*.

Still, the ’90s in clay animation belonged to Aardman, which blazes few new trails in terms of technique but delights young and old with its ability to tell a story. That’s the case with Nick Park and Peter Lord’s new film, *Chicken Run*.

“It is the first stop-motion animation movie made in the Aardman style ... which is unique,” says Dreamworks’ Jeffrey Katzenberg, the film’s executive producer. “There’s nothing else like it in the world.”

“I’m happy for Nick and Peter that Dreamworks has gotten behind it,” says Vinton of *Chicken Run*. “*Mark Twain* missed its true market. And animation suffers for that. For a long time Disney was the only one who knew how to market animation. We’ll see what Dreamworks can do.”

Whether Dreamwork’s marketing or just the charm of the Aardman characters, someone is doing something right. And clay animation is ready for its close-up.



## On Clay, Computers and *Chicken Run*

The old masters are pleased by the success of *Chicken Run*.

"I'm very happy to see *Chicken Run* come out," says Art Clokey, the creator of *Gumby*. "We've had a struggle to get people to finance our movie because its clay animation and not computer animation."

What is so great about clay? "The heartbeat and imprint of the nervous system of the artist in clay animation is imprinted on the movement," says Clokey. "There are little nicks and indentations that are not noticed but they're there. Every movement by a human is infinitesimally different from any other one."

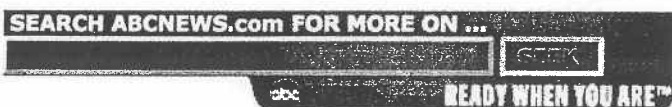
Of Park, Clokey cannot be complimentary enough. "He's really a perfectionist. It's real beautiful animation. I don't think anyone can beat him."

Not even *Gumby*? "We're more organic type of people. I try to avoid slickness. It tends to be too perfect. I don't mean to imply that's the way I see Nick Park's work. He just takes more pains."

Will Vinton, who created the first clay animation feature in 1985, *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, as well as the famed California Raisins commercials, can't say why clay is so appealing.

"Certain stories really work well in clay. I'm not a good person to ask why people love it so much. I have my theories," says Vinton. "Maybe they relate to the three-dimensional quality of the clay characters. They're tangible and tactile. They really do exist. It is a palpable reality."

— Mark Bloch, ABCNEWS.com



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Beetle Bailey's Cartoonist Rehabilitates a Character

## Halftrack Gets Overhaul



Mort Walker's popular comic strip "Beetle Bailey" features a general who was in dire need of sensitivity training (Reprinted by special permission of King Features)

By Mark Bloch

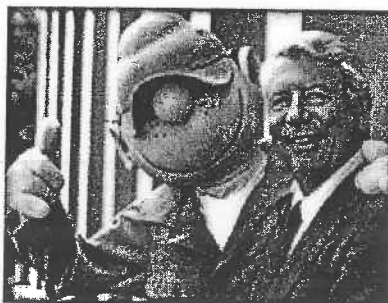
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It's not the first time a comic icon has changed with the times. Blondie the housewife started her own catering business. *Doonesbury's* cast of characters had to grow into adulthood.

And now, with recent headlines exposing the U.S. military's problems with sexual harrassment, the leering and lecherous Gen. Amos Halftrack of the comic strip "Beetle Bailey" is getting rehabilitated. And probably will soon be getting more in touch with his feelings.

**"I'm fighting bureaucracy and defending the American tradition to question authority. It's part and parcel of the American psyche."**

**—Mort Walker, Creator of Beetle Bailey**



Cartoonist Mort Walker poses with his creation Beetle Bailey at a ceremony at the Pentagon in June 1990 (Bob Daugherty/AP Photo)

Gen. Halftrack has been fantasizing about his voluptuous secretary Miss Buxley for decades in the "Beetle Bailey" strip, but the time has come for the bumbling officer to get with the nineties. "It just didn't go over anymore," said the strip's creator, Mort Walker.

Rather than retire the general, Walker decided to send him to a sensitivity training class that began in July. "He's been so much fun. I've only taken away one of his attributes. I don't think we're going to miss anything."

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## A Symbol of the Human Condition

Walker has used the general for almost 50 years as a symbol of what is wrong with the military and the human condition. "All of the failures of man are embodied in this one, creaky old character," Walker said Friday from his studio in Connecticut. "He is a prime representative of Army foul-ups, of bureaucracy, not to mention bad golf and abusive happy hours."

But after the real-life Tailhook scandal and the recent tribulations of some of the armed forces' highest-ranking enlisted men, Beetle creator Walker used the comic strip to make a statement about turning over a new leaf. "I turned the old goat into a lamb," Walker said.

International  
Museum of  
Cartoon Art  
[http://  
www.cartoon.org](http://www.cartoon.org)

The baby boom was just getting underway when Mort Walker, 73, first created Beetle Bailey in 1950. It was the same year a strip called "Lil Folks" was reborn as "Peanuts" and EC Comics launched a "new trend" of horror comics with a title called "Crypt of Terror" that eventually became "Tales From The Crypt."

## Cartoonist No Stranger to Military

Though he was later the creator of well-known comics like "Hi and Lois" and "Boner's Ark," it was the military that provided the inevitable biographical setting for Walker's most enduring strip, Beetle Bailey.

After cutting short a career as a designer at Hallmark Cards, 18-year-old Walker embarked on four years of service that reads like an enlistment brochure. "I started in the Air Force," he said, "then went to the Signal Corps to the engineers to the infantry to officers' school and finally the ordnance in Italy." He was then tapped for the Intelligence Investigation Office and finished World War II in charge of the German prisoners of war in Southern Italy. "I repatriated 10,000 Germans to the Red Cross in Switzerland after the war," he said.

"I was 21 years old and they never gave me an instruction book."

According to the International Museum of Comic Art, of which he is a founder, Walker became the top-selling magazine freelance cartoonist in the country by 1948.

"Beetle Bailey" began as a college strip that had nothing to do with the military. But when young Beetle enlisted in the Army in 1951, the strip enjoyed a healthy climb in circulation that outlasted the Cold War.

## 1,800 newspapers in 38 countries

Beetle Bailey appears, 47 years later, in more than 1,800



newspapers in 38 countries. "My philosophy has always been that I'm there to entertain people and not to offend them," he said in an earlier interview with the Johnson City Press of Johnson City, Tenn.

But Friday he added, "I thought maybe I could teach people what sexual harassment is all about by having him misbehave."

"He never did anything. He never pinched her. He never touched her or anything like that." Still, "it looked as if we were playfully condoning such things." Walker knew Halfrack had to change with the times. "I'm from the old school. There was a girl-watching society we all used to belong to."

### Inappropriate Office Attire

But those days are over for the General and for cartoonist Walker. "For 10 years I had no real trouble, but then I began to get comments from some of my editors," he said in reference to the leering general. The last political



**MORT WALKER**

BORN 1923, (ADDISON MORTON WALKER) IN EL DORADO, KS. GREW UP IN KANSAS CITY, MO. PARENTS WERE ARTISTS. SOLD MY FIRST CARTOON

AT 11, AND HAD A WEEKLY COMIC STRIP AT 15. WAS CHIEF DESIGNER AT HALL-MARK CARDS AT 18. SERVED 4 YEARS IN THE ARMY, INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN ITALY IN CHARGE OF GERMAN POW CAMP.

GRADUATED FROM MO UNIV. 1946. WENT TO NY. WAS EDITOR OF MAGAZINES AND ZIP SELLING GAG CARTOONIST. STARTED BEETLE BAILEY 1950. HAD 10.5, 1954, SEVEN OTHER STRIPS. HAVE WRITTEN BOOKS, TV AND STAGE SCRIPTS. WON REUBEN AND MANY OTHER AWARDS BUT CONSIDER THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF CARTOON ART (1974) MY GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT. MARRIED CATHY IN 1965. COMBINED FAMILY OF 10 CHILDREN. 6 WORK WITH ME. HOME? STAMFORD, CT. AND BOCA RATON, FL. LOVE GOLF, MY FAMILY, CATHY, MY CARTOONIST FRIENDS AND CARTOONS.

(Source: [International Museum of Cartoon Art](#))

show the outside one now." He added, "I tried to de-emphasize her sexuality."

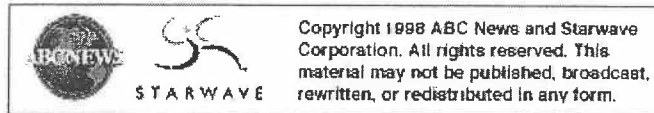
Walker, who has been called "the most prolific newspaper cartoonist of all time," and won the Reuben Award as the best cartoonist of the year 1954, believes his strip should reflect responsible, modern thinking about how women are treated in the military and in the workplace.

changes in the strip occurred in the eighties but it was the woman in Halfrack's office who changed then. "I did clean up Miss Buxley because she was dressed inappropriately for the office."

"Several feminists got after me so I lowered her hemline, raised her neckline and eliminated one of her bustlines," he said. "I only

“As hard as it is to find anything in the Pentagon, they finally found their sense of humor,” Walker said of a June, 1990, ceremony in his honor in Washington, D.C. The top brass at the Pentagon decided the cartoonist deserved an award, “for morale building or something like that,” he explained. “A general told me, ‘Now I hope you’ll treat us more kindly.’ But I told him, “‘Don’t count on it.’”

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*



ABCNEWS.com

# World

Published on April 17, 1998

Seizure-inducing *Pokemon* Returns, Heads for U.S.



## JAPANIMATION



ABCNEWS' Nathan Thomas reports on the Japanese cartoon that sent children to the hospital.

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By Mark Bloch

ABCNEWS.com

APRIL 15 — Like a tamagotchi given an emergency injection of cyber-nutrients, the visually potent Pocket Monsters have returned from the dead.

You remember *Pokemon*, or *Pocket Monsters*, the phenomenally popular Japanese animation series yanked from the air in December after it gave at least 700 people in that country TV-induced seizures? On Thursday, the series goes back on the air in Japan.

And, come Sept. 7, just when American children are putting down their Game Boys to head back to the classroom, the show will flash on to American television, appearing five days a week in about 90 percent of the country, its distributors hope.

Do parents need to be concerned about *Pokemon*? Does the visceral Japanese animation called anime, which has found quite a following in American subculture, prompt violence in viewers? And has television and film ever made anyone physically sick before? Join us for a look at art-induced epilepsy, flickering light and Japanese animation—and how *Pokemon* became the flash point for all three topics.

### MARKETING, FLICKERS AND SEIZURES

#### Have A *Pokemon* Christmas

The marketing whiz behind the Cabbage Patch Kids hopes to unseat Beanie Babies next Christmas by bringing *Pokemon* to America.

#### The Science of Seizures

How does flickering light affect the brain? Experts are skeptical that the *Pokemon* phenomenon was actually epilepsy induced by flickering TVs, but it's not out of the question.

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More than 30 years ago, the screening of a film called “The Flicker,” made without a camera, created a sensation by causing hallucinations and epileptic seizures.

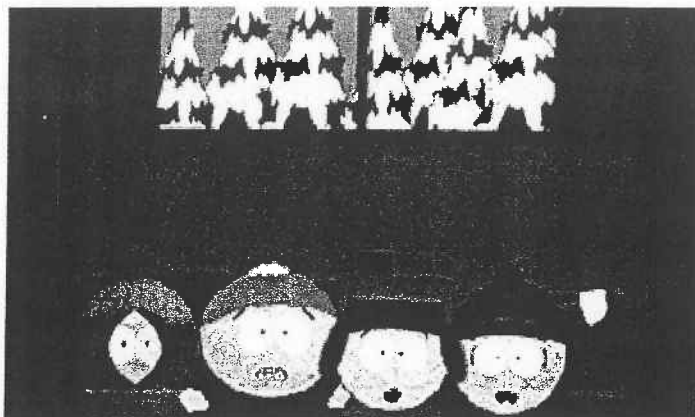
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Tomorrow, Japan; By Labor Day, the U.S.

## Have a Pokemon Christmas



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WORLD  
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Just when  
American  
parents  
were hoping  
it was safe  
to let their  
kids watch  
TV again,  
here comes  
the  
announcement  
that the  
show will hit  
U.S.  
airwaves  
five days a  
week  
beginning  
Sept. 7.

America is ready for *Southpark*, a *Godzilla* remake and the ubiquitous *Dancing Baby*. Will *Pokemon* be next? Marketers of Japanese anime are betting the trend will eventually become as popular in the United States as it is in Japan. (AP Photo)

By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

APRIL 15 — Alfred R. Kahn, the marketing whiz behind the Cabbage Patch Kids, has a new mission: to help the American public forget the seizures, headaches and nausea caused by the Pocket Monsters.

"The epilepsy incident is a double-edged sword. You get publicity but not the ilk you're looking for," says Kahn of the considerable attention received by TV Tokyo's *Pokemon*, known in English as *Pocket Monsters*.

"But we hope if people are drawn to it for sensational reasons, the real story is in the success of the content itself. This makes *Teletubbies* look like nothing."

*Pokemon*, Japan's most popular animation series, returns to the airwaves Thursday for the first time since it was pulled in December after some 700 viewers nationwide suffered video-induced seizures.

### It's Coming to America

And at summer's end, the show hits the U.S. airwaves. It will be seen five days a week starting Sept. 7, running in syndication in 90 percent of the country—on stations that



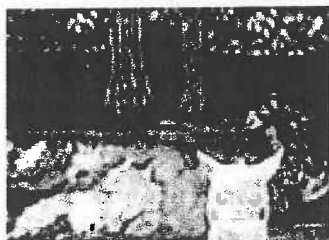
carry children's programming in the early morning and after school.

And that is when Pocket Monster mania may begin. "It's going to be a *Pokemon* Christmas," says Kahn, CEO of 4 Kids Entertainment, a New York licensing firm that will distribute the show in the United States. Kahn, who named the firm after his own children, says his 9-year-old daughter is a *Pokemon* fan.

*Pokemon* was TV Tokyo's top-rated children's program and an escalating marketing phenomenon when it was yanked from the air. Kahn hopes the show can win back that momentum and find new fans in the States.

"We've been tracking it for a couple of years," says Kahn, who became intrigued by the Pocket Monsters back when they were the protagonists of a video game. "We are Nintendo's licensing agency. We follow them looking for crossovers in the U.S. We decided eight or 10 months ago this was something we should look at."

*Pokemon* was born a Nintendo Game Boy cartridge in Japan, Kahn says.



"The idea is, you're a Pocket Monster trainer. If you don't train them, they can turn evil. They are like virtual pets. The second reason kids like them is that they are collectible. It's the Beanie Baby idea."

*Pokemon* began as a Nintendo Game Boy cartridge. It became a merchandising juggernaut in Japan, spinning into a TV show and eventually to yo-yos and instant noodles. (ABCNEWS.com)

To say the Pocket Monsters touched a lucrative chord in Japan

would be an understatement, Kahn notes. "A good Game Boy cartridge usually sells a half million worldwide. *Pokemon* sold 8 million. So a TV show was developed. They started licensing the characters. In 24 months it has sold \$4 billion of product in Japan."

## TV Trauma

The *Pokemon* craze eventually hit a wall, of course. It began about 20 minutes into the Dec. 16, 1997, show. About 700 people suffered convulsions while watching the episode—and 200 of them were sent reeling to emergency rooms. The victims, ranging in age from 3 to 58, listed convulsions, nausea, vomiting, and dizziness among their symptoms.

The very popularity of the show may be to blame for the large numbers of victims. Imagine an episode of *Seinfeld* that induced seizures in only a miniscule portion of the audience and you can see why.



Still, marketers insist that this was a one-time occurrence. "A 20-cycle strobe effect in the blue frequency can effect maybe two or three out of 10,000 people," says John O'Donnell, the managing director of Central Park Media, one of the largest importers of Japanese animation. "They might have an epileptic reaction and that's terrible. But it's a freak thing."

## Animated Renaissance

Once relegated to Saturday morning kids' shows, animated series like *The Simpsons* and *South Park* have become a staple of American pop culture. The strange but compelling "Dancing Baby" has made the rounds from the Internet to Fox's *Ally McBeal*. Japan's rampaging reptile Godzilla is about to make a big-budget Hollywood debut May 20. Can an American *Pokemon* phenomenon be far behind?

And if so, is the country in danger of a mega-mass stupor on a magnitude unmatched by regular television programming? Kahn says no.

"People have asked whether they should be worried," he says. "The show was pulled off the air in Japan. Their investigation determined the flashes of light, combined with certain color palettes, was what triggered it. That's a horrible thing. We've edited out any scenes that are too high-level or have the strobing effect that caused the incident."

Kahn says the offending episode will never be aired in the United States. "All the other shows were re-edited and anything with a potential problem was removed. It's something avoidable, so you want to avoid it. As a parent I'd be totally demolished by something like that in my home. We wouldn't run it if we weren't totally comfortable that we could correct it. So we did."

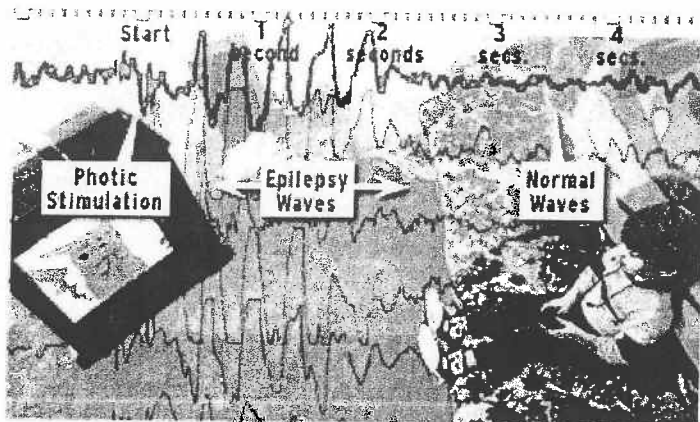
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# ABCNEWS.com World

Some Doctors Skeptical of *Pokemon*-Epilepsy Tie

## Seizure or Hysteria?



### EEG showing epilepsy waves from photic stimulation

An electro-encephalogram shows that a strong light stimulus shined in the eyes of children sensitive to certain types of epilepsy can directly trigger a seizure. (ABCNEWS.com)

By Mark Bloch

ABCNEWS.com

**"It is possible that a few of the children may have experienced photo-sens-**

**itive**

**induced seizures.**

**But it's hard to conceive that 700 did."**

—Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, Beth-Israel Medical Center

NEW YORK, April 15 — These letters and images are not really here.

The continuous brightness and steady image you see on a movie screen, TV or computer is, in fact, an illusion.

What you are looking at now is nothing more than patterns of rapidly flickering light. A phenomenon known as "persistence of vision" allows the eye to interpret a rapid succession of alternating light and dark as even, consistent illumination.

But when the frequency of light and dark is too slow to create the illusion, a noticeable flickering sensation occurs. That's how early silent films came to be called "flicks," a term we still use today.

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Japanese anime are known for vivid colors and equally visceral storytelling

919 kb (avi)  
905 kb (mov)

RealVideo  
(download  
RealPlayer)

That's too simple an explanation for the *Pokemon* phenomenon in Japan, however. In fact, epilepsy experts interviewed by ABCNEWS.com were skeptical the seizures experienced by hundreds of viewers were triggered by an epilepsy-like syndrome.

"I've never heard of anything like it," said Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, director of the Epilepsy Program at the Clinical Neuro-Physiology Laboratory at New York's Beth Israel Medical Center.

He said it's possible that a few of the children watching may have experienced photo-sensitive-induced seizures. "But it's hard to conceive that 700 did."

The director of New York University's Epilepsy Center agrees. "I think there were maybe two or three or 10 that went to emergency rooms, then the media picked up the story and that in turn produced a wave of anxiety-based reactions," Dr. Orrin Devinsky said. The reaction could just as likely have been produced by anxiety and hyperventilation, he said.

"Photic stimulus will happen within seconds for it to be related to epilepsy," he said. "An intense emotional response could be responsible for some of the cases. But I don't think 700 kids had epileptic seizures."

### Defining 'Photo-Epileptic' Seizure

The "frequency and intensity of light stimulation" is what causes photo epilepsy, Devinsky said. "Flashing lights can synchronize brain cells so it gets cells into the synch mode. Normal consciousness depends on millions of neurons being synchronized and discharging electrical activity simultaneously."

But sometimes that synchronization process gets out of control, resulting in a seizure. "Normally there are inhibition brain cells that prevent the synchronization from spreading too far in the brain," Devinsky said. "Epilepsy is the failure to stop that process. It occurs when synchronization gets out of hand."

### Television Epilepsy

Beth Israel's Cohen pointed out a phenomenon known as "TV epilepsy" sometimes occurs in very young children of either sex and in adolescent girls. "And it is more common in Europe because their flicker rate is slower than in the U.S.A.," he said.

The United States uses NTSC video signals at 60 cycles per second, also known as 60 herz. That's faster than Europe and Japan, which both use a 50-herz cycle. Cohen explains that "a strobe light at 10 or 13 or 15 [cycles per second] can induce seizures in people with a

Certain types of lighting, such as office fluorescent lamp bulbs, can also trigger epileptic seizures because they, like television screens, emit a flash instead of a steady light

certain genetic makeup.”

### Is Red Light Significant?

Some who watched the *Pokemon* episode in question remarked on the oddly glowing red eyes of the characters. The red light may have some significance to the mysterious outbreak. About 20 minutes into the half-hour program, as good guys and bad guys fought it out inside a computer, a colorful “vaccine bomb” exploded, and was followed by five seconds of rhythmically blinking red lights in the eyes of Flash Mouse, the show's most popular character.

“The red eyes are interesting to me,” said Cohen. “When we are trying to diagnose epilepsy with an EEG machine, we use a white strobe and ask the patient to close their eyes to achieve a red or orange stimulus rather than white. Intense red is the most effective stimulus.”

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Go West, Speed Racer, Go

## Japan's Anime Earns U.S. Fans

By Mark Bloch

ABCNEWS.com



NEW YORK, April 15 — Yes, that was a *Speed Racer* T-shirt actor Eric Stolz was wearing in his role as a drug dealer in Quentin Tarantino's cult classic *Pulp Fiction*. And you can bet that tiny detail wasn't lost on aficionados of the Japanese animation known as "anime."

Volkswagen also pressed *Speed Racer* into service for an ad campaign not too long ago, using a bit of childhood nostalgia on American post-boomers who remember the cartoon adventures of the oddly cowlicked title character as one of the first examples of Japanese "anime" (pronounced "Annie May") to cross the ocean to America.

Today's anime makes *Speed Racer* look like he was driving an Edsel instead of a Mach 5. Interestingly, though, *Speed Racer* was not the first of his kind. In 1961, three theatrical releases of Japanese films, *Magic Boy*, (MGM), *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (Globe) and *Alakazam the Great* (American International Pictures), went largely unnoticed. Industry insiders and the few fans who did notice saw them as foreign films, not necessarily distinctly Japanese.

Meanwhile, "Western" cartoons such as *The Mighty*

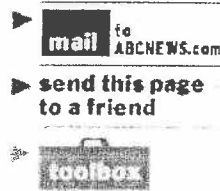


Vampire Princess Miyu carries with her the promise of occultism and eroticism, like many anime characters. Is she friend or fiend? (Courtesy of AnimEigo)

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**Industry insiders or fans that did notice saw them as foreign films, with no particular distinction given to the fact that they were Japanese.**





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*Hercules* and *Roger Ramjet* also carried the fine print "Made In Japan." But American parents were none the wiser. They didn't know or care the shows their children watched were imported on the cheap from Japanese animation firms.

## The Father of Japanese Animation



But for Osamu Tezuka, the father of Japanese animation, those cartoons opened a door to American TV. Influenced by American animators Max Fleisher and Walt Disney, Tezuka created *Tetsuwan Atom*. When the cartoon went into syndication two years later, he renamed him *Astro Boy* for American audiences. *Gigantor*

Here's Eguchi Yoosuke, leader of a high-school biker gang and a school handicrafts club. His motto: Ride fast, make noise, and beat up the dishonorable. (Courtesy of AnimEigo)

followed in 1966, *Speed Racer* a year later. Japanese animation had arrived.

But it was not until 10 years later that the first serious Japanese animation fandom began to grow. Anime enthusiasts in Los Angeles created a club centered around the art form. By 1978, the Japanese magazine *Animage* had reached the United States. That same year, the first Americanized Japanese TV show since *Speed Racer* aired. It was called *Science Ninja Team Gatchaman* in Japan. In the United States it caused a minor stir as *Battle Of The Planets*.

## The Second of Three Waves

The second wave of Japanese animation was less anonymous than the first. These animations were more complex, with nastier villains and deeper dramatic themes than American cartoons.

It also caused some parents concern. They felt the new anime shows featured graphic and explicit violence, and plot lines that often evoked a techno-apocalypse.

The 1980s marked the years of expansion and influences for Japanese animation in America. For the first time, Tezuka was recognized as a founder of anime.

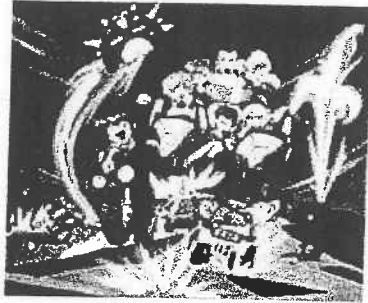


A genetically engineered parasite called a BAOH has become a living survival machine, comfortably hiding in the brain of hero Ikuroo. (Courtesy of AnimEigo)

**Manga is believed to be a word coined in 1815 by the Japanese artist Hokusai. It's literal meaning is "irresponsible drawings." The satirical artwork he created may have laid the groundwork for an artform that is uniquely Japanese.**

Tezuka, who died in 1989, also created shojo, a genre that features a gentler form of fantasy drama as opposed to action adventure.

## Anime Conventions



Rather than wait for others to parody them, animators of "Bubblegum Crisis" do it themselves with what they call "Super-deformed" style. Caution: very bad puns inside. (Courtesy of AnimEigo)

of age in the '60s saw *Speed Racer* and *Astro Boy* reissued as comics.

Finally, in 1989, anime fandom hit the mass market. Now anime, comics, and science fiction share the same grounds of fan dedication and community. And cable television has picked up on the trend. The tony Independent Film Channel occasionally airs anime; the Sci-Fi Channel shows the violent, often sexually charged cartoons on weekend mornings.

Anxious to cash in on the Transformer robot-toy craze, American comic shops jumped on the anime bandwagon, since many of the anime dramas contain robots piloted by humans that fight wars and

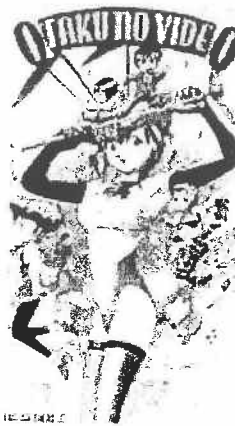
one-on-one battles like cyber-samurais. And by 1987, nostalgia hit as baby boomers who came

## Still an Acquired Taste

For the uninitiated, it's hard to understand the anime craze. The closest American counterparts are art cartoons like Ralph Bakshi's X-rated *Fritz the Cat*.

The cornerstone of the Japanese industry, however, is more focused on printed comics than the animated versions of those comics. In Japan, manga comic books account for 40 percent of the publishing industry. And just as animated anime are more violent and visceral than American cartoons, so manga are much more adult, with graphic sexuality and violence.

"That's of course not how comic books and cartoons evolved in the United States. "In the 1920s and '30s you see the first comic books," said John O'Donnell, an expert on Japanese animation and the director of anime importer Central Park Media.



"Otaku no Video" means fan's video. (Courtesy of AnimEigo)

“After World War II, [when] American G.I.s came back from the war, there was a demand for comic books that appealed to an older audience. They had grown up and they expected comic books to grow up with them,” O’Donnell said.

That started a trend, but it was short-lived. “America was suffering a wave of juvenile delinquency and the postwar politicians wanted to find out why. Remember this was the McCarthy era,” he said.

“So they decided that comic books were to blame and created a comic code authority. They divided the kid stuff from the comics about monsters and guns and women in lingerie. This lobotomized the comic book industry. It had to be dumbed down to an 8-to-12-year-old level.”

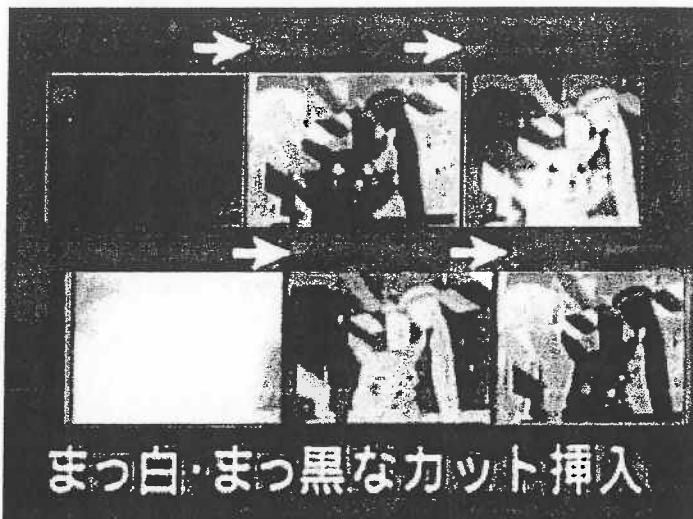
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UP

# ABCNEWS.com World

Power of the Flick: It Can Make You Sick

## The Art of Flash



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The  
*Pokemon*  
phenomenon  
in Japan  
that affected  
700 people  
is perhaps  
the **largest**  
of its kind. It  
is not the  
**first**.

Cartoons like Japan's *Pokemon* are created by animators one frame at a time. Artists have long known that intercutting light and dark frames in rapid succession creates special effects, but can also trigger epileptic seizures. (ABCNEWS.com)

By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

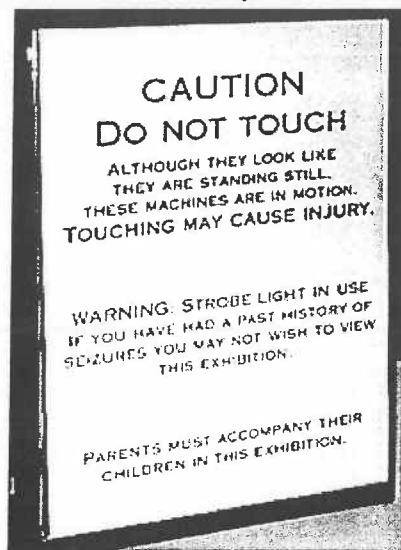
NEW YORK, April 15 — Art can make you sick.

It can also delight and mystify the senses. One of the main tools artists have used throughout the last hundred years is the phenomenon of flickering light.

"The Dream  
Machine  
makes  
visable the  
fundamental  
dynamic  
order

The mysterious mass phenomenon on Dec. 16, 1997, in Japan that caused an unpleasant, even violent reaction among more than 700 people watching the animated TV show *Pokemon* is an example of the effects of flickering light on the human brain. For some, it's just a headache.

People with epilepsy may suffer worse effects.



Warning signs like this one outside Gregory Barsamian's art show in New York City alert people susceptible to seizures to the power of strobe flicker. (ABCNEWS.com)



present in  
the  
physiology  
of the  
brain.”

—Bryon Gysin

But Japan’s *Pokémon* experience is not unique. Here’s a chronology of similar, mysterious events.

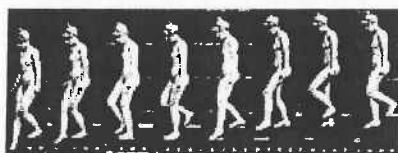
### Timeline: Flickering Light and Epilepsy

**1800s** The phenomenon of epileptic seizures set off by flickering lights is discovered. Travelers in carriages suffered seizures on journeys down long stretches of road due to a natural stroboscopic effect caused when they passed towering trees awash in light from the setting sun.

**1818** Czech inventor J. E. Purkyne discusses “persistence of vision,” the mental phenomenon that creates the optical illusion of motion.

**1832** A series of inventions to create moving pictures begins with the phenakistoscope, followed by the zoetrope (1834) and the praxinoscope (1877).

**1887** American photographer Eadweard Muybridge arranges evenly spaced cameras and sequentially records



Muybridge’s 1887 *Nude Descending Stairs*

a model’s course of travel. Frenchman E. T. Marey does similar studies of human motion on one “chronophotographic” plate.

**1892** Thomas Edison’s assistant William Dickson creates the first camera and a viewing box called a kinetoscope.

**1912** Artist Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) causes a scandal with his painting, *Nude Descending A Staircase*, then abandons paint completely, spending the rest of his life on a series of optical experiments involving rotating discs, painted propellers, “delays” on glass, stereopticons, and peepholes.

**1920s** During the early days of silent film, with films projected at 16 frames per second, an annoying flickering sensation occurred. To overcome it, a three-bladed shutter was introduced to effectively increase the frequency to 48 fps. Today’s sound projectors operate at 24 fps and require a two-bladed shutter to produce an evenly illuminated picture.

**1959** Poet and painter Brion Gysin, traveling on a bus through an alley at sunset, experienced colorful euphoric hallucinations. A year later he re-created the experience, patenting a simple apparatus involving a paper cylinder, a turntable revolving at 78 revolutions per minute and a 100-watt light bulb called *the Dream Machine*. For some, but not all, users of the device, “looking” with eyes closed at the flickering light created alpha waves in the brain, responsible for hallucinations and relief of feelings of exhaustion or melancholy.

**Early 1960s** Some patrons of pulsating strobe-lighted discotheques around the world suffer epileptic seizures.

“Recent  
research  
into the  
structure of  
brain  
rhythms  
suggests  
that it is in a  
state of  
relaxation of  
thought that  
new  
relationships  
can be  
seen.”

—Brion Gysin





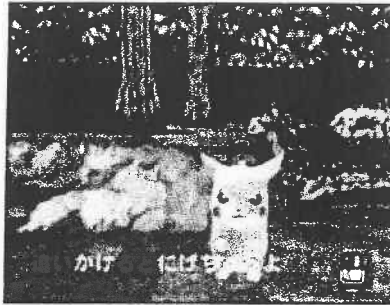
Contemporary  
artist Gregory  
Barsamian's work  
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(download  
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**1966** First showing of *The Flicker*, an experimental film by New York artist Tony Conrad, causes physical discomfort and becomes a sensation at the New York Film Festival after Conrad posts a warning to epileptics. The 30-minute short prompts some audience members to hallucinate. Others just get headaches.

**1971** A Michael Crichton story, *The Andromeda Strain*, appears as a Hollywood film, featuring a main character who shields her eyes in vain as an aggressive, flickering light renders her defenseless.

**1991** Video game manufacturers concede that seizures can be triggered by flashing lights, repetitive karate kicks or falls into electronic dungeons. Acknowledging that there is a risk for a small number of people, Nintendo began warning customers of the risk in 1991, and Sega in 1992.

"If a person has this type of epilepsy, we encourage them not to play video games," Sega said. But doctors cite no practical way to determine beforehand if the condition exists in a particular child.



The popular character that sent hundreds of children to Japanese hospitals is seen here in the video game rendition of the show.  
(ABCNEWS.com)

**April 1993** A TV commercial for "Golden Wonder pot snacks" in England causes three people to suffer epileptic fits and is subsequently banned until dangerous flashing sequences are removed. The ad parodied a 1950s-style commentator hard-selling the snack amid flashing imagery, prompting 28 complaints.

**September 1993** Nintendo defeats a lawsuit brought by a Michigan woman who blamed her seizures on its game. The jury found that epilepsy alone had caused the reaction and "is a pre-existing condition which in some cases may be triggered, but never caused, by any source of flashing light."

**December 1993** New York pediatrician Barbara Coven causes a furor when she suggests in a letter to *The New York Times* that Nintendo games with flashing lights might have a beneficial effect among children with no previous history of epilepsy: "The game becomes a diagnostic tool in what one could call a relatively safe environment, in the home."

**January 1994** Two people in Chicago file lawsuits claiming they suffered seizures induced by flashing lights on building fire alarms installed in response to a Federal law requiring warnings for the hearing-impaired.

**December 1997** Artist Gregory Barsamian, who uses a flashing strobe as part of his dynamic sculptures, puts up cautionary signs at the Schmidt-Bingham Gallery in New York. "No one has ever been affected adversely," he says, crediting the signs.



Mary Hart, Bad Folk and Big Band Blackouts

## Eclectic Seizures



By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

NEW YORK, April 15 — *Seinfeld*'s Kramer falls down and blacks out every time *Entertainment Tonight* comes on Jerry's TV. The blame falls on the perky voice of well-intentioned *ET* co-host Mary Hart. Her spunky speech comes out at just the right frequency to seize Kramer up. Too weird to be true?

Nope. Various forms of visual stimuli can cause seizures. TV epilepsy and photic epilepsy are just two of the diagnosed conditions that occur. But rarer still are seizures triggered by things you can hear.

**TV epilepsy and photic epilepsy are just two of the diagnosed conditions that occur occasionally. But rarer still are seizures that are triggered by audible phenomena.**

### The Shrill Terror of Mary Hart

The July 11, 1991, *New England Journal of Medicine* described 45-year-old Dianne Neale's reaction to watching the TV program *Entertainment Tonight*:

mild seizures, confusion, nausea and a feeling of pressure in her head. The case became well known when Neale filed suit in U.S. District Court in 1989 against her former employers, alleging she was fired after calling someone a "bitch" on the telephone while having a seizure. Neale says she can't recall the incident.

Neale has a rare form of epilepsy in which certain sounds can trigger seizures. Systematic testing by her doctor ruled out the voice frequencies of all but one of the cast members—co-host Mary Hart. Neale's condition made her, and Hart, the butt of jokes. Mary Hart apologized on the air for Neale's embarrassment, prompting Neale to respond: "I have no hard feelings



Surprisingly, Mary Hart's voice caused seizures in a person with a rare form of epilepsy. (AP Photo)

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toward her.”

In the years since, Neale’s doctor prescribed anticonvulsant drugs and told her not to watch the show. She has remained “relatively seizure-free.”

## Poorly Played Folk Music



In another rare form of epilepsy attacks were induced by the musical *Oklahoma*. (PNI)

In 1967, the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness studied uncommon forms of epilepsy, including those induced by sound. One woman experienced attacks only when she listened to poorly executed renditions of Western folk music on her local radio station. Another reacted to Rogers and Hammerstein's “People Will Say We're in Love” from the musical *Oklahoma*.

In the 1940s a woman suffered epileptic seizures whenever she listened to the Tommy Dorsey version of the swing tune *String of Pearls*. Strangely, Benny Goodman’s version of the same song had no effect on her whatsoever.

## Ear Conditioning

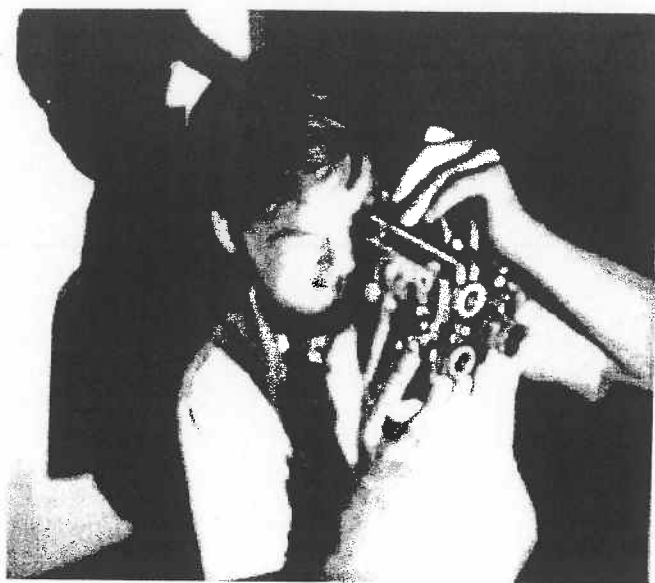
Another female patient had seizures only when she heard Christmas carols. Her malady was successfully treated by listening to carols on tape while she slept. Similarly, a man suffered from epilepsy when he heard musical compositions by Debussy or Sibelius, but only when they were played by a full orchestra. He was treated by incrementally increasing his “dosage”: Doctors altered his response to the music by playing soloists first, then painstakingly adding more instruments until he could listen to the full orchestra without incident. More than 50 hours of conditioning were required for the cure.

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Film Caused Seizures, and Mini-Movies in the Mind

## Tony Conrad's 'The Flicker'



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Artist Tony Conrad shooting film in 1965. A year later his camera-less *The Flicker* became one of the earliest films of the "structural" movement. It now carries a warning that a doctor should be present at any screenings. (Photo: Frederick Eberstadt. Courtesy of Tony Conrad.)

By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

NEW YORK, April 15 — Say what you will about Tony Conrad's legendary 1966 art film, *The Flicker*—it achieved the effect artists crave for their creations.

The *Pokemon* phenomenon in Japan is the largest of its kind. But Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* preceded it, on a smaller scale, by two decades. The effects of his film.



Tony Conrad in 1995.  
(Photo: Bettina Herzner.  
Courtesy of Tony Conrad)

"It works!" Conrad said. "Visually and psychologically there is a pronounced effect on the adult audience."

The thought of 700 people feeling ill effects from watching a television program, as happened during an episode of the Japanese animated show *Pokemon*, may be shocking. But it isn't the first time people have been physically sickened by visual phenomena.

Artist Conrad's film *The Flicker* caused a sensation in 1966 when it was shown at the Museum of Modern Art.

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.....  
**however, were intended.** 1966 at the New York Film Festival with its warning before the opening titles that viewing the film could induce hallucinations, even seizures.

“After the premiere screening at the New York Filmmakers Cinemateque, the guy who ran the theater told me a week later he still had a splitting headache,” Conrad told ABCNEWS.com. “Finally he was diagnosed with photogenic migraine. But I wasn’t trying to hurt anyone, any more than these animators in Japan are.”

**“I was convinced art was about changing how people think.”** The film combines light patterns “which are related harmonically to the drone of the normal projection frequency.” In other words, the film progresses slowly away from normal movie projector flicker. The alternating of black and white frames gradually builds until midway through the film, when some viewers usually begin to experience unusual side effects.

—Tony Conrad

“Some people saw insects and birds. Letters or numbers. Many people saw concentric circles—the most common was colored, jiggling mandala-type figures. It was incredible to hear this.”

### Is Hypnosis a Cause?

While artists, animators and scientists have experimented with flickering light throughout the century, no one is more familiar with the concept of physical disturbance than Conrad. “I have more experience with this ‘epileptic-prone entertainment’ than other people.”

**Conrad's film caused a furor at the 1966 New York Film Fest and the NOW Festival in Washington D.C. Thirty years later it is traveling as the centerpiece of an important art show called Hall of Mirrors.**

Conrad does not attribute the *Pokemon* incident in Japan to epilepsy. “It is probably not a photogenic episode at all but much more related to classic hypnotic induction. You’d have to understand the social impact of the cartoon. Not just the visceral modulation of light on the screen. That’s only a part of the effect.”

Conrad, today a professor of media studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo, mentioned the significance of small Japanese apartments with large, high-resolution TV screens as a possible contributing factor.

### Experience Linked to Expectations

Conrad and a researcher both observed that people who came to his screenings with a negative attitude had different experiences than those who didn’t. “People’s experiences were linked to their expectations,” he said. “People who were relaxed saw a variety of colors when they looked at the screen. Other people had fantasies of whole scenes. One saw a covered wagon train with a landscape. But people who were apprehensive or anxious coming in reported seeing very little unusual phenomena, such as colors. Some had negative effects like tense,



anxious headaches.”

## Interest in Hypnosis

Conrad began his career as a minimalist music composer. (He recently released a boxed set of his music on CD called *Early Minimalism*.) “As an artist I became very interested in hypnosis. I was convinced art was about changing how people think.” So he set out to alter his audience’s perceptions. The unexpected result was migraine headaches, epileptic seizures and hallucinations—and a film that became a *cause celebre*.

Conrad added a warning to his film as soon as he heard of the ill effects. “I knew what I was doing. I had actually known people who had epilepsy so I was concerned for their well-being.”

## Precaution with Your Popcorn

From the Film Makers Cooperative Catalogue No. 5 entry on *The Flicker* (1966): “The fullest measure of susceptibility is embodied in the victim of photogenic migraine and particularly in the one adult in 15,000 who suffers from photogenic epilepsy. To protect these few, special precautions should be taken at all screenings. Instruction for first aid of seizure cases are included with the film. A

doctor should attend or be available. The film opens with a warning notice which should not cause undue concern, but will alert the one in thousands who could be injured. Danger to a normal person is no greater than that of any other hallucinatory film or of TV. The normal semi-hypnotic or hallucinatory state induced during the middle of the film slowly withdraws toward the end, leaving no appreciable residual effect.”

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Published on July 30, 1998

Artists Change the Face of Baseball

## Irrational Pastime

"It's not an art form. It's a way of life."

—Judy Spak,  
baseball card  
defacing party  
co-host



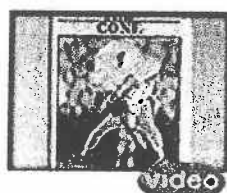
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By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

BROOKLYN, N.Y., July 30 — "I love baseball, and I love art," says artist Paul Kuhrman. "But I love art more."

For almost 20 years, Kuhrman and fellow artist Jim Markowich have woven wit, an eye for detail and copious amounts of art supplies into a unique tribute to the National Pastime. But it may give some traditional fans pause.

On a table out on Kuhrman's Brooklyn patio, Darryl Strawberry has been turned into a piece of fruit. His former teammate David Cone is hanging on the wall as a dripping ice cream treat. A few feet away, someone has built a space shuttle out of the Houston Astros, and veteran Frank Viola is now a musical instrument, with strings on his stomach. "I'm famous for my mutilations," says



How (and why)  
to deface a  
baseball card.  
(WABC-TV)

RealVideo  
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"The Umpire" from the  
Baseball Tarot Deck (Tarot

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## Slide Show

DEFACING CARDS

Markowich's wife, Sandy Mayer, a thirtysomething blond woman with a mischievous grin. "I have absolutely no reverence for this sport."

Welcome to the strange and paradoxical world of baseball card defacing.

d'Cooperstown) by Paul Kuhrman and Jim Markowich. This, their initial foray into a marriage of art and sports, eventually led them to the mysterious cult of the Baseball Card Defacing Party. (Kuhrman Archive)

### The Party Line

Not only do Kuhrman and Markowich freely fold, spindle and mutilate baseball cards, they hold an annual party to spread the gospel of their unorthodox art movement. After numerous gallery exhibitions and a handful of mainstream magazine spreads featuring the cards, they are gearing up for their third decade of activity.

"We'll do something big for the 20th anniversary next year," says Kuhrman. "But we already did the Really Big Baseball Card Defacing Party. A thousand cards were done by over 250 people, but it was kind of weird because I only knew about half of them. So we'll have to think up something better to commemorate 20 years of defaced cards."

Saturday afternoon, Kuhrman and his wife, Judy Spak, hosted a more intimate party decorated with red, white and blue bunting and inflatable baseballs. There was space for about 30 guests around a long table adorned with markers, crayons, pens, pencils erasers, exacto blades, old magazines and a liberal supply of old and new baseball cards.

"It's very punk, but it's beyond punk," explained well-known East Village artist John Holmstrom, a veteran of more than a dozen of these events. "It's beyond graffiti. It's an attack on commerciality, it's an attack on the sports establishment and at the same time a tribute to all of that."

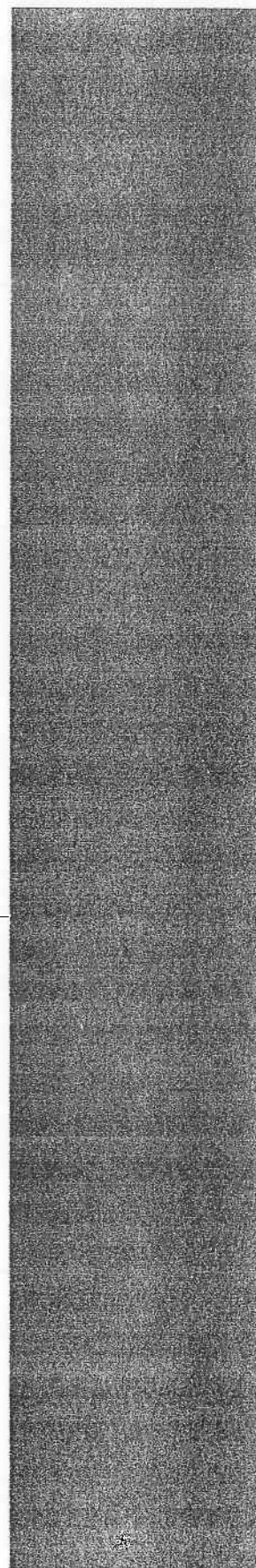
### You Had to Be There

How does one get invited to a baseball card defacing party?

"There's always the excitement of preparing the mailing list," says Spak, an artist and mother who has attended all but one event. Her husband prepares mock "tickets" that are then mailed to a choice selection of defacers, both veterans and newcomers (known as "rookies").

"I go through phases. At parties people do stuff that's never been done before. I say, 'Wow!' It gives me ideas of things to try."

—Paul Kuhrman  
Co-founder of  
Baseball Card  
Defacing





**"Last year I had neither quality or quantity. The first year—just because of the eagerness factor—I had both."**

**—Charlie Orr  
Former Rookie  
Defacing  
"Phenom"**



Attendees can show up any time between, say, 1:35 p.m. (starting time for many baseball games) and 10 p.m. They are welcome to scratch, scrape, glue and draw to their hearts' content, sign the back and then hang their finished creations with masking tape on the Wall of Fame, where often one can hear snickers, giggles, guffaws and the occasional shocked gasp.

All cards become the possessions of the hosts. "I have over 6,000 cards!" boasts the mustachioed Kuhlman, who looks a bit like a 19th century player himself.

## **Marrying Art, Sports, Humor and Religion**

Kuhlman, a Pittsburgh native, and Markowich, who was his roommate at the exclusive Manhattan art college Cooper Union, began defacing cards quite by accident. They'd always been interested in a middle ground between humor, art and sports. "Religion, too," explained Kuhlman. "Jim and I designed a deck of baseball tarot cards and a baseball chapel with a stainedglass window."

The outrageous hobby had less lofty beginnings.

"We were watching the '79 World Series between the Orioles and the Pirates. After the game we went to the corner store to get a couple of beers and I saw some baseball cards. I thought, 'Hey, maybe there will be some Pirates!'"

Kuhlman splurged for several packs, but only two cards turned out to be Pirates, leaving about a hundred others. "So there we were, stuck with these cards. We cut shapes. We burned them with candles. Finally, we started mindlessly drawing on them. That led to entire mythological teams like the Mystics, the Ghosts and the Ghouls." It wasn't long before more conceptual projects took hold, like their franchise "The Cubists" or "literals,"



**Paul Kuhlman defaces a baseball card. He's got more than 6,000 of them, 2,500 of which he "embellished" personally. (Mark Bloch/ABCNEWS.com)**



**When cards are completed, defacers add them to the Wall of Fame. Ooohs and aaahs are always welcome, but a guffaw is the highest form of praise. (Mark Bloch/ABCNEWS.com)**

which is when, say, a player named Cookie Rojas is turned into a ginger snap.

The parties themselves took shape as a fluke. Kuhrman was obligated to introduce a couple of acquaintances to each other and decided a Baseball Card Defacing Party was as good an excuse as any to get them together. Kuhrman and Spak, Markowich and Mayer were half the guest list. "The first party had eight people," said Spak. "Three weren't artists. They had as much fun as everyone else."

It wasn't long before four parties were held a year; one each in honor of Spring Training, Opening Day, the All-Star Break and, of course, the World Series.

## The Anti-Collectors

Markowich sees the whole thing as "an anti-collecting" statement. "There's just something too precious about buying an entire set and sticking it up in the closet so they will all stay in mint condition." Kuhrman agrees. "It's sort of a suckers game. I wouldn't pay more than a nickle for a mass-produced card. If everyone's mother hadn't thrown them out they wouldn't be worth much. By drawing on them, we make one-of-a-kind cards. Now those should be worth money!"

The cards may be a hobby, but Kuhrman once dreamed of more.

"I used to want to apply for the Commissioner of Baseball job," he says. "I had ideas like putting obstacles like windmills and statues in the outfield. But I don't think they'd go for that." ■

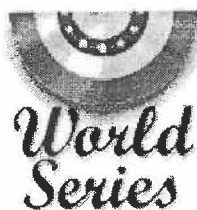
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## Cleveland's legacy of loss

By Mark Bloch  
 ABCNEWS.com



It seemed for a while they were going to be the "team of destiny," the unexpected winners of the 1997 World Series. But in the end it was another kind of destiny that engulfed the Cleveland Indians.

Since the 1950s, few baseball teams have been as mediocre as the Indians. Some attribute it to a mysterious "curse" that began with the 1960 trade of the popular Rocky Colavito to the Detroit Tigers. Whatever the cause, their ineptitude continues to be haplessly lovable.

### ALSO SEE

[Marlins capture title in classic game](#)

[Another title eludes Indians](#)

This year is the latest in a 100-year history of near-misses and disappointing might-have-beens for faithful Cleveland fans.

### April 24, 1901

The Indians, known then as the Cleveland Blues, played in the first American League game ever (three others scheduled that day were rained out). They lost 8-2 to the White Sox, perhaps a bit of foreshadowing for Cleveland's 82 losses that year, and for future seasons as well.

### 1903

Cleveland shortstop Johnny Gochnaur set a team record for errors with 98. The record still stands.

### 1914

The Indians lose 102 games, a Cleveland record that stood until 1991. Local amateur baseball games were drawing 80,000 fans, but the Indians pulled in only 186,000 fans *all season* to their home in League Park.

### 1915

A poll favored the name Indians in honor of Lou Sockalexis, a Penobscot Indian who played for Cleveland from 1897-99, batting .338 his rookie year. Unfortunately, the first Native American in the majors played only seven error-filled games his last season before being kicked out of baseball for drunkenness. He died the year of the poll, but the team logo Chief Wahoo lives on, despite decades of protests by Native Americans.



## 1920

The Indians win the best-of-nine World Series over the Brooklyn Dodgers 5-2. But their first world title is not without cost. The Indians were stunned in an August game against the Yankees when shortstop Ray Chapman, who was hitting .303 and liked to crouch tight over the plate with his face almost in the strike zone, caught a fastball in the head and died of a fractured skull the next day.

## 1926

Dutch Levson defeats the Yankees twice on the same day, 5-1 and 6-1. He is the last major leaguer to ever throw two complete game wins in one day. Amazingly, he didn't strike out a batter all day.

## July 31, 1932

Designed in vain to lure the Olympics, Cleveland Municipal Stadium opens before a record Indians crowd of 78,000. The monolithic stadium became famous as the Mistake on the Lake for the frigid winds that blew in off Lake Erie. By the time the Indians moved to a new stadium 63 years later, not one player had ever hit a ball into the center-field bleachers.

## July 31, 1932

When legendary pitcher Walter Johnson came on board to briefly manage Cleveland, conflict followed. In May 1935, a bout of paranoia got so bad that Johnson fired two players, alienating fans who booed the future Hall of Famer. Later, extra police were assigned to watch games, and beverages were sold only in paper cups for fear that Johnson would be pelted with glass bottles. He couldn't endure the campaign against him and was eventually let go.

## 1938

Pitcher Johnny Allen, a problematic drinker known for taunting opposing players, trashing a Boston hotel lobby and trying to punch out a teammate whose error ended Allen's 15-game winning streak in 1937. In June 1938, he refused an umpire's order to trim a dangling piece of his sleeve and stormed off the mound. When he was fined \$250, he decided to retire. The team's owner displayed the offending jersey in a Cleveland department store window. The shirt ended up in Cooperstown.

## 1940

Bob Feller, signed in 1936 at age 17, threw a no-hitter on Opening Day. However, the Indians lost the pennant to Detroit by one game. Ironically, a loss by Feller (27-11, 2.62 ERA) to the Tigers in a rare relief appearance kept the pennant out of reach. Manager Ossie Vitt criticized Feller, causing players to demand Vitt be fired. When the incident became public, the team acquired the nickname The Crybabies. Rival Detroit fans threw baby bottles, nipples and jars of baby food on the field to mock them.

## 1947

Bill Veeck, the club's most theatrical owner, brought in Larry Doby as the first black player in the American League. Bob Hope came aboard at the same time as a shareholder, as did midget racing and an orchestra between innings. Veeck also was responsible for signing Satchel Paige, whose true age was a mystery but who had pitched in the Negro Leagues as early as 1928. Paige was the first African-American to pitch in the A.L. and in 1948 the first to pitch in a World Series.

## 1948

The Indians drew a major-league record 2,620,627 fans in a nail-biting season that culminated in a successful playoff game against the Red Sox for their first pennant in 28 years. Despite a team batting average below .200 in the World Series, the Indians prevailed, beating the Boston Braves in six games.

**1952**

The Indians sport an awesome pitching rotation of Bob Lemon, Bob Feller, Mike Garcia and Early Wynn. All but Garcia would wind up in the Hall of Fame. Wynn once said he'd hit his own mother with a pitch, but "only if she were digging in." Larry Doby led the league with 32 homers and Al Rosen with 105 RBIs, but when it was all over, the Yankees won the pennant by two games.

**1954**

A high-powered offense leads the Indians to the pennant with a record 111 victories. But Cleveland loses the World Series in four straight games to the New York Giants. Willie Mays made his famous over-the-shoulder catch of a 460-foot Vic Wertz blast to quash a Cleveland rally in the eighth inning of Game 1

**1957**

Herb Score, the 1955 Rookie of the Year and most promising Cleveland pitcher to come along in years, was ruined when a Gil McDougald line drive hit the left-hander in the eye. He returned to pitch, but never at his previous level.

**1960**

All hope for the franchise seemed wrapped up in one handsome and popular right-fielder from the Bronx named Rocky Colavito. That hope ended when Colavito was unexpectedly traded to Detroit, where he pounded 35 home runs with a .474 slugging average. Earlier another budding young player named Roger Maris had been traded to Kansas City. Fans spoke later of "The Curse of Rocky Colavito."

**1969**

Luis Tiant, a right-hander who in 1968 won 21 games and posted a 1.60 ERA, personified the Tribe of the '60s by leading the league in losses the following season. The franchise finished dead last in '69 and again in '71, something they'd done only once in the previous 68 years.

**July 4, 1974**

Perhaps the lowest moment in the franchise's checkered history came the night of this holiday promotion against the Texas Rangers. "Beer Night" offered an unlimited supply of 10 cent beer to the frustrated Cleveland audience. The night -- and the game -- ended in a ninth-inning riot by drunken fans who stormed the field, resulting in a rare forfeit.

**1975**

Frank Robinson became baseball's first black manager, and as a player/manager he homered in his first at-bat. The team reached .500 under Robinson's leadership in 1976, but by June 19, 1977, even he couldn't survive the Cleveland downward spiral. In the next 14 years the Indians would go through eight managers and lose 100 games three times.

**1986**

The team is sold to Richard and David Jacobs, real estate developers, putting an end to rumors that the team was headed to Tampa Bay.

**1993**

Poised to turn the corner in its last season in Municipal Stadium, the team went to Spring Training ready to become a contender. But tragedy struck again when a boating accident near the end of camp killed relievers Steve Olin and Tim Crews and injured the recently signed Bobby Ojeda. The team didn't regroup from the tragedy until the second half of the season.

**1995**

In a season shortened by the players' strike, the Tribe's 100-44 record is baseball's best. The Indians reach the World Series for the first time since 1954, only to lose to the Braves in six games. Though disappointed that the mighty bats are stymied by Atlanta's pitchers, Cleveland fans are grateful just to have gotten this far.

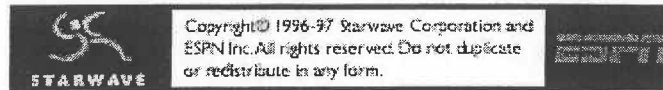
## 1997

In a postseason in which they teetered on the edge of elimination, the Indians reach the bottom of the ninth inning of Game 7 with a chance to erase years of frustration. But the 5-year-old Florida Marlins tie the game, then win it in the 11th. For the umpteenth time, Cleveland fans experience that sinking feeling.

*Mark Bloch of [ABCNEWS.com](http://ABCNEWS.com) has been an Indians fan for all of his 41 years. He's still waiting to see a World Series banner raised.*

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### HEALTH WARNING:

The contents of this exhibition may cause shock, vomiting, confusion, panic, euphoria, and anxiety. If you suffer from high blood pressure, a nervous disorder, or palpitations, you should consult your doctor before viewing this exhibition.

## Art Exhibit Sparks Controversy, Ire

### First Lady Joins the Fray Over Museum's Funding

A mock health warning poster lists the hazards viewers may face when viewing the upcoming "Sensation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The exhibit is drawing criticism from New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani. (Brooklyn Museum of Art)

By Mark Bloch  
ABCNEWS.com

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 — The first lady today showed support for a controversial art exhibit targeted by her likely political opponent, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Although she said she doesn't personally approve of the exhibit's contents, Hillary Rodham Clinton said it's wrong to take city funds away from the institution, as the mayor has pledged.

Speaking outside a Harlem school this morning, Clinton was the latest to join the fray over the upcoming Brooklyn Art Museum exhibit, which includes a portrait of the Virgin Mary embellished with elephant dung.

Giuliani, who, like Mrs. Clinton, is considering running for U.S. Senate, is pledging to cut \$7 million in city funds if the museum goes ahead with the show, "Sensation: Young British Artists From the Saatchi Collection," set to open Saturday.

"I share the feeling that I know many New Yorkers have that there are parts of this exhibit that would be deeply offensive," Mrs. Clinton said. "I would not go to see this exhibit." But she said "it is not appropriate to penalize and punish an institution such as the Brooklyn Museum."

### Catholic Opposition

Sunday, Cardinal John O'Connor pledged his support for Giuliani's efforts.

"I'm saddened by what appears to be an attack not only on our blessed mother ... but one must ask if it is not an attack on religion itself and in a special way on

### SUMMARY

An upcoming art exhibit featuring dead animals and an unusual portrait of the Virgin Mary has led New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to threaten to cut off funding to a Brooklyn museum.

**Shock Art vs.  
Public  
Funding**

### WEB LINK

**'Sensation' Exhibit  
at Brooklyn Museum  
of Art**

the Catholic Church," O'Connor said in his weekly sermon at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Even before O'Connor's sermon, the collection — 90 pieces by 42 different artists — was already under fire from Roman Catholic groups and animal-rights activists.

The Catholic League was incensed by Chris Ofili's *The Holy Virgin Mary*, a painting of the mother of Jesus stained with elephant dung. The group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals was upset by a work called *This Little Piggy Went to Market, This Little Piggy Stayed Home*, which features a dissected pig floating in formaldehyde.

But civil rights activists say the mayor is violating



Artist Sarah Lucas' *Bunny* is among the exhibits in "Sensation," a controversial upcoming collection at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. (BMA)

the First Amendment by pledging to take city funding away from the museum.

"[Giuliani's] assertion that New York City can withdraw all funds for the museum based on a single exhibition that he finds offensive illustrates a serious misunderstanding of the Constitution," said Norm Siegel, director of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

In response to his critics, the mayor said, "If somebody wants to do that privately and pay for it privately, well, that's what the First Amendment is all about. But to have the government subsidize something like that is outrageous."

British artist Damien Hirst, whose works are



British artist Damien Hirst (Jan Mardian/ABCNEWS.com)

featured in the show, told ABCNEWS.com the mayor should not comment on an exhibit he hasn't seen.

"It's a question of censorship," said Hirst, known for works composed of animals such as sharks, cows and pigs preserved and presented in formaldehyde-filled glass containers.

"He may as well say, 'I only like Picassos,' or 'I only like monochrome blue paintings.' You can't start removing spaces where they exhibit art because you don't like what's there," he said.



Museum Director Arnold Lehman, also responding to the mayor's criticism, has said he believes it is the job of a museum to support the right of artists to express themselves freely.

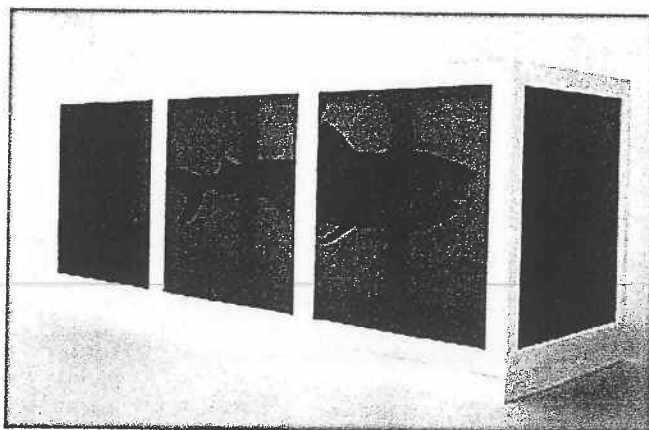
However, the museum has acknowledged that some material in "Sensation" may be inappropriate for children, and no one under 16 will be admitted unless accompanied by a parent.

## Crowds and Controversy in London

Likely to anger some critics is Marcus Harvey's painting *Myra*, a 13-foot rendering of a British child-killer created from children's handprints.

The much-hyped collection drew 300,000 visitors when it debuted at London's Royal Academy in 1997. Three academy members resigned in protest when it opened.

In addition to cutting off monthly funding, New York City also suspended talks on a proposed \$20 million capital expansion project for the Brooklyn museum.



*The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, an exhibit by artist Damien Hirst in the upcoming "Sensation" collection, features a tiger shark in a formaldehyde solution. (BMA)

But for Hirst and other British artists, what some see as controversy to them is simply an extension of who they are, and represents work they have been doing for years.

"People have been using dung to paint pictures of the Virgin Mary on cave walls for a couple of thousand years," Hirst said of the controversial portrait.

Of artist Marc Quinn's 3-D head made of frozen blood, Hirst said, "It's his own blood. People say, 'I put my blood and sweat and tears into my work.' He really did it."

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*



## When Shock Art Meets Public Money

The flap over the upcoming "Sensation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art is just the latest controversy pitting artists who are trying to express themselves against politicians decrying public moneys being spent on art they consider objectionable.

At the middle of many of these controversies has been the National Endowment for the Arts, which was created by Congress in 1965 with the mission of "encouraging thought, imagination and inquiry."

The NEA's troubles began in 1989 with the exhibit of photography by Robert Mapplethorpe, renowned for his homoerotic themes. Critics of the exhibit were infuriated to learn the show was partially funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., canceled the exhibit.

Since then, other artists have found themselves the subject of scrutiny: In 1990 NEA Chairman John E. Frohnmayer stopped funding the performance artist Karen Finley, known for pouring chocolate on her naked body. Finley and other artists, known as the "NEA Four," eventually sued the government agency on First Amendment grounds.

When the House of Representatives came under control of the Republican Party, the NEA became a target. In 1994, then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich wanted to eliminate the agency altogether. The NEA survived, but in 1996 its budget was cut by nearly 40 percent. Its 1999 budget is \$98 million, and the average cost to the taxpayer is less than 40 cents a year.

Since then, funding has increased, but the Supreme Court ruled in June of 1998 that the NEA could choose not to fund artists it considers indecent.

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## Leap of Faith

Known for Working Small, Artist Ray Johnson Finally Makes It Big

The late Ray Johnson was well-known among artists for his collages and mail art. Now a show at the Whitney Museum of Art presents his work to the masses. Click the Interactive button to learn more about his life and mysterious death. (William S. Wilson, 1966)

By Mark Bloch  
[ABCNEWS.com](http://ABCNEWS.com)

He's an artist. He's famous. He's dead.

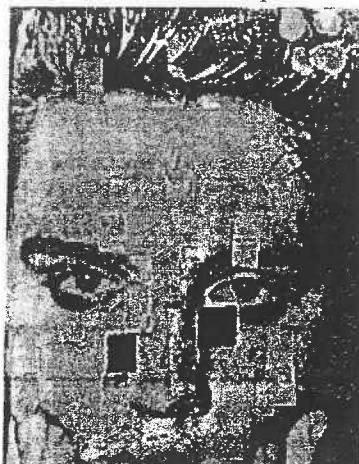
While most artists spend their lives battling this unfortunate cliché, the late Ray Johnson embraced it, even planned it this way.

Johnson's mysterious death in 1995 was the masterpiece that has earned him the recognition he couldn't bear during his lifetime. Four years after his suicide, a major exhibition of his work opened at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art, the country's standard bearer of contemporary art.

Who was Ray Johnson, why did he kill himself, and what has happened to his artistic reputation since his death?

### The Big Day

The last days of Johnson's life reflected a pattern in his career: he often melded art and life to produce a singular, startling statement that even his closest friends didn't anticipate.

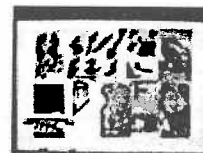


This agile 67-year-old man, who had jokingly announced his own demise many times as part of his art, jumped from a bridge on Friday the 13th in January 1995 and drowned.

Early in January, he told several people he was in the process of creating his "greatest

### SUMMARY

It's a cliché that became a self-fulfilling prophecy: Ray Johnson was an artist who avoided recognition in life, but has it in death.



### VIDEO

Donna De Salvo, Curator at Large at the Wexner Center for the Arts, leads a tour of the Whitney Museum show "Ray Johnson: Correspondences."

[Full Video](#)  
(download)



Johnson was one of the first artists to use celebrity images in his work. *Elvis Presley #2* (1956-57), shown here, predates Andy Warhol and Pop art by several years. Click on the photo to see a slide show of Johnson's work. (William S. Wilson Collection, ©Estate of Ray Johnson)

work" to date. A week later, he was gone.

He was last seen alive by two teenage girls in Sag Harbor, N.Y., as he was backstroking into a cove. The next day, his corpse was pulled, fully

clothed, from the water.

"He looked peaceful" says Joe Ialacchi, chief of the Sag Harbor police.

#### WEB LINKS

[Whitney Museum of American Art](#)

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[Panscan: 3 articles on Ray Johnson](#)

### Famously Unknown

Johnson's carefully-crafted exit set a "Paul Is Dead" mystery in motion that permeated the art press.

Journalists interviewed his far-flung correspondents, sifting through old letters for clues to explain this complex man and his enigmatic endgame, while art dealers researched auction prices, scrambling to represent his estate.

In life, when a critic referred to him as "New York's most famous unknown artist," Johnson gladly recycled the comment into his work. Now his premeditated death has prompted a much-deserved rescue mission from artistic obscurity.

### Take My Art, Please

Max Anderson, director of the Whitney Museum, says he's "pleased to bring Johnson's work to a broad audience" in the exhibition entitled *Correspondences*.

But it wasn't always possible. In the early '60s, Johnson turned his back on convention and gave his art away to anyone who interested him, via something he called the New York Correspondence School. He set up the tongue-in-cheek institution, infuriating dealers and delighting the friends and acquaintances who received the works. By sending his pieces through the mail, he created an international network of collectors and shattered boundaries in the art world, meanwhile remaining its best-kept secret.

"Johnson formed a complex, 'pre-digital' creative network," notes Donna De Salvo, curator for the Whitney show and curator at large at the Wexner Arts Center at Ohio State University. Indeed, before there was an Internet, there was "Mail art," an unorthodox movement, currently in its fourth decade, that hails Johnson as its "Grand-dada."

"Johnson's mail-away art can't be bought or sold

but only received," the late critic David Bourdon once remarked.

## Retreat to Long Island

The "artists' artist," was an influential presence from the 1950s on. In 1995, painter Chuck Close cited a need to "point out to the rest of the world what artists have always known about Ray: that there was a major contribution."

The hermit-like Johnson worked quietly on his "school" and his collages from his home in a western Long Island town. The Detroit native attended experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the 1940s, then befriended a who's who of art stars-to-be in New York City.

Then, on the same day in 1968 that his good friend Andy Warhol was shot, Johnson was mugged at knifepoint in downtown Manhattan. In reaction, he relocated to conservative Locust Valley, Long Island, reducing most socializing to phone and mail. Rare appearances at New York events became legendary, always including a touch of the absurd. He'd arrive for a meeting swinging a long rope as a prop or visit a wealthy collector carrying dozens of collages in a cardboard box.

## Pop Goes the Easel

While Johnson's treatments of Elvis and James Dean are seen by scholars as the first examples of what later became known as Pop art, it remains to be seen if this insider can now capture the imagination of a larger public.

"He'd begin with one set of rules and then change them in the middle of the game," explains William S. Wilson, a major Johnson collector. This "strategy" often put exhibitions in peril before they began.

Sherri Geldin, director of the Wexner Center for the Arts, which will exhibit *Correspondences* later this year, describes Johnson as "important, though deliberately elusive."

His cultivated knack for subverting norms made life difficult for those who wanted to show his work, and kept him out of the public eye. With his oddly well-planned death, Johnson seems to have removed the final obstruction to a mass appreciation of his unique genius.

At long last, Ray Johnson is ready for his close-up.

## Johnson's 15 Minutes and Counting

The works in the Whitney exhibit of Ray Johnson's work, *Correspondences*, display his adeptness at creating a dance of meaning among visual elements, ideas, people and events.

Included in the exhibit are selections from the five decades of work that earned him a secret reputation in the well-heeled art world: collages silhouette portraits, mailings from his New York Correspondence School, early paintings and objects, and documentation of performances he called "nothings," a nose-thumbing response to 1960s Happenings.

The day before the Whitney opening, none other than Monica Lewinsky walked through the gallery, presumably enjoying the references to popular and cultural icons as diverse as David Bowie, Greta Garbo and Shirley Temple. Had Johnson lived, Lewinsky surely would have been added to the fray. His collages incorporate texts and images from newspapers, magazines, comic strips and items received in the mail, making for a visual jambalaya, chopped up and reassembled for contemplation.

"His work is so American," says Max Anderson, new director of the Whitney, citing "its freshness and refusal to be easily characterized."

The Whitney show runs through March 21. It will be presented at the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, where it was organized, from Jan. 29 through April 16, 2000.

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## Life Beyond Raymond

Compared to Motherhood,  
Playing a TV Wife Is a Snap

Actress Patricia Heaton at a reception honoring primetime Emmy nominees in Los Angeles, Sept. 6. She took home the Emmy for best actress in a comedy series. (Reuters)

By Mark Bloch

abcNEWS.com

**In This Series**

Emmy Awards 2000

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 9 — Patricia Heaton has more pressing things on her mind than her Emmy nomination for best actress in a comedy series.

"All that you've starved for and worked for, for years, comes true and then someone's Batman backpack can undermine everything."

Speaking from her dressing room on the set of *Everybody Loves Raymond* in Los Angeles in the days leading up to the Emmys, Heaton was clear about her priorities: She is a real mother first, and a TV mom second.

"Today John had his first day of kindergarten," she said, referring to the second of her four sons with British actor David Hunt. "I'm not convinced we're out of the woods yet."

Heaton took the Emmy Award nomination in stride, having gone through the experience last year. "It's really exciting once you get there, but it doesn't really hit you until they are announcing your category. Then the adrenaline really shoots up."

Heaton is well-respected for her edgy banter with standup comedian Ray Romano. "Ray and I are presenting this year," she said, "so we have that extra added thing of trying to be funny in 10 seconds."

The Cleveland-born actress got her first featured role eight years ago on the critically acclaimed, but short lived, *Room for Two*, in which she played the grown daughter of the show's star, Linda Lavin.

Heaton sees a similarity between the two programs. "It



was really relationship-based as opposed to situation-based. They call '*Raymond*' a relationship comedy."

### Family Building Together

All five members of *Raymond*'s ensemble cast were nominated this year. "Finally," Patricia added, praising co-stars Romano, Brad Garret, who plays the hulking sad sack brother as well as Peter Boyle, and Doris Roberts, the veteran thespians who play her annoying in-laws. "I think it's why the show works so well. Everybody really has each others rhythm down. We've been together for five years."

But Heaton is not the only one juggling family and career. "I've had two kids since the show started. Ray's had a kid. Brad's had two kids. So there's been a lot of family building together."

### Stuff People Really Deal With

Heaton is singled out this year for some hilarious work on a tension-filled subject. "It's an episode about PMS. I watched it recently at a friends house with a couple and they were chuckling, but I could tell it was also hitting very close to home for them. They were kind of serious as they were watching it. It's the stuff people really deal with in their marriages."


Heaton often functions as the straight man. "It can often be a thankless role but in this case we have such good writers it's really terrific. They've allowed Deborah to have more interesting qualities that you don't often get. In the PMS thing she was allowed to be pretty bitchy and wrong in a lot of what she was saying.

"Often the straight person is sort of patronizing and long-suffering and she's not," she continues, "She doesn't put up with his stuff." That's putting it lightly. The episode, like many in the series, dices and slices Romano's nasal dad character to shreds.

### My Mother the Straight Man

In real life, while never far from their alter-egos, Heaton and Romano are pals, sharing all the tenderness of their on-screen personas, but without the biting humor. When Ray started mugging in Heaton's dressing room during our conversation she explained, "I have a little boudoir. He can't believe it. I have rugs and curtains and flowers and scented candles. He has a beer can sculpture and a bag of stale popcorn."

Soon Patricia Heaton will be back to her "normal"




life as a mother and co-founder of Four Boys Films, the production company that she runs with her husband. As for the Emmy hoopla, Patricia says, "It'll be nice when it's over. I've been having to do a lot of dress shopping and interviews and all the hubbub that leads up to it."

And the hit show she works on? "Work is sort of my little midday sanctuary where I can come and just focus on the script. But it is a lot, you know. I've been feeling pretty overwhelmed this week."

One must conclude that there is no limit to the chaos that can be caused by a Batman backpack."

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## Rock Star Defied Convention



### John Lennon Freely Mixed Politics With His Music

Former Beatle John Lennon and his wife, Yoko Ono, leave his U.S. immigration hearing in New York in 1972 (AP Photo)

By Mark Bloch

ABCNEWS.com

NEW YORK, Sept. 25, 1997 — Why would the FBI be interested in John Lennon? The federal agency demonstrated its suspicion of rock 'n' roll artists early on. In 1963, it pursued an unsuccessful 30-month inquiry of songwriter Richard Berry and rock group The Kingsmen, investigating "Louie Louie" for indecent lyrics. Lennon may have caught the FBI's attention for many of his actions in a short life punctuated by controversy.

### The Politics of Lennon

**Nov. 4, 1963:** At a Royal Variety Performance attended by Queen Elizabeth, John Lennon announced The Beatles' final song by saying, "Will people in the cheaper seats clap your hands? All the rest of you—if you'll just rattle your jewelry."

**June 11, 1965:** The Beatles received the Member of the Order of the British Empire, an important award presented in Britain annually. Irate former recipients protested. Hector Dupuis, a former Canadian MP, said, "The British House of Royalty had put me on the same level as a bunch of vulgar numskulls." Lennon noted that military officers got their awards for killing people. "We got ours for entertaining."

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"Will people in the cheaper seats clap your hands? All the rest of you—if you'll just rattle your jewelry."

John Lennon

### WEB LINKS

[The Times of London](#)

[New Musical Express](#)

[About.com's Beatles Site](#)

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**1966:** When Capitol Records announced plans to deliver an album Yesterday and Today, the group decided to comment on the dead-baby jokes craze of the day. The result was a cover with The Beatles dressed in butcher smocks surrounded by meat and adorned with doll parts. No one got the joke and Capitol ended up covering the original cover with a new one, which many fans steamed off, resulting in pricey collectors' items.

**July 4, 1966:** During a final world tour, The Beatles were attacked by angry crowds in Manila, Phillipines. President Marcos had removed all security assigned to the rock group, after the musicians accidentally slept through a planned luncheon party with First Lady Imelda Marcos.

**Aug. 12, 1966:** Lennon, at a Chicago news conference, apologized for his widely publicized remark, "The Beatles are more popular than Jesus." The comment had sparked an international protest, which culminated in the burning of Beatles records.

**May 30, 1966:** The Beatles begin recording the song "Revolution," which contains the words, "But when you talk about destruction, don't you know that you can count me out." Lennon later said, "There were two versions of that song, but the underground left only picked up the one that said, 'Count Me Out.' The original version, which ends up on the LP, says 'Count me in,' too. I put in both because I wasn't sure."

**1968:** Lennon and his new girlfriend, Yoko Ono, broke ranks with the clean-cut Beatles image and posed nude on the front cover of their record Two Virgins. The U.S. Customs Service sued to prevent any copies from being imported. Eventually the album was sold in a brown paper wrapper on a tiny label called Tetragrammaton, after Capitol refused to distribute it.

**May 26, 1969:** In Room 1742 of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, Lennon and Ono recorded "Give Peace a Chance" at their honeymoon "bed-in." Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Tommy Smothers, Dick Gregory, Petula Clark, a priest and a rabbi served as backup singers. It became an anthem.

**Oct. 1, 1969:** The Beatles album Abbey Road was released. Lennon's "Come Together" had its origins when Timothy Leary decided to run for governor of California. It was originally titled "Come Together, Join the Party," Leary's campaign slogan. Leary had said years earlier, "The Beatles are prototypes of a new race of laughing freemen: revolutionary agents sent by God, endowed with a mysterious power to create a new human species."

**Nov. 25, 1969:** Lennon returned his Member of the Order of the British Empire prize, noting: "Your majesty, I am returning this MBE in protest of . . . Britain's involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra thing, against our support of America in Vietnam, and against 'Cold Turkey' slipping down the charts."

**Jan. 15, 1970:** An exhibition of Lennon's erotic lithographs at the Indica Gallery in London was raided by police. 1971 Lennon recorded his hit "Power to the People," a paean to leftist politics.

**Dec. 1, 1971:** Lennon and Ono released "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)" and bought full-page ads in major cities around the world to promote peace.

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**1972:** An attempt to deport Lennon from the United States resulted in a four-year struggle with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service because of his misdemeanor conviction for marijuana possession in England in 1968. The New York Times, New York Mayor John Lindsay and others came to his defense.

**1972:** The contents of Lennon and Ono's *Some Time in New York City* album and a weeklong appearance as guest hosts on *The Mike Douglas Show* with guests such as Jerry Rubin put Lennon's politics at the forefront of his art.

**1976:** Lennon received his green card and went into retirement in New York City. On Dec. 8, 1980, he was shot dead outside his home by a deranged fan. Conspiracy theorists posit a "Manchurian Candidate"-like scenario by the government.

**Sept. 25, 1997:** The FBI grudgingly made public all but 10 secret files on Lennon, including information ranging from the singer's contacts with antiwar activists to a talking parrot that chirped "Right on."

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### Robert Wyatt

#### Shleep

Label: Thirsty Ear  
File Under: Still quirky after all these years  
Rating: 80

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Courageous aural explorer Robert Wyatt is singing his heart out again, and back to pick up a few new fans. He began his unorthodox pop-poetry experiments thirty years ago with Soft Machine, and *Shleep* finds that humility and playfulness very much intact. The album showcases Wyatt's elegantly awkward voice with a palette of off-kilter trumpet and fiddle, flip-floppity drumming, and lush, loose synthesizer linings.

When the unclassifiable British songsmith's last full-length recording hit the stores in 1992, CDs were still a relatively new phenomenon. Six years later he's exploring the CD form itself with this magical meditation on insomnia and birds, in that order. Along the way, he counts sheep and touches on arachnophobic spiders, salmon meandering through human waste, and other peculiar images only he could transform into likable lyrics. In the video for the melodious existential foray "Free Will and Testament," a duet with Paul Weller and one of CD's best tracks, Wyatt compares vinyl LPs to a face with two asymmetrical halves, then states his ambition of wanting to use the CD form differently—as an unpredictable journey that doesn't lead one astray after a few listenings.

*Shleep* delivers on this promise. Just as a graceful, upbeat, toe-tapping or otherwise agreeable melody ends, a haunting, droning, or simply quirky composition takes hold. Throughout, Wyatt weaves odd time signatures with menacing instrumental combinations that lope into the consciousness. Even the most euphonic pop tune, the Brian Eno-produced "Heaps of Sheeps," reveals unexpected crevices and folds several layers down. Eno, Weller, former Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera (who gave Wyatt free reign over his home studio in England), and several other notable players make this the most collaborative Wyatt LP since *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*. Lyrically and instrumentally, *Shleep* meanders, then jerks and twists with beauty, just like the twilight dream world that is its subject. — Mark Bloch

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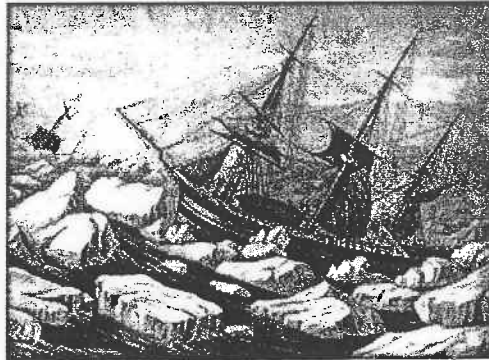
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## Real Extreme Adventurers



The Age of Exploration is Devastatingly Recounted in *Barrow's Boys*

A four-day-long gale strikes James Ross' expedition to Antarctica in 1843. (Atlantic Monthly Press)

By Mark Bloch

abc NEWS.com

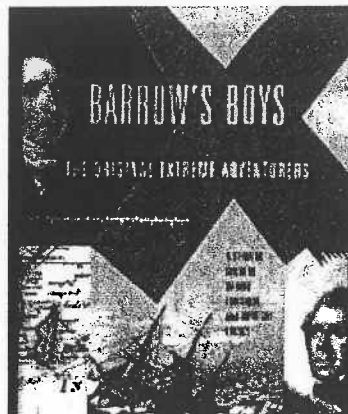
BY THE  
BOOK

Aug. 22 — It's true, the "strange tasting meat" turned out to be one explorer's missing colleagues. Yes, a strain of yellow fever did turn another adventurer's tongue yellow, then brown and finally to black.

But look at the bright side: trapped by ice for four winters, one bored group of would-be conquistadors printed newspapers and performed plays to pass the time. That should count for *something*.

The man we have to thank for this litany of misadventures is a British civil servant, John Barrow, who was also responsible for spearheading the first crossing of the North-West Passage and the discovery of the North Magnetic Pole in 1831. Now, nearly 200 years later, British author Fergus Fleming takes us behind the scenes of over two dozen ill-fated expeditions in an exhaustive — often exhausting — narrative.

*Barrow's Boys: The Original Extreme Adventurers* (Atlantic Monthly Press) works for fans of both



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### Barrow's Boys

and mismanaged by inept bureaucrats are nothing new — and they aren't all bad, either, when they provide for intriguing reading to those far removed from impending disaster.

### An Ambitious Model of Dullness

Hardly a blueblood, Barrow was born in 1764 to a father who worked the fields while Barrow learned Latin, Greek and Chinese and studied astronomy and math. He eventually built a following writing about exploration for the prestigious *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

He traveled to Africa conducting a census, mapping parts of the interior as far as present-day Namibia, and made a few amateur geological surveys. His connections gradually raised him to the position of Second Secretary of the Admiralty, a job that required a bureaucrat *par excellence* respectful of rank yet at least moderately knowledgeable of a seaman's life. Barrow was well-qualified and proved it, holding the job through Whig and Tory administrations until he was 81.

In Barrow's unwavering daily routine he avoided excess, drinking only the occasional glass of wine and eating plain food. "All in all he appeared the model of dullness," Fleming notes.

But privately he was an ambitious man. While he avoided partisan situations, he was determined to make his name somehow. He did so on the accomplishments and sufferings of others.

With an atlas opened in front of him, Barrow wondered why so many areas of it were blank; the dream of filling them in became his battle cry. He knew the Napoleonic wars had swelled the size of the Navy. Officers were career men and they needed something to do, so Barrow conscripted them into filling in those blank spots.

Barrow raised questions persuasive to men to whom naval superiority, scientific knowledge and commerce were important: Was there a North-West Passage? What lay at the heart of Africa and the North Pole? Did Antarctica exist?

The full-fledged enactment of Barrow's "swords into plowshares" plan for the British was a small miracle. But thanks to his imprecise orders and tiny

for tails of both  
adventure travel and  
history, and shows that  
bumbling expeditions  
insufficiently budgeted

budgets, the most ambitious exploration program the world had ever seen turned to so much rancid meat.

## High Frustration

This book could be called a zany comedy of errors if not for the brutal tragedies. One hapless tale after another is trotted out, becoming a bit formulaic at times. Each journey's ambitious intention, plotted by Barrow, is outlined. The expedition's leader is then illuminated with biographical details and a physical description. Next begins the tiresome travelogue, mixing intriguing details from journal entries with dates and footnotes.

Seekers of Indiana Jones-style drama might find it a bit more tedious than academics but the experience is optimized by reading a chapter or less at a time.

Such disasters include Captain James Tuckey's expedition up the Niger River, to find an alleged Valhalla of gold. His crew suffered from yellow fever, and Tuckey himself succumbed to malaria. Or Gordon Laing, who became the first white man to reach the city of Timbuctoo (located in present-day Mali) but never lived to tell the tale back home, having been decapitated on the way out of town.

Or John Ross, who was stranded in the Canadian Arctic for four winters while seeking the North-West Passage only to be rescued by his own ship whose crew believed their captain long dead, even as his withered shape boarded their vessel.

## What Was That Mystery Meat?

The most compelling tale takes place when Barrow decides to reverse his bad fortune in Africa with a search for a polar route to the Orient. A link between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans would provide Britain with the treasures of Asia without having to round Cape Horn or South Africa. The North-West Passage was "a navigator's Eldorado" which at least a half dozen explorers failed to find. More would make the attempt on Barrow's watch, but the map of their journeys more resembles an unlaced sneaker between Canada and Greenland than a single vector.

Barrow chose John Franklin ("a beefy genial giant who could not hurt a fly" and who knew nothing about survival) to lead an overland expedition around Canada's largely uncharted northern coastline, travelling overland to a lake, then a river and finally the sea. As Franklin's right hand man and expedition's naturalist, he named Dr. John



Richardson, a Scottish surgeon from the Royal Marines.

By journey's end, more than half of their party would starve to death, and Richardson would stand accused of murder.

Lost in the tundra, they first left cargo behind. Next they jettisoned instruments, manuals and scientific specimens. Their thermometers froze; pewter mugs were melted down for bullets. The starving group ate wolf meat, wolf bones, deer tongues, deer fat, mice, until finally their shoes were "greedily devoured."

They are joined by a mysterious voyageur named Michel Teroaahaute, who refused to gather lichen, and kept mum on his frequent disappearances. Teroaahaute's solitary travels actually led to the corpses of three of Franklin's party, and the "wolf's meat" he brought back for the adventurers may have been their human flesh.

After another of Franklin's expedition was found dead, with Teraoohaute standing over the body with a smoking gun feigning innocence, Richardson took matters into his own hands and shot the cannibal in the head.

A native Indian eventually rescued the survivors. Franklin had traveled over 5,000 miles, lost eleven of 20 men, and failed to find the elusive passage. But it is testimony to Barrow's genius that the wandering boot-eater is listed in the book's index as "Sir" John Franklin.

Read in small doses, Fleming's tribute to these intrepid explorers, described as "a stirring story of daring, fortitude, and outright lunacy," earns its appellation and then some.

## About the Book

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by Fergus Fleming

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