



By Janelle Bitker

*"Ooh, turn your head away
From the screen, oh people
It will tell you nothing more"*

Jeff Buckley, "The Sky is a Landfill"

Believe it or not, there are loads of interesting independent

films out right now. Surprised? That's understandable. After all, not a single one has played at the Alameda Theater and Cineplex since it's opening in May.

Don't get me wrong; the Alameda Theater is beautiful. Its retro elegance is both unique and stunning, and the large, 500-person theater puts me into a state of awe, and I have been to the Cineplex perhaps too many times this summer for the pure reason that it is one of the only places open in Alameda past 9 p.m.

The theater has forced me into movies that I would, in a normal state of mind, never even consider seeing. "Wanted," for example. Seriously? I know the average teenager thought that movie was "epic" and "so crazy" and "genius" or whatever, but let's all face it: it was multi-million dollar garbage.

There were only a small handful of movies that I genuinely wanted to see this summer that came to the Alameda Theater, and they were all big-budget films I could find anywhere. "The Dark Knight," "Wall-E" – appealing films that most people in Alameda saw.

But for the most part, everything at the Alameda Theater was dumb, dumb and dumber.

The stupidest, mind-numbing, degrading-towards-all-things-remotely-intelligent movies were readily available virtually every hour of every day this summer. I mean who saw "The Longshots" or the ever-offensive "You Don't Mess with the Zohan?"

I understand the need to show movies that will make money. Really, I do. I also understand that the majority of Alameda Theater patrons are teenagers who laugh when a fat guy gets punched in the face. I understand that pleasing this clientele results in a lot of cash, and that this is how the theater will survive in such a poor economy.

Seven screens play a rotating ten movies throughout the day. Why can't the good ol' folks at the Alameda Theater reserve just one of their seven theaters for independent or foreign films? For films outside the typical, big-budget Hollywood spectrum? For intellect, wit or an artistic point of view? For diversity, for goodness sakes!

That could be just one film out of the ten, virtually identical movies they currently show. A whole new clientele of sophisticated movie-goers would be on the scene, and the insipid adolescents wanting their gory action would still have nine movies to choose from.

It seems so simple, because it is.

And there is still time for this change! And I hope it comes soon, because I really, really do not want to trek out to Berkeley or San Francisco to finally see "In Search of a Midnight Kiss."

A Letter to the College Board

By Rachael Valler

Dear College Board,

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for helping me "connect to college success" while simultaneously ruining my life. While some of my peers are outdoors enjoying the sunshine, I am dutifully reading your helpful and intimidating website. Forget going to the gym or getting a healthy amount of exercise; my fingers are getting the most rigorous work out possible. In fact, I can already feel my arthritis developing due to the incredible amount of practice tests I have taken.

Your site has really had a great effect on my every day life, with extremely practical applications. Thanks to your helpful test-taking guides, I have begun to think in multiple choice. At 12:42 each day, my mind quickly switches to test-taking mode. At lunch, when I am debating on what to get, your full-proof test preparation guides have taught me well. Do I go to a) Ramiro and Sons and get a child burrito or b) go to Peet's and indulge in a Double Shot Espresso, c) House of Bagels—always a solid choice, but is it too obvious? Are they trying to trick me? Or perhaps I should

go for d) In-N-Out with Animal Style fries and a Vanilla Shake or e) All of the above. So, obviously I choose E. Thanks College Board for not only corrupting my decision-making process, but also decimating any chance I have for a healthy diet.

Thanks to your analysis of each individual college, my peers and I can truly see how we stand. Who needs names? Now we are just a number, a score to be sent out to various colleges to be critiqued. Individuality and personal identity have always been overrated. My poor score on the Math 2 SAT II has only furthered my insecurity. Insecurity leads to desperation and the idea that we are unable to have an enriching, successful life, and that leads us straight to your site.

It's pathetic to think that your website is so incredibly popular. High school students, stressing about their studies and college applications, are only furthering their anxiety by visiting your site. Is this what we have become? Grade grubbers who are only interested in getting into UCLA and scoring perfectly on our SAT? You know things are getting out of control when the highlight of our day is getting the SAT Question of the Day correct. And in reality, shouldn't we

be whiling away hours on Facebook rather than reading your anxiety inducing content on your site? You learn all kinds of things on the various applications. Rather than sending UC LA my SAT scores, I can send my best friend a Pokemon, which we all know is much more fulfilling and valuable anyway.

And now, when so much emphasis is placed on standardized tests, which you enthusiastically support, students are crumbling under the pressure. Once cordial colleagues are turning into ravenous competitors. Forget helping friends study for the SAT, they are standing in your way of Yale or Harvard—every man is for himself.

According to the website nomoretets.com, when fourth graders at a Sunday School in Florida were asked what they wanted to pray for and what they were afraid of, together they prayed about passing their local standardized tests.

So thank you. Thank you for forcing students into a scantron-filled existence, full of stress, animosity and low-self esteem. You make the world a better place.

Dutifully yours,
Rachael R. Valler

Steer clear from these laws.

By Megan Huey

The legislators of California have tightened their seat belts once again on driving restrictions, and with good reason.

Teenage drivers have the highest mortality rate of any age group attributed to car accidents and car crashes. Car accidents are the leading cause of teenage deaths; more than 5,000 teenagers die each year in the entire United States. Due to the gradual increase of laws being made and enforced, death tolls are declining slowly but surely.

Cell phone usage is a big subject. Vehicle Code 23124 states that drivers 18 and over may use hands-free devices to make calls, but the same code prohibits drivers under 18 from using devices, hands-free or not, while driving their cars.

A huge flaw in this relatively new law is that the problem is not the cell phone itself, but the actual distraction that comes from the act of talking. When driving with my father, I became immersed in a deep conversation and while I was talking, I missed a turn I was supposed to take. My father then said, "It's hard to talk and concentrate on driving at the same time

isn't it?" Before then, I had never thought that talking would be that big of a distraction.

Another issue with the law is that text messaging is still allowed. Wait, what was that? Text messaging is still allowed? Yes, that's right. The argument most drivers have been is that making or receiving calls requires to know what buttons to push when dialing or picking up. Although to send a text message you would need to know the buttons by heart; but what happens when the person replies? The driver would have to take his' or her's eyes off the road to read the text message and that creates two potential dangers; the driver is taking his or her eyes off the road and is trying to compute what the text message said and what they are going to reply with.

Now seeing the dangers that text messaging has, legislators in several states are trying to bar text messaging as well. As of right now, text messaging is still allowed, but strongly discouraged. Texting while driving adds a 300% risk of getting in an accident. Next time you're texting while driving, think about that.

Under Section 12814.6 CVC instated in January 2006, minors

under 18 with their license may not drive anyone under the age of 20 unless accompanied by a person 25 and older. They also may not drive between the hours of 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. within the first 12 months of receiving their license.

This is a fair rule after some consideration. After 12 months, the driver will have most of the acquired skills needed to be an experienced driver, especially the capability of making quick and sensible decisions when put into potentially hazardous situations while driving. Having other passengers in the car is dangerous, especially teenagers who drive other teenagers. According to statistics, taken by Reader's Digest, show that adding one passenger to the car increases the car crash risk by 48%. And by adding a second passenger, the risk of getting into a car crash increases by 158%.

The restrictions of hours when teenagers are allowed to drive are also reasonable. Driving during late hours while tired and zoned out is risky; the driver has a slower reaction time when tired, which can lead to an accident.

This law does have a few loop-
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Freshman and senior perspectives

Freshman staff writer finds Alameda High School very impressive

By Isaac Everett

Upon entering high school, I was thankful to find it in line with most of my expectations. The people were kind, the teachers were nice, the school was bigger. I believe the school to be very welcoming, and am pleased to go here each morning.

I am very impressed that even with the low funding that the state has given to our schools, A.H.S can still be an excellent school. The teachers are very clear with lessons, and are flexible with schedules and such. I feel as though the teachers trust the students more than they did in middle school, class sizes are smaller, though I've been told that that is mainly due to the fact that freshmen get smaller class sizes in math and English.

I believe the school to be very welcoming, and am pleased to go here each morning.

I enjoy the freedom of being able to go off-campus for lunch. Living fairly close by, I am able to drop off the books from my morning classes and pick up the books needed for my afternoon classes, all whilst cooking a three cheese panini for lunch.

High school was not radically different from my expectations, which were that the majority of the people would be nice, and that I would like most of my classes. Though I hoped it would be a change for the better, there was no guarantee A.H.S would be a better place.

An unexpected obstacle was the floor plan of the second floor

of the main building. I am thoroughly convinced that the building has extra-dimensional properties. It does not look very big on the outside, but on the inside, it is rather large. The second floor has the feel of a labyrinth, with its many twists and turns.

High school was not radically different from my expectations, which were that the majority of the people would be nice, and that I would like most of my classes.

Something else I was not expecting was the block schedule. I like the idea of the block schedule, because it allows me to spend more time in classes I am interested in.

The best part of being a freshman, in my opinion, is the smaller class sizes. With a smaller class the teachers can pay more attention to individual students.

Despite what many people say,

The best part of being a freshman, in my opinion, is the smaller class sizes.

being a freshman isn't so bad at all. People don't treat me any differently, except for the times when I get lost in the building and they say, "Of course you got lost, you're a freshman."

After four years, senior staff writer gives advice and insight

By Fayola Perry

Mirianne Williamson once said that, "our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure."

I began to question that statement when reflecting on my last three years as a student here. I remember the insurmountable pressure that I felt. I also remember not feeling powerful at all; I felt Lilliputian. It was as if these over-developed and over-dressed teens were larger than life, and little me was just another face in the crowd. This was even before I stepped into the classrooms, where my middle school honor roll certificate paled in comparison to the vast knowledge that these 14-year-old scholars and intellects possessed; they were in my grade yet I still felt inferior.

It was a frustrating and humbling experience to say the least, to go from the top of the social pecking order to the very bottom.

Although I stood out, was outspoken and quickly befriended many upperclassmen, there was always that looming fear that I, Fayola Perry, was not good enough.

Unlike most teenage girls, my main concerns were not centered on appearance- I was more or less comfortable in that regard- what worried me most was the ever-present feeling that I couldn't, wouldn't and didn't measure up academically and intellectually.

As I coasted through freshman year, I reconnected with my passion: writing. I write outside of school, but I would always get in trouble in class for off-task writing. Creative writing class provided me with an outlet to express myself; it was something

to look forward to during the monotonous school day.

As my freshman year drew to a close, I began to get complacent and lazy and my grades began reflecting my lack of effort and acceptance of mediocrity.

Sophomore year continued in the similar manner. I had let my fear of inadequacy drive me to actually being inadequate.

Junior year was when realized that I was using my fear of being insufficient as a crutch. This only further disabled me, and it was at that point that I had truly become inadequate.

So my advice to you, especially lower classmen do not allow yourself to become complacent and nonchalant, because when one quails and accepts defeat, it is only then that they have actually been defeated.

If I could impart any knowledge to incoming freshmen, it would be that a little effort goes a long way. Don't ever give up. Fracture the status quo, and don't settle for passing mediocrity unless that is truly your best effort, and you know you've given any and every task your all.

So many factors can contribute to students' downfalls. Whether boredom, bad study skills, or lack of effort, I learned that it can be overcome if we stop limiting ourselves.

If boredom is what caused my complacency, I would like to tell my younger-self, use those classes or school activities that you do enjoy to fuel your day, and help you keep physically, mentally, and emotionally aware and present. Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, because we allow the fear to cripple our progress, for we are truly powerful beyond measure as long as we give our best effort.

Dress code falls short in fairness

By Alexandra Markheim

When it comes to the dress code, the staff seems to be divided on how to enforce the rules. With some teachers, it's an automatic reflex to comment on students' inappropriate attire, while with others, the outfit goes completely unmentioned.

It seems like more female teachers are willing to comment on students' attire. But with male teachers, most remain quiet throughout the subject, probably because any comments they make could be perceived as inappropriate. Some teachers will make critical remarks to certain students while not mentioning

anything to the students they are "friends" with. It's not fair that certain students become singled out and punished for their attire just because they haven't befriended the staff. If teachers and staff are going to comment on students' attire, it needs to be fair across the board. Playing favorites is not acceptable.

When it comes to staff applying the dress code, certain methods they use to check if the attire is school appropriate are downright unnecessary. "Once they made me bend over in the hall way in front of everybody. It was embarrassing. They took the situation out of hand and said things that were uncalled for,"

one student, who asked not to be named, said.

As a student who has broken the dress code and been caught, it honestly does not persuade me not to wear the certain piece of clothing again. When you break a dress code, all that happens is you either get sent home or are asked to wear sweats. But how effective is that? I have worn the same clothes I've been "punished" for on a subsequent day without any further consequences.

Some clothing restrictions are unnecessary. When Alameda suffers through a heat wave, and each individual classroom has 30 plus teenagers with no air con-

ditioner and not enough windows to let a breeze through, the staff has unreasonable expectations.

I have worn short shorts to try to keep cool, but if they were honestly that revealing, I would not have worn them in the first place. When the weather is sweltering, the students have no way to cool off. On these days, the staff should understand and let the dress code slide by.

Some people may say, "Well if you feel that the dress code isn't being distributed equally, why aren't you in favor of a uniform?" I'm not, because with uniforms, students aren't capable of ex-

Dress Code: see page 10

2008 presidential faceoff: Obama vs. McCain

Barack Obama: leading the United States into the future

By Daniel Chen

As Election Day nears, millions of Americans have to make that decisive choice between the two presidential candidates. So the question remains, who's the best choice for America? While Obama has swept the country and few people have simply jumped on the bandwagon, Barack Obama remains the best choice to lead America against the challenges of tomorrow.

Obama's presidential platform has a much sounder basis than that of John McCain. First-off, his tax plan will restore fiscal responsibility to the government, in face of eight years of reckless tax cuts and a rising federal deficit. Obama has said that he will reduce taxes for the middle and working classes, which is 95% of the population, while raising taxes only for the highest bracket of income earners.

Now, as the economy slows

and sinks closer to a recession, regulations are needed to stop corruption and reckless spending on Wall Street. McCain has long been a proponent of deregulation, and only recently has he changed his position due to the dynamic political climate.

On September 15, McCain said that the fundamentals of the economy are sound. That same day, Lehman Brothers, a global financial-services firm, filed for bankruptcy, the largest bankruptcy in American history. When asked to define "rich", McCain said the cutoff point was an income of \$5 million. For someone who claims to know what is best for the American people, it seems that McCain is largely out-of-touch.

Obama, on the other hand, favors more regulation for Wall Street. After irresponsible deregulation, Americans want to restore fiscal responsibility to the government. Obama has

made that a corner piece of his platform. As of late, even Bush has favored new legislation calling for direct federal involvement into the economy with the large price tag of \$700 billion. It seems that many Republicans are now seeing the consequences of letting the economy run wild.

In addition, Obama's choice of a running mate is a better choice for America. Joe Biden, a senior senator of Washington, has the foreign policy experience that Obama lacks. In choosing his running mate, Obama has shown that he can make informed decisions that will reward him both in the short and long-term.

McCain, on the other hand, has chosen a running mate who can only energize his base momentarily. While criticizing Obama's presidential run due to his inexperience, McCain has gone out and chosen Sarah Palin, someone who has less than two years of experience as governor

of Alaska.

During an interview with Charles Gibson, Palin stressed that because Alaska is adjacent to Russia, she has foreign policy experience. In a subsequent interview with Katie Couric, Palin continued to stress this point, even adding that because Russian planes land in Alaska, her foreign policy is substantial.

Also, Palin didn't know the definition of the Bush Doctrine, the administration's post 9/11 foreign policy that calls for preemptive military action. In choosing an inexperienced running mate, McCain jeopardizes the nation in the event that if Palin assumes the presidency, she will have even less experience than Obama, seeing that she ran a state with a population smaller than San Francisco's.

McCain does have significant foreign policy experience. His lifelong commitment to service to our country is honorable beyond

measure. However, McCain has been wrong on many foreign policy issues, namely, the Iraq War. Though McCain was right about the troop surge, he was wrong for the first four years. America needs a president that will confront the threats of tomorrow with a cool, calculated head, not the hot-headed brazenness that McCain has shown. In my opinion, Obama was wrong about the troop surge, but I believe he has greater judgement than McCain, who's bellicose nature and obsession with honor will be detrimental to the nation.

We need a president who will restore fiscal responsibility to Washington, can make responsible decisions, knows the problems of the American people, and can approach foreign policy with a cool head. McCain has done great service to this nation, but its time for him to step down. We need a new generation of leaders. We need Obama.

The path to energy independence: "Drill, baby, drill"... sort of

By Allen Young

As Election Day approaches, millions of Americans will have the opportunity to have their voices heard and elect the next President of the United States.

This election is perhaps the most important and crucial election in the past two decades. We are a country at war against terrorism, with a troubled economy and who we choose as our next president will help shape the future of our country and the world.

After considering both Senator Barack Obama and John McCain, I have come to the informed conclusion to support Senator McCain and Governor Sarah Palin for President and Vice President of the United States.

The personal accomplishments along with the political experience that both McCain and Palin bring to the ticket offer America a new chance at renewed prosperity and peace.

The most important job of the

president during a time of war is to serve effectively as Commander-in Chief. With our continued involvement in the Iraq War, the instability of the Middle East and Eastern Europe, it is imperative that our next president has the military and foreign policy experience necessary to protect our nation. McCain has spent a lifetime devoted to the protection of the United States and the service of its people. His years as a POW during the Vietnam War gives him an unique perspective and experience no other person running for president ever had.

McCain has proven time and time again that he knows what is right for the United States in terms of foreign policy. When most Democrats opposed the troop surge in 2006 arguing that it would not be effective, McCain fervently supported it. Two years after the start of the surge, violence is drastically reduced in Iraq and significant progress has been made both militarily and diplomatically.

With the recent crisis on Wall Street and the failure of numerous banking and mortgage companies with many others struggling to survive, we need a president that will keep taxes low for all Americans and businesses. McCain and Palin have vowed to do just that while Obama and Joe Biden have proposed tax increases for everyone including middle class families, small businesses and corporations. This taxation policy will stunt investment in our economy, force businesses to ship jobs overseas and do nothing to help our slumping stock market and economy.

Obama will govern as a typical tax and spend liberal. He plans to raise taxes on all Americans in order to recklessly spend money on excessive unrealistic programs. Although his plan for universal healthcare is noble and altruistic, the reality is that the implementation of a large federal program such as this will inevitably bankrupt the country and send the deficit through the roof.

McCain will govern on sound social conservative principles while embracing the value of bipartisanship.

McCain values the sanctity of all life regardless of its stage in development. He believes in the traditions that have made this country great such as the right to bear arms and our solemn duty to protect and defend our nation and its people.

I also believe McCain and Palin have a far superior plan to achieve energy independence in this country. McCain has proposed investing in the development of alternative sources of energy such as nuclear and renewable energies but at the same time he realizes that it will take time for all these technologies to replace our dependence on foreign oil. In order to reduce the importation of foreign oil during our transitional years from a oil dependent to an alternative energy dependent country, McCain supports increased drilling off our own coast as well as drilling in ANWR (Alaska National Wild-

life Refuge).

Obama on the other hand supports alternative energy but rejects nuclear power and increased domestic oil production on the grounds that it would destroy our environment. Although this is a valid reason not to drill, not doing so would cause our country to continue to send billions of dollars overseas every year to buy oil from hostile countries and as a result, jeopardize our national security.

On issue after issue, McCain shows he possesses policies and ideas superior to Obama's. His years in the Senate as well as his service to our country during the Vietnam War have provided him the knowledge, character, and leadership skills necessary in a president.

If one is willing to look past all the empty rhetoric spewed by Obama and take the time to really consider the ideas and solutions each candidate is proposing, the choice becomes extremely clear. McCain is ready to lead. Obama simply is not.

Driving from page 8

holes. One is that you can drive your underage sibling if you have a signed note explaining why it is necessary for you to drive him or her for the exact date and between the exact hours.

The second loophole is that if you are an emancipated minor, then the only paper you will need is Proof of Financial Responsibility stating that you are exempt from this law.

All these mandated new laws

have created a decline in the pattern of teenagers getting their license. These laws were not meant to dissuade teenagers from getting their license but to rather protect the ones who do. If you are one of the teenagers who feel discouraged, don't be; the government is just trying to keep our future generation safe and alive.

I say go and get that permit and license, but know that driv-

ing is a privilege not a right. Drive safely and by the law.

If it is your parents who are saying no, then simply make a strong case that you feel you feel you are ready and mature enough to take on this responsibility. A popular trend among parents and teenagers is driving contracts in which both would agree to certain consequences. They are printable and accessible from many sites.

Dresscode from page 9

pressing their own creativity and inner personality. I believe that I believe that our physical appearance and the way we dress should represent our true selves. How we choose to present ourselves helps us grow into adults and learn how to respect and see each person as their own individual. We may be students of Alameda High, but we are all our own person and expressing ourselves is

what makes any student unique and different.

The true answer to the dress code drama is to enforce a clear set of rules consistently. If so many people aren't in agreement with the current dress code, the staff should create a new dress code that accommodates the current dilemmas of changing weather and conditions. There's an easy way to fix this problem while pleasing everyone.