

2005

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Merry Christmas

Merry @#\$%*& Christmas!

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-12-25 at 00:00:58.

SteveCast #8 Carnage at the Mall

More of my nonsense on the mic, on vacation and bored.

Music in this podcast: [The Quintessentials](#) - The Stepford Wives, [Gold Enzo Ferarri](#) - To the Night Club, [Bad Religion](#) - American Jesus

Music provided by [the Podsafe Music Network](#).

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-12-23 at 00:28:27.

SteveCast #7: Customer Appreciation Day

I'm on vacation again, so it's time to resume an activity that can consume my time that's at least somewhat constructive.

WTF is "customer appreciation day"?

[Propeller Brewery's India Pale Ale](#)

What razor do you use?

Featured music by [The Pistol Whipper Snappers](#). Background music provided by [Chub Creek](#) and [Mark Rushton](#). Extra content by [Bruce Murray](#).

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-12-20 at 18:26:53.

Spine is back!

There was something amiss with our database server, but we restored the system as it was on Thursday before it went down. Some of your comments, and blog entries may have been lost if you made them after Thursday night.

Continue as if you were normal.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-12-19 at 10:03:39.

RIAA phone call



Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-12-13 at 20:35:39.

Best 404 Ever



[My Odeo Channel](#) (odeo/197f40cc82612ba9)

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-12-13 at 18:55:51.

Open the box on new music

A very interesting music subscription service has opened up recently. Pandora.com has indexed the musical "styles" of a crapload of music, some popular, some not-so-popular. The really cool thing about this particular service is that you can create multiple "channels" by seeding it with the name of a band or a song. It'll then analyze that song and deliver in your channel songs with similar musical qualities.

It's really quite good at what it does: Pick your favourite song and create a channel based on that...I've been listening to my **Eric's Trip** and **Chixdiggitt** channel for most of the morning, and I've heard maybe two songs I didn't like.

Give it a try. Unless you're on dial-up :P

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-12-08 at 13:01:26.

All blog entries now on the front page

I got tired of having such a static front page on spine.cx, so now, all blog entries from all users will appear on the front page. You can still give out the URL to your own personal blog as

`http://<username>.blogs.spine.cx/` like this <http://steve.blogs.spine.cx>.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-11-30 at 10:19:05.

I baked some Macaroni and Cheese

Ok, so I'm about to get down to some funky baking action. Macaroni and cheese. Easy, right? Well, in theory...

First I realize that I don't have a casserole dish. Or a grater. To the Store! Home Outfitters provides me with a spiffy new stainless steel collander, a pyrex casserole dish that has a lid so it can double as a storage container, and one of those cool graters that they use in restaurants where you put the cheese in and just turn the handle (they're are much easier on your knuckles). Next stop is the grocery store, where I pick up all the ingredients I'll need to do the stuff before I put everything in the oven.

Come inside, and I'll share the rest of the process with you.

First things first. It's called Macaroni and Cheese, so I started with the macaroni. Bring a pot to boil and throw it in. That's easy. Then, since lean ground beef was on sale, and I had bought some of it, I decided to make macaroni and cheese and meat. I started browning the beef. The next step was to crush a column of crackers. They didn't stand a chance.

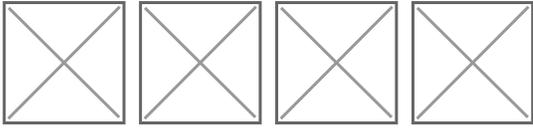


The second part of macaroni and cheese is obviously the cheese. I had purchased many fine cheeses to use as part of the recipe. I had hoped my new grater was up to the challenge and it didn't disappoint. Those cheeses were begging for mercy in seconds flat. Cheddar, Monterey Jack, and fresh Parmesan all went into the mix. Along with a couple of cans of Hunts Italian flavoured tomato sauce. I was supposed to use tomatoes, but I didn't realize I got the wrong thing until I had opened the cans and was pouring the contents into a bowl.

The final pre-bake step: Pour all that shit into a casserole dish and cover it with the crushed crackers. I now realize why people think that all their homemade shit tastes better than anything else. I was so fucking hungry when I *started* this ordeal, by the time I got to this step, and was waiting for the thing to bake, I would have been happy to gnaw on the sole of my shoe. Anything tastes good at that point.

In the end, the thing turned out pretty well. I never said I *couldn't* cook, just that I *didn't* cook. People

seem to confuse the two.



Oh yeah, I cleaned up too.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-11-28 at 22:40:41.

My Challenge

Today, I have commenced my challenge in accordance with the latest podcast. Jeannine has challenged me to go an entire week without eating out. Since it didn't officially start until today, I took the opportunity to order a pizza from Freeman's Little New York last night and that's what I brought for lunch today. I had a cold slice this morning for breakfast.

This evening, I have to go where I haven't been in many months: The Grocery Store. I hate grocery shopping. Most of the time, I end up buying too much shit because I want to try to extend the time between required trips, and half of it spoils in my fridge because I end up eating out somewhere.

If any of you guys have some good, easy, fast recipes for things that I can make this week, post them here. I'll take them under advisement when I'm at the store.

[Edit 28/11/2005 16:59:23]

Thanks for all the suggestions! I think I'm going to try the Macaroni and Cheese tonight. I'll let you know how it goes.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-11-28 at 11:33:29.

Halifax Podcaster Meet-up

Got to meet some interesting characters tonight, including Tod Maffin, Bruce Murray, and Jeff MacArthur. Tod is travelling the country, talking to local podcasters along the way, and trying to come up with a strategy for podcasting for the CBC going forward. We met at the Economy Shoe Shop.



Beer, food, and interesting conversation. Good times.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-11-24 at 01:10:59.

Lost podcast reveals some new information

If anyone else is listening to the Lost podcast that ABC is doing, you'll now know that they have revealed that yes, in fact, the bunker that the tail section survivors found was Dharma Initiative facility called "The Arrow". This isn't really hugely surprising because the logo found in that bunker looked similar to the Swan logo, but with an arrow instead of a swan. What they won't say (yet) is what research was being done in that facility. If you don't know what I'm talking about, go [\[url=\]here](#), and then continue inside the article.

They also said that this week's episode is going to be called "Collision" and that it will feature a flashback for Anna Lucia (Michelle Rodriguez's character).

Hanso Foundation Projects:

1. Life-Extension Project
2. Electromagnetic Research Initiative
3. Quest for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence
4. Mathematical Forecasting Initiative
5. Cryogenics Development Imperative
6. Juxtapositional Eugenics Development Institute
7. Accelerated Remote Viewing Training Facility

In the orientation video (from the episode titled "Orientation"), it is mentioned that there are 6 stations (like the one the fuselage survivors found), but it was unclear whether they meant 6 on the island or 6 in the world. A second bunker found on the island would seem to indicate the former.

Because of the scenes showing Jack's key floating in front of him and Desmond mentioning that his fillings hurt whenever he walks past a certain wall in the facility, it is reasonable to assume that "Swan" station is dedicated to the Electromagnetic research initiative. Everyone is still speculating what the "Arrow" station's purpose is.

In the latest episode, "The Other 48 Days", the tail-section survivors find, a Bible, a glass eye, and a radio. What that could possibly mean is anybody's guess, but the producers of the podcast have said that they are not random and that those specific objects were found for a reason. Here's hoping they don't make us wait *too* long.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-11-23 at 00:44:10.

Saturday night at the Attic: CHIXDIGGIT!

Everybody who's anybody is going to be at the Attic this Saturday night to see [Chixdiggitt!](#) for their Halifax Pop Explosion appearance.

This band is probably my favourite live act. Their energy on stage is legendary and their music is short enough to hold even the attention of the most ritalin-prescribed spaz. Trust me when I say you'll regret it if you weren't there. Also on the bill are the semi-local act (from Moncton), the Ditchpigs, who pleasantly surprised me the first two times I saw them.

Show starts at 2300h. And best of all? It's only \$10.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-10-14 at 09:21:39.

How much fucking water can the sky hold?

I know we live in Nova Scotia, where the weather can change in an instant. So why isn't it changing now? How much fucking water can possibly be up there? Surely we've seen it all by now. It's been raining all fucking weekend...and not just drizzling, I mean raining HARD. My dehumidifier told me to fuck off.

Goddamn.

I was going to wash my car this weekend.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-10-10 at 14:51:14.

My Flickr account

I've opened up an account on Flickr. It's pretty useful. As a freeloader, you can upload up to 20 megs of photos per month. If you choose to pay \$25 / year, you can upload up to **2 gigs** a month. (**EDIT:** Changed from 20 gigs to 2 gigs to reflect reality. Still, that's a lot of photos: All the photos on spine so far aren't even 2 gigs.)

Since I have a quality camera on my cellphone now, I've taken to taking random pictures. Flickr is the perfect venue for such an endeavour. You can even subscribe to an RSS feed for my photos.

You can see my photos in all their web-enabled glory here: <http://flickr.com/photos/stevedinn/>.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-09-29 at 16:53:31.

Some stuff has happened while I was away

I ventured out into my neighbourhood today. Many things have changed since I've been gone. I took some pictures using my jizz-jar.

Click inside and we can walk through them.

1. It looks like the ol' Copper Penny is getting a new facade. I don't think that'll make it any more upscale.



2. This HDC place was supposed to open before I left (on September 7th). It still doesn't look very open, and really, why do I care anyway?



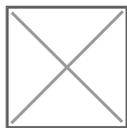
3. Applebees. Swiss Chalet meets the Apple Barrel. Meh.



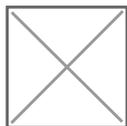
4. NSLC in Bayers Lake is finally open! Only about an entire year behind schedule! Walk-in coolers get my thumbs up. Now if only they weren't under the thumb of a retarded union like the NSGEU...



5. Old Navy, baby, yeah! I will continue to ensure that children in developing countries have jobs by shopping here.



6. I couldn't zoom very well, but if you look in the background on the yellow building, you can see the logo of the once great Kartbahn. Hopefully it'll be open soon.



Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-09-18 at 19:48:37.

i-mate Jasjar

One of the cool things about going to the PDC was the crazy deal that was announce during the keynote speech on the first day by [Jim Allchin](#). An [i-mate Jasjar](#), normally retailing for about US\$1200 for the low, low price of US\$160. And if you were one of the first 300 people to order (of course, I was; I was #78), you could get a bluetooth wireless headset for US\$9.95 (which I also got). How can you say no to a nearly 90% discount, especially for a device that is so fucking cool?

Let me run down some of the features on this baby: First, it's a Windows Pocket PC 2003-based PDA. It has bluetooth and 802.11 wireless capabilities. It has two cameras, one 1600 x 1280 on the back for real pictures, and a 320 x 240 on the front so you can partake in video calls. Calls...yeah...did I mention it's also a cell phone? Pop your simcard in and you're also on the GSM network.



The device can open like a clamshell to reveal the beautiful 640 x 480 screen and QWERTY keyboard. I'm still getting used to typing with my thumbs. The screen can also swivel 180 degrees and fold back down on top of the keyboard to act like a regular PDA. The screen will automatically re-orient itself from landscape to portrait when you do this, in order to maintain "uprightness" of the display.

I popped my 256 meg SD card that previously belonged to my camera in to the device and it happily played my MP3 media files in Windows Media Player 10. I'm really enjoying using my first true convergence device. I think I'll still use my MP3 player for music though, this thing is still a little more bulky than I'd really like to carry around with me all the time, but I can't really complain. It's the best portable device I've seen to date.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-09-16 at 03:16:29.

Tuesday afternoon at the PDC

I am posting this from a new PDA/cellphone/wi-fi device...I'm still getting used to the keyboard, or thumbboard as it seems to be.

Anyway, a session on MMC 3.0 is about to start so I'll check you guys later. Frosst and I will put up some audio as well.

Edit: Some photos are up, and the podcast is back up after some technical difficulties.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-09-13 at 18:56:09.

Finally in L.A.

Fucking woke up at 0345h this morning to get my 0430h ride to the airport to catch my 0610h flight to JFK and then onto LAX. Cool incidents were that I went through security at JFK right behind the Wayans Brothers. That was pretty neat. I'm glad to see that celebrities have to go through the same sort of bullshit that the rest of us do.

After that, we got on the flight to L.A., and proceeded to become bored out of my mind. It was a fucking long flight (~5 hours) and I am too fucking big to fit comfortably in the economy-class seats. But, of course, we eventually make it and disembark. Then comes the crazy cab ride in the handicap cab with the guy who looks like he's strung out on coke. That was fun.

But the best part is coming up. We check into the hotel, and not 5 minutes after I get into the room and attempt to get online, but the power goes out. I think I just blew a fuse or something, but as it turns out, half the city is out. Frosst was theorizing as usual, along with most other people, I'm sure, that it was a terrorist attack, but I believe it just turned out to be some utility problem.

So, my first day at the PDC is tomorrow. Wish me luck.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-09-12 at 19:23:05.

I win again

Date: Wed, 07 Sep 2005 17:26:47 -0300
From: Kimberly Hoffman <her email address>
Subject: Allison Crowe
To: <my email address>

Congratulations Steve, you have won two tickets to see Allison Crowe on Saturday, September 10th at 8:00 pm and a copy of her CD. You can pick up your prizes prior to show date at The Coast, 5435 Portland Place between the hours of 9 am to 5 pm. Thanks.

--

Office Manager
The Coast
5435 Portland Place, Halifax NS, B3K 6R7
902.422.6278 ext 123 Fax: 425-0013
www.thecoast.ca

Anyone know what Alison Crowe is like? I knew an Alison Crowe growing up, but I don't think it's the same one.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-09-07 at 21:24:09.

SteveCast #6 - New Orleans is Sinking

I rant a little bit about the anarchy that's going on in [New Orleans](#) and some about [Big Brother 6](#).

Check out [this guy's LiveJournal blog](#). He's a ~~sysadmin~~ the crisis manager for [DirectNIC](#), and he's been holed up in their offices on the 10th floor of an office building in New Orleans since before the Katrina hit. It's really interesting to hear a first hand account of what's happening on the front lines.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-09-01 at 23:40:33.

Podcast mailing list

Due to a few requests, I have set up [a mailing list](#) so that people can be notified via email when a new [Spine.cx Podcast](#) comes out. I'm not sure why they just don't [subscribe via RSS](#), but to each their own.

If you would prefer this method of announcement for the podcasts, you can get yourself on this mailing list by [going here and signing up](#).

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-08-26 at 11:09:41.

Podcasting on location

For the first time, Jeannine and I have been requested to make a personal appearance :) We will be podcasting at the opening of **Bethana Briffett's** new clothing store, **Banana Berry Clothing**. We will be at the store on Thursday, September 8th, 2005, at least from 5:30 - 7:30, with the podcast being released to the internet the following day.

There will probably not be anything there that fits me, but if you're into clothing designed and made by local Haligonians, and would like to support a fellow [Spine.cx Dork](#)'s venture into the entrepreneur-o-sphere, stop by **1584 Argyle Street** on **September 8th** from **1700h - 2000h**.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-08-23 at 21:45:45.

Plane Crashes

Is it just me or have there been a lot of plane crashes in the media lately? Toronto's Air France crash, Greece's Cypriot airliner crash, Venezuela's charter jet crash, and now one in Switzerland.

Everyone always says that flying is statistically safer than driving, and that is absolutely true. But still, sometimes you can't help thinking and fearing the worst. I wonder if the media is just reporting more of them now. It's hard to gauge the difference between what they're reporting now and what they *didn't* before.

It's not going to keep me from flying to the U.S. next month though...after all, the only crash in North America had no casualties, right? Right? :|

Edit: Another one in Peru.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-08-23 at 14:41:19.

SteveCast #5 - Charger test drive and Dave Doolittle's

Steve & I went to test drive a Dodge Charger and ate at Dave Doolittle's. Post in the comments here if you want to go on a Alexander Keith's brewery tour or a Harbour Hopper ride tomorrow (Saturday).

Listen to this one in headphones if you can ;)

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-08-19 at 16:05:00.

SteveCast #4 - The Redwood Grill

I didn't really get a chance to do some of the great suggestions I got, because I didn't go downtown today. I *did*, however, get to go out to the Redwood Grill for supper. In the SteveCast, you'll find my review, as well as some talk about the suggested activities that I didn't do :)

Today's music was brought to you by Spiderbait and John Frusciante.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-08-18 at 19:30:41.

SteveCast #3 - Batting Cages and the Vines

I take a suggestion from Ryan Belbin and hit the batting cages at Atlantic Playland. Afterwards, I drive around a bit and hit the Vines Pasta Grill for supper. All in all, not a completely boring day.

Keep the text messages coming! Email me if you must. Tell me what I should do, and a restaurant where I can eat; I'll record the event and review the restaurant.

Edit: Today's music was brought to you by Daft Punk.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-08-18 at 08:00:01.

SteveCast #2 - On vacation and bored

I'm on vacation and bored out of my mind. Send my phone a text message with what the hell I should do today. I'll try and record it for the next SteveCast.

Edit: Today's music was brought to you today by [Punk-O-Rama 10](#).

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-08-17 at 11:45:38.

Obvious: Bell ExpressVu has lousy customer service

No real surprise here, I just wanted to link to [a real horror story](#) that this guy has had about his attempt to buy a second receiver from Bell. The commenter at the bottom is certainly correct about the cellphone and cable companies having the same bad service. The worst customer experiences I've ever had have come from Rogers and Eastlink.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-08-11 at 20:34:18.

SteveCast #1

The first of probably many "SteveCasts" (Not to be confused with the [Spine.cx Podcast](#)). I talk a bit about how RSS works and how it fits in with podcasting. Then I go into an explanation of some of the new features on the website.

You can probably look forward to some ranting.

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-08-06 at 18:55:18.

Spine.cx's 4th birthday

Yay! It's been 4 years since Spine.cx was brought up in this format of articles and comments and such.

How many of you remember when spine.cx looked like [this](#)?

For a short time, [it looked like this](#).

But most of you probably remember spine.cx [when it was blue](#).

For it's birthday, I gave spine.cx [post-datable blog entries](#) and [user profile pages](#). But anyway, [Bean](#) is in town from [Ottawa](#), so I thought we could have a bit of a party for it at Maxwell's on Saturday night. What do you think?

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-08-05 at 14:16:55.

Podcasting for everybody!

In an effort to make life easier for me, I accidentally added a feature to the website. When you go to post a new blog entry now, if you're paying attention, you'll notice a new text field just above the OK button: "Enclosure URL". If you stick a URL in this text field, it'll show up linked to from the podcast icon in your post, and it'll be included in your blog's RSS feed in the podcasting <enclosure> tag.

No, I'm not going to host your MP3 files, I'm just allowing you to easily create the RSS feed...but buy me a hard drive and I might change my mind ;)

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-08-01 at 19:42:07.

Popularizing the Spine.cx Podcast

Among the many other things I think about during any given day, one of them usually is, "How can I make the Spine.cx Podcast more popular to more people?" Hmm...that certain is one to wax philosophical about, isn't it? One certain way is to vote for the Spine.cx Podcast on PodcastAlley.com. I've actually included a little form over on the right-hand side of the main page that'll be pre-populated with your email address. All you have to do is click the button. If you're worried about being spammed, I wouldn't. I have never received a spam email as a result of my voting on PodcastAlley.

Another way is to subscribe to the Spine.cx Podcast using iTunes and Odeo.com. If you're already subscribed through some other means, you don't have to stop, note that subscription doesn't necessarily mean downloading again. Those two places just use subscription counts or rates to rank their podcasts.

Of course, the best way to popularize just about anything is by word of mouth. Tell your friends about it if you think it's entertaining. Teach them how to subscribe, rather than downloading each episode individually. Introduce them to Odeo.com and how crazy-fucking-easy it is to use. Post on some forums or something. Talk about it.

I was trying to think of a way to have some sort of podcast-promotion contest, but how would I decide who won? I suppose I could just be subjective. I really have no way of knowing how many more people are listening because of a certain campaign. If you can think of some way that could work, I would love to hear it. I would like to have a real contest, where people could win something useful...like \$30 or something.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-07-26 at 15:41:34.

At least Scientologists don't ring your doorbell and wake you up

I fucking hate Jehova's Witnesses!!! Why do they come to my fucking house? They woke me up today. I know it was 10:30, and I probably should have been up anyway, but that's not even close to the point.

I don't want their fucking "Watchtower" magazine. I couldn't even feel good about telling this one off, because she was like 80 years old. Damn.

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-07-16 at 11:26:48.

What is up with Club 5171?

I do not understand what the owners of Club 5171 (formerly Merrill's) are doing with that once-great bar. It all started when they closed the place for three weeks for renovations...

..And then opened again as the exact same fucking place. Since then, it left its dance bar beginnings and tried having live acts play. That obviously didn't work because they changed the format once again to a latin/salsa dancing theme. Today, I'm reading the Coast to find that Club 5171 is advertising themselves as "**The only country bar in the heart of Halifax**".

What. The. Fuck.

I don't think that a bar that can't decide what the fuck it wants to be has any chance to survive (make your time). I'm predicting right now that the brand new bar "*The Frigate*" located under Pogue Fado in the old Soho Kitchen space does WAY better than Club Fifty-one Seventy-shit.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-07-15 at 08:31:44.

The new machine is live!

The afore-mentioned new machine is live. Hopefully the only difference you'll all notice is that it's faster.

But please let me know if it isn't.

Giddyup.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-07-05 at 21:31:05.

NSGEU wants you to boycott private liquor stores

Fuck that.

I'm not even going to get started on what I think of unions, but I know that I absolutely **love** the private liquor stores. Knowing that they're not unionized just makes me love them even more.

This summer, I shall endeavour to shop *exclusively* at non-unionized stores. Fortunately, the NSGEU has posted a list for me.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-07-05 at 08:44:47.

A new spine.cx

Spine.cx is about to get transplanted into a new body. Currently, spine.cx is running on an AMD K6/2 400 MHz chip with 384MB of RAM. A new machine has been set up with an AMD Athlon 1800+ chip and 500MB of RAM. In addition, I have two 40 gig mirrored drives instead of one 5-year-old 6 gig drive :)

In my initial tests, pages on the new server were loading almost 10 times faster than on the current server. Feel free to play with it. Post away, do whatever you want. when I switch it over for good, everything posted to the beta server will be overwritten with the database from the original.

Let me know if there are any problems.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-06-30 at 16:58:26.

Cheap audio equipment

I'm looking at buying some new equipment for recording the podcast. Specifically a new mixer. The one I have only supports two microphones, and to get the guest in for the last two, I've had to pass that mic through my laptop as a preamp and it doesn't sound as good.

So, I'd like to pick up a mixer with ≥ 3 mic inputs (has to support XLR as well as 1/8 or 1/4" mono plugs) and some regular line-level inputs as well. Really cool would be the ability to redirect arbitrary inputs to a secondary output (or to both primary and secondary outputs).

If anyone has any connections, now's the time to give it up :) Or used gear, I'm open to used gear as well, as long as it does what I want at a reasonable price.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-06-29 at 14:39:30.

It's about fucking time

I really don't understand why it took so fucking long to pass the gay marriage bill. Doesn't this shit just make sense to people? This idea behind bill C-38 is one of the most obvious I have ever contemplated. I really do not "get" the people that disagree with it.

I hope that there are whole families of Harper-lovers out there that have headed for their storm cellars because they think the married gays are going to ruin their families.

I realize that most people on this website will agree with me and that I'm "preaching to the converted" so to speak. But man, sometimes it's just good to write about something that you think the government finally got right. I'm not even gay, but this sort of shit is on the same level as things like giving women the vote; i.e., very important, don't you think?

Update: It's been more than 12 hours after the passing of gay marriage legislation and I still haven't seen any de-valued heterosexual marriages. Hmm...wait...no way...Maybe Harper was *wrong*?

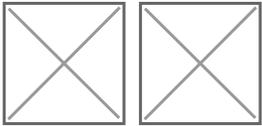
Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-06-28 at 23:35:04.

Promo Girl's identity revealed

I don't know how many of you guys listen to CBC radio, but you probably know that I do. For the last year or so, a curious entity known only as "Promo Girl" has introduced shows, announced upcoming programs, and the like. I always thought she sounded kinda hot.

Well now I have proof.

Promo Girl's identity has been revealed as [Shauna MacDonald](#); originally from Antigonish, but now calling Toronto home. She's been in the [Trailer Park Boys](#) too.



Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-06-23 at 10:19:21.

Panhandling's not illegal...yet

There is a new potential law on the books of the Nova Scotia government. Halifax city council voted overwhelmingly in favour of recommending the "Safe Streets Act" to the province allowing the police to arrest aggressive panhandlers.

[Click here for the CBC Nova Scotia article.](#)

One member of an activist group present during the vote had to be carried out of City Hall by police after they were asked to leave, so there is definitely some disagreement as to whether it was a good idea. But what I think is the most curious thing about this proposed law is the question, "What exactly defines aggressive?" I've never had a panhandler get physically aggressive with me, but I've had them ask me repeatedly for money. Enough that I felt uncomfortable and just wanted to get the hell away from them.

Is this just an excuse, as the protester said, to "make poverty illegal" or is it a reasonable course of action given that panhandlers can be potentially dangerous to the public?

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-06-15 at 09:29:01.

Thanks for the gifts!

I just wanted to say thanks to all the people who brought with them birthday gifts for me on Saturday night. I totally didn't ask for or expect them, so it was even nicer to get something. I ended up with two quarts (or 26'ers for you newfs) of liquor (Crown Royal and Captain Morgan's Private Stock) and three lobsters complete with a stick of real butter!

Thanks everyone, I really appreciated you all coming out and having a good time. Except for the magnets...but I'm not going to let that sully the experience :) Hopefully next year, for my 30th, it'll be even bigger and better.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-06-13 at 22:21:11.

I think I crashed a party

Tanya and I went downtown on Saturday night, to the Seahorse. I'm fairly certain we weren't supposed to be there because the place was not have as crowded as I would have expected. Not very crowded at all. Turns out we crashed some sort of EMI executive's retirement party. Man, was he ever drunk...but 8 shots of tequila in about 20 minutes will do that to you. Jimmy Rankin and Scott MacIntyre were playing too, so that was pretty cool.

After they started those guys played, we were treated to the billed act for the night, King Konqueror. First time I'd ever seen them play, and they were good. They're going to be back at the Seahorse on the 23rd of June, so go check them out if you're into that sort of thing.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-06-06 at 22:57:27.

Best money making scam ever

Man, I wish I had thought of this. All you have to do to make money in this day and age is to threaten to kill and eat a cute little animal. You don't even have to follow through because nobody is going to know if you don't. This schmuck has already bilked \$28k from hapless visitors, and people are still donating.

I'm still not sure this site isn't just a psych student's way to pay tuition.

If you're dumb enough to pay someone money not to eat a rabbit, you deserve to lose it. Read the hate mail. It's pretty funny.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-05-31 at 09:15:48.

Crawl & Order: The day after

The Crawl & Order pubcrawl went off last night without a hitch, save perhaps for the crap-ass weather. The photos are up over [here](#), the pubcast is over [here](#), and you can comment on anything about the crawl in here.

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-05-22 at 18:55:34.

Garrison's Jalapeno Ale

I visited [Bishops Cellar](#) today with my 10% off coupon from [The Coast](#). Got a whole bunch of stuff I've never tried before.

Right now, I'm drinking Jalapeno Beer by Garrison. It smells like the nachos from Empire theatres. Even the crappy cheese; it's amazing. It tastes pretty much like you'd expect it to, like a medium-coloured beer with the distinct flavour of jalapenos.

But it's HOT. Spicy hot. Holy shit. I took a big swig right after I opened it and I nearly shit myself. It was jabbing at the back of my throat with [capsicin](#) daggers. It's taking me the better part of an hour to get it down because I have to let my mouth cool down after each gulp. I think that's why they sell them individually instead of in 6 packs or cases...nobody would drink more than one of these things at once.

It's good, but not in the way that most beer is. Most beer is good because it tastes good and you can drink a bunch of them. This Jalapeno beer is good because it tastes pretty good, and if you give it to your guests, they won't ask for another.

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-05-14 at 21:00:15.

Wireless is almost ubiquitous

I am almost convinced that wireless can and will be everywhere. Right now, I'm in the basement of my grandmother's house in St. John's, Newfoundland, and I'm stealing wireless from somebody in the neighbourhood. It's tremendous. The signal is almost non-existent, but it's good enough that I can maintain a connection and that's good enough for me.

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-05-07 at 23:12:42.

Website feature!

I have told a few people this, but I'm sure most of you don't know: You can get redirected to your blog through snazzy personalized URLs...you just stick your username in front of blogs.spine.cx. For example, mine is <http://steve.blogs.spine.cx>. Makes it easier to give out at parties.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-04-28 at 08:42:26.

Pink Razors

Chixdigg have a new album out, it's called Pink Razors. Man, just when you think they can't rock any harder, they come out with something that rocks fucking harder. I think Chixdigg is probably my favourite band of all time, eclipsing my previous favourite band of all time, Eric's Trip. I mean, what other punk band would ever use the word 'philatelist'? That's just awesome. They're so fucking hard they could scratch corundum. Ask Mohs. He knows what's hard core.

P.S. I might be drunk.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-04-25 at 23:53:13.

The new Doctor Who

There's a new Doctor Who series and so far, it's awesome. Obviously since we're in an entirely new decade for Doctor Who, the special effects are an order of magnitude better than you've ever seen. The Doctor is in his 9th regeneration and is played by Christopher Eccleston. His new assistant is played by Billie Piper (yes, this Billie Piper).

With this show, and the new Battlestar Galactia, I have renewed hope for SciFi on Television, even though Enterprise has been cancelled just when it was getting good.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-04-25 at 23:24:53.

The second podcast

So, we got together at my place and recorded a second podcast. This one has Jeannine talking into a much better microphone. Thanks to [Matt Muise](#) for lending it to me. We run the gamut with this one...talking about everything from how to pronounce 'scallops' to whether it should be legal to use your cellphone while driving.

Subscribe to the podcast [here](#).

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-04-24 at 19:38:20.

Spine.cx's first podcast

Yes, it's true! Spine.cx has entered the pod-o-sphere. I'm guessing that some (probably many) of you have no idea what podcasting is or why it could be useful to you. The short version is that podcasting is the downloading of binary content via RSS syndication. (If you don't know what RSS is, check out the orange rectangle located on the left of this page.) With the correct application managing your syndication, you don't have to manually download anything. You just go to your computer, and there's a bunch of content on your hard drive.

The most common use for this technology so far is syndicating audio files (usually mp3s) that are basically radio shows. I subscribe to a few of them. But the beauty of it is that it's not limited to audio. It could be video, or even a torrent file. Combine syndication with the automatic downloading of torrents and you've got something incredibly powerful and useful. I'm not using bittorrent technology (yet), but everything is still available as MP3s.

Subscribe to my podcast feed!

Jeanning and I talk about Halifax developments, swarmings, and the new pope (who I think I mistakenly called John Ratzinger...should have been Joseph). I can't apologize enough for the quality of Jeannine's microphone; it really sounds like shit. If anybody has a reasonable mic that the wouldn't mind lending me... ;)

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-04-21 at 23:47:25.

The Subway Thing

For posterity, here is the original Subway rant that pretty much got Spine.cx on the map. I just wanted to make sure it wasn't lost.

Bring Back the Classic Cut

An Online Petition

Picture this, I'm at Subway, and I'm looking forward to sinking my teeth into my freshly-made, renaissance-quality 12-inch roasted chicken sub. Mmmmmm....Delicious. It's lunch time, and I'm relatively hungry. My mind is pretty much blank except for the culinary concoction that I'll be injesting in the next few short minutes.

The illiterate seem to like symbols.

"What kind of bread?" the nice lady behind the counter disturbs my sandwich-induced meditation.

"White," I reply, without hesitation. I never could get into the idea of submarine sandwiches on whole wheat, but I digress...

My mind is racing with pictures of generous helpings of meat and vegetables all nestled into a V-shaped canyon of tasty bread with that clever little strip disconnected from the main loaf. It actually seems to invite toppings to fill it up. It's just not proper if it's not overflowing with the girth of edible vegetation.

The nice lady turns abruptly, and grabs a loaf from the rack behind her. Faster with a knife than that android from "Aliens", she slices open the bread and begins to place the sumptuous ingredients within. I begin to notice something not quite right with the look of this proto-sandwich, but I let it go; after all, she's the Sandwich Artist, not me.

I follow along the sneeze guard, toward the cash register, as the nice lady continues making my meal, and I finally realize that the bread is not actually in two pieces, as the Subway sandwiches of yore, but rather one. It's simply slit down one side like a hot dog bun. I'm in shock. There's just no way I'm going to get all the toppings I want on this sandwich. I'm in such a state of disbelief that I pay, slackjawed, and leave with an \$8 mutation under my arm.

Most people don't read the text, so here's another picture.

Apparently gone are the days when one could ask for enough lettuce and tomatoes to effectively have a side salad with one's sub. Not to mention the impossible feat of attempting to eat one of these hideous abominations; I won't go into the gory details here.

Sure, you can bend to the will of the establishment, and force yourself to *ask* for the old cut, but that's really not the point. Do you have to ask for the "classic" Coke anymore? No, it's the default. And you know why? Because it's better. The public stood up and bitched, and the establishment listened. Power to the people!

To anyone who longs for the classic subway bread incision, and abhors this incredulous deformity of art, please sign my petition to bring the 'classic' cut back to the Subways of our fine nation, and to find the one responsible for instigating this despicable mutilation of sandwiches.

How do you like your buns?

A comparison of two sandwiches

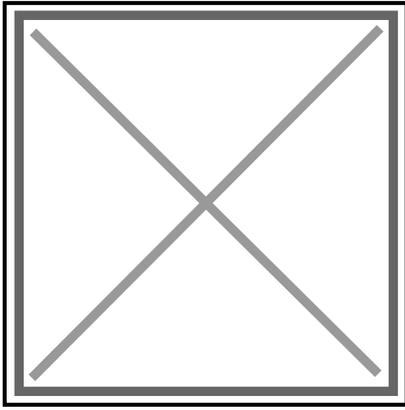
Purpose: To demonstrate that the new "hot dog" style of Subway bread cutting is inferior to the old "V-shaped canyon" style.

Hypothesis: The old style will hold more vegetables, and be easier to eat. Overall, providing a more enjoyable lunchtime experience to the eater.

Procedure: I get together with a non-believing friend to use as a control specimen. I figure he won't mind getting a sandwich cut the new way because he doesn't yet know the difference. I know it's kind of unethical, letting him actually pay money for an abomination like this, but hey, it's for science. We travel to Subway with plans to get basically the same sandwiches, only mine cut the old way, and his cut the new way. The time at the actual store was rather uneventful. The staff were polite and efficient as they always are. I don't blame them for this fiasco...they're just doing what they're told. But how can you call your employees Sandwich Artists when they must bow to the Establishment's method of cutting bread?

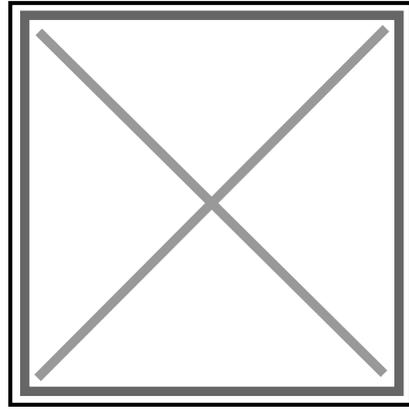
Let's take a look at the sandwiches once we get them back to the lunchroom and unwrap them:

The Old Cut



This is what a sandwich should look like. Neat. Tidy. Perhaps a little spillage around the bottom, but that extra stuff is all good.

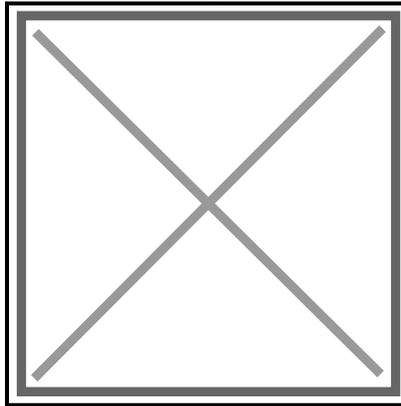
The New Cut



Look at it. It's disgusting. It looks like somebody gutted a muskrat.

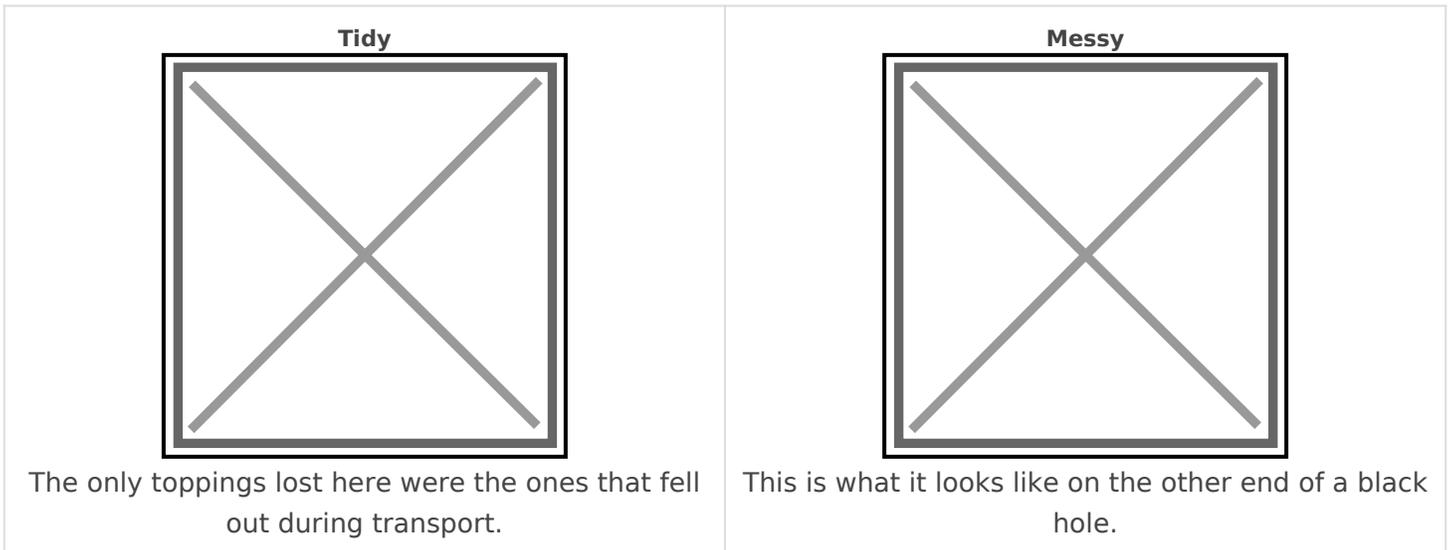
Here we can see my assistant, Ryan, attempting to eat the sandwich cut the new way. As he soon finds out, it's not very easy.

The Eating Process



This might just be the most disturbing picture of all; he can't even get it to his mouth without spilling toppings all over the place. Poor Ryan, the sacrifices he makes for science...

Now that we're finished eating, we can examine the aftermath. You can easily see that the waste factor is much lower with the old cut.



Conclusion: We now have empirical evidence to support the previously made hypothesis. It is reasonable to believe that the old cut is superior.

The Gourmet Bread Conspiracy

or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the New Cut

I don't know if many of you other people noticed this, but looking back, didn't the new cut start appearing just about the same time those new [gourmet breads](#) came out? Not to mention that @%!&*? hand puppet with the voice of the parrot from Aladdin. I believe that the introduction of these breads was not simply to allow the sandwich eater more choice, but also to distract patrons from the fact that it was being cut using an inferior method.

Now, I'm all for innovation in the wheat sciences, but these breads hardly innovate. I was going through the drive-through at a Subway near my home, and I asked the gentleman behind the voice in the speaker to explain the difference between these new-fangled types of bread and, I kid you not, this is a quote:

<p><i>"Hearty Italian, that's basically white with some crap on top; Country Wheat, that's whole wheat with crap on top; and Parmesan Oregano."</i></p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">Note the crap.</div>
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I'm not going to comment on his obvious coarseness of language, on the contrary, I appreciated his frankness in the matter. Parmesan Oregano is the only one of the breads that actually involves

something new, apart from the ill-fated Asiago Cheese bread, which only lasted about a month.

As a discriminating consumer, would you say that "some crap" on top of a regular offering of bread warrants the prefix "gourmet"? I sure don't. It is because of this that I feel the "gourmet" breads of Subway are nothing more than a "smokescreen" of sorts to draw the attention of the public away from the more important issue that's right under our noses: the absence of the V-groove cut.

"Try this new bread, it's great!" says my friend as he chomps down on his new-cut sandwich; a fallen mustard-soaked pickle already staining his shoe.

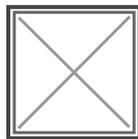
I rest my case.

The fresh salmon debacle

Or lack thereof, as the case may be

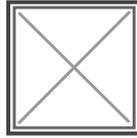
As I'm sure you're aware, my cause is to get the old cut re-instated. But throughout the course of my campaign, various people have emailed me with their own grudges against Subway, and although it deviates from this site's goal, I couldn't help but indulge myself and bitch about this as well.

A loyal reader ([Joe U. Rinator](#)) sent in this photo of what I consider to be another grave disappointment:



At first, like you, I saw the brightly-lit letters spelling out the words "Fresh Salmon". "Hooray!" I thought. What luck. At least one Subway has made a conscious decision to offer a choice of meats above and beyond the ordinary selections. This might even give people who aren't hardcore vegans a choice other than the veggie sub. Hell, I'm the furthest thing from a vegetarian possible, and I'm thinking to myself that I'd love to try a 12" Salmon on white right now.

But then I look a little closer at what I thought was a JPEG artifact, and my blissfully ignorant reality is shattered once again, by the complete, unadulterated absurdity of a large sandwich chain. I leaned in, close to the monitor, and saw some barely visible lighter blue text above and below the word "fresh". I zoomed in for a closer look:



Oh the horror. I realize that what I had seen was not a JPEG artifact, but something much more sinister. Not an innocent product of a lossy image-compression algorithm; no, this was a deliberately-placed, law-suit avoiding manoever. Cleverly framing the advertisement of "Fresh Salmon" were words to change the meaning into a much less appealing product: "new fresh salmon taste".

I'm pretty sure that if what they were serving was salmon, they would damn well call it salmon. This leaves me with quite the poser: If it's not salmon, then what the hell is it? At best it's fish-flavored tofu; at worst--and this is probably closer to the truth--it's a carefully mixed concoction of alge and sawdust. If I want sawdust in a fast food product I'll go to McDonald's.

Just another page in a growing dossier of evidence that the standards at Subway are sliding down a slippery slope from whence there is no return.

The word on the street

The public's opinion of the new cut

I've seen quite a few people sign my petition so far; 152 as of this writing, but I thought the best way to be sure I was doing the right thing was to take to the streets and ask the public. While investigating, I found out some interesting truths:

1. Not many people like to have their picture taken by a stranger; especially when you tell them that it's for a web site.
2. People think you're weird when you ask them about sandwich breads.
3. As I suspected, the public massively prefers the old cut.

Hear what the public had to say



"I totally despise the new way, I prefer the old way. It seems to be more convenient and less messy."

[Listen](#) (32 KBps MP3)

	<p><i>"I personally hate the new cut. I'm not sure why they changed it but I would like to speak for the old cut."</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"It's very simple...the new cut just isn't acceptable. With the old cut, you get all that stuff, and you can hold it in your hand, and just keep chewing and chewing and chewing; man it makes like a huge sub. The new cut? It's crap!"</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"I like the old way better than the new way because all your stuff doesn't fall out."</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"[I like] the old way because it fits more into it and it stays nicer because when it's cut the new way it's more messier because it goes all over the place. The old way kept it in the sub."</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"I prefer the old way, just because things don't fall out the side like they do more now, like everything was on top, you know, so it couldn't fall out the side and that the stuff stays in better and everything blends in better that way."</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"The old cut is better! I like the old cut. Bring back the old cut"</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>
	<p><i>"I always ask them to cut it the old way, and then they look kind of cranky when they do."</i></p> <p><i>"I ask for the old way because I don't like the new way. Yeah, there's not enough room there."</i></p> <p>Listen (32 KBps MP3)</p>

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-04-18 at 11:59:32.

New Forums!

So, just like I rewrote the main site, I've also re-written the forums. They've been done for a while, but I've just been using them myself. I haven't seen any glaring bugs, but if you do, drop me a line and let me know, please.

Also, in case anybody didn't notice who would otherwise care, I would like to move the pub crawl discussion into this thread.

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-04-17 at 12:38:32.

Create your own South Park look-alike

Using this [flash animation](#), you can make yourself into a [South Park](#) character. Good way to waste time at work ;)

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-04-14 at 10:23:13.

More companies should do this

This is one of the coolest things I've ever seen put out by a technology company. It's not a product, it's an advertisement...but it's awesome. It's an explanation of Hitachi's perpendicular technology done in the style of schoolhouse rock.

[Click here to watch it](#)

Just goes to show that if you make an advertisement entertaining, people will not only *not* fast-forward through it, they will actively seek it out and watch it over and over.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-04-13 at 10:18:07.

I thought everything was relative

Let me start out by saying that I love Uncommon Grounds, but their coffee sizing methods just don't make sense.

Is it not logical to call your smallest size, oh, I don't know...SMALL? And say, perhaps, you had three sizes. What would you call them? I think the industry standard would be "small", "medium", and "large". Unfortunately, this is not the case at Uncommon Grounds. I can forgive the "single", "double", and "triple" labels. They at least make sense; unlike Starbucks with their "venti" and WTF. But if you ask for a coffee by actual size, you'll quickly find that their scale is skewed to the right: Their smallest coffee is a medium. Why are these sizes not relative?

Sure, there are times when a size should be absolute, like clothing. If I wear an extra-large, I want to be able to buy any extra-large and know it will fit. If the same methodology were to apply to UG's coffee, then they should offer a small as well.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-04-12 at 10:10:03.

MSN Messenger 7.0

So Messenger 7.0 is out now, officially. I recommend that you all download it, it's pretty cool. Some of the new features include letting you see little, miniaturized images of the contacts in your contact list, allowing users to append a message to their name (so changing your name isn't necessary), and hooking into Media Player to show your contacts what you're listening to at the time. There's also a bunch of little features like "winks", "nudges", and the ability to tell everyone when your MSN Spaces blog is updated.

"What I'm listening to" is a feature I just can't get to work. I don't know why it doesn't work; everything seems to indicate that it should. But it doesn't. If anyone can offer any troubleshooting tips for that one, I'd be much obliged.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-04-08 at 18:50:40.

This Ottawa hotel is awesome

I'm in Ottawa on a business trip and the hotel they put us in is fucking awesome. It's called the Brookstreet Hotel. Hands down, it's the best hotel I've ever stayed in. Better than anything in Halifax. The Internet connection in the rooms is FAST, which could be because we're right next to an Alcatel building. I downloaded about a gig worth of stuff in a little over half an hour.

Anyway, if anyone's reading in Ottawa, let me know what's fun to do here. I'm only here tonight and wednesday night, and we leave Thursday evening.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-04-05 at 18:58:01.

Let's Blaspheme

What do the Pope and Terri Schiavo have in common?

Come on, that question is its own punchline.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-04-01 at 15:26:28.

Google maps is officially the best website ever

I bore witness to something on google maps that completely blew my mind. It recognizes one-way streets when giving directions. I suppose it makes sense since they get their data from a company who also provides data for car navigation systems, but holy shit, that's cool.

Check it out: [One way The other way](#)

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-03-30 at 13:05:00.

What's up with this?



Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-29 at 22:17:58.

Birthdays in the HRM

Every year, I think about trying to come up with a list of things that somebody can do **free** on their birthday. Stuff like Baskin-Robbins free ice cream or lunch at Mother Tuckers and things like that. But every year, I forget until it's too late to do anything about it.

Not this year! Let's compile a list. This could be beneficial to anybody who has a birthday coming up. The more things we find, the more we can all get for free. Fuck, I love free shit.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-29 at 13:38:27.

The Montreal Grill

I just found out that the restaurant (or diner, I guess it's a diner) in the basement of the BMO building downtown has its specials online. [Pretty cool.](#)

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-29 at 13:32:05.

Podcasting and the applications used

I am seriously considering starting up my own podcast. I have pretty much all the gear I would need to do it, short of a three or four channel mixer that would be handy for adding music or switching between two microphones. I am planning to record anything I'd do on my [iRiver IFP 799](#), which is incidentally the same thing that [Adam Curry](#) uses for his podcast.

Mine wouldn't necessarily be daily, probably not, but maybe weekly. One piece of software that Curry uses that I would love to be able to use is a Mac-only application called [Audio Hijack](#) that can grab the sound output of any other application and record it specifically. I tried some basic recording to see how my microphones sound and used my laptop to play some background music, but I still get the pings and blips of other applications like MSN. I know I could just shut those certain applications down, but even explorer makes noise sometimes. Really, what I would like this ability for is to be able to talk to somebody on the podcast via [Skype](#). Seriously, how cool would that be? I could do phone interviews.

Anyway, if anybody has any suggestions for windows applications that can do the same thing, please respond here or [email me](#).

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-29 at 11:46:10.

Time for a new pubcrawl?

So far this year, I've heard no less than three people in separate situations ask me if there is going to be another spine.cx pubcrawl. I don't see why there can't be if the interest is there, but the last few seemed to be waning in the number of those attending. I am more than willing to organize, if the people will come, but it's hard to get motivated when you've seen more than 100 come out and now you're getting only around 30.

If one is going to happen, now is the time, or at least soon. Spring is in the air, the temperature is rising and St. Patrick's day was just a warm up.

Feel free to use this blog entry to post theme and date suggestions. If TJ reads this, consider this the bat-signal. There's a good chance I will need your t-shirt design services in the near future ;)

EDIT (17 Apr 05): Please continue discussion here, in the forums.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-03-28 at 19:14:05.

Having lunch on a Sunday afternoon

Right now, I'm sitting in the Blowers Street Paper Chase. I've ordered a club sandwich and a bowl of ginger-carrot soup. I'm listening to another table's conversation about which country of the world has worst bastardized the English language. One says the United States, one says Australia, a third says Canada, and the fourth is actually arguing for England.

Personally, I don't think it should be just about country, but rather region. Actually one of the guys just brought that up. I mean look at Canada; how many dialects are there? Just in Nova Scotia, even. You can easily tell if somebody is from Cape Breton, or the south shore just by the way they talk. In England, there have been jokes written about how you can tell from somebody's accent, where they live, to the precision of what street they live on. Anybody else have any thoughts?

Incidentally, the club sandwich was exquisite. More bacon than any other club sandwich I've ever had...and this bacon was excellent. Rich, flavourful tomatoes, and vibrantly green, crunchy lettuce. Deee-licious. And their wireless access is free. That's what I like to hear. Even if you don't have a laptop, you can pay a nominal fee and use their workstations scattered throughout the place.

The coffee's not as good as Uncommon Grounds' coffee, but then, really, what is?

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-03-27 at 13:43:49.

Skype Internet Telephony

I'm sure many of you have heard of Skype. Me too, but I had never really used it until yesterday. Man, was I impressed. I got a friend of mine to give me his skype ID over MSN messenger and then I dialed him up. It was amazingly clear. Computer to computer calls anywhere in the world are free. Free.

They've probably had this for a while, but I just never noticed, but now they have the ability to call actual real phones. It costs money to do that, but it's probably cheaper than making a real long distance call. Basically you go over the internet to the local Skype center in whatever country you're calling and then it makes a local call to the number you wanted. Pretty slick.

Anyone else have a Skype ID? Post 'em in the comments, if you don't mind them being public. Mine is "stevedinn". Give me a call :)

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-03-25 at 11:29:15.

Video lottery terminals

On the way into work on the bus this morning, I heard a piece on the news stating that local bar owners are upset about a push by the Nova Scotia government to take away their VLTs. I say good for the fucking government.

Their chief argument is that they would not be able to survive as a business if such a large portion of their income is taken away. If such a large portion of their income is coming from VLTs, then aren't they basically a casino? I think that any place that isn't surviving on their merits as a bar and is just hanging on because they are a place for the gambling-addicted to wallow in their own crapulence, then I don't think they should stick around anyway.

Get rid of the damn VLTs.

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-03-23 at 09:24:09.

Nobody will let me buy a wi-fi SD card

I have been wanting a small, portable wi-fi-enabled device since wireless technology has been available. Now that PalmOne has introduced their SD wi-fi card, I'm thinking to myself, "This card + my Zire 72 = unstoppable!" I journey to Futureshop to pick one up. First stop, the digital camera, PDA, & Cell Phone thingy:

"Hello, I'd like a Palm wi-fi SD card please."

"Sorry, you can only get one in a bundle with a PDA."

I'm pulling out my wallet. "How much is...pardon?"

"You can only get one with a PDA".

Fuck.

What is up with that? As it turns out, Staples is the same way. Why can't I buy this thing by itself? After some googling, I found it on a few websites, but I would rather buy it locally if I can, for obvious reasons. It's not often I leave Futureshop when the thing I want it still in the store.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-22 at 20:36:59.

Podcasting applications suck

I'm trying to get into Podcasting. There are some interesting shows that I've started to listen to on the bus ride downtown in the morning. Unfortunately, the software sucks ass. I haven't been able to get anything I've downloaded to work properly for me. I have to just go to the website and download the shows manually.

I'm very tempted to write my own. If nothing else, it'll show me exactly how difficult it really is to get a podcasting app running.

My roommate and I had the basic idea for podcasting about a year ago. Well, ok, it was mostly his idea, but I was there. I even constructively added to the idea process. But it was mostly selfish; I just wanted my television show torrents to get automatically downloaded each week. Replace television shows with MP3s of radio broadcasts and you've got podcasting.

What I'd really like to know is, why haven't the existing RSS readers out there got this feature in their product. I mean, they already do RSS, all they would have to add is support for the <enclosure> tag, and they're off to the races. Not to mention that I don't really want to have to have two applications that basically do the same fucking thing.

Edit: Of course, the same day I posted this iPodder came out with version 2.0 of their software. Needless to say, it's much better than the one I had before.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-03-18 at 15:16:50.

New MP3 player

I just bought an [iRiver IFP 799](#). It's a 1 gigabyte player that thanks to a timely firmware upgrade, windows recognizes it as a removable drive. I credit this purchase to [Brent](#) who had previously bought the [256 meg version](#).

It's a pretty sweet player all in all, and it's one of the only ones available with my number one feature: being able to play [Ogg Vorbis](#).



This little player has a number of features that led me to its purchase. One is definately its size. This thing is small. It's about as long as my index finger and about twice as wide. The heaviest thing about it is the double A battery that it takes.

Also very powerful is the recording abilities. You are able to record directly to MP3 from the FM radio, the microphone, or the line in. In fact, Brent used his device to record a [Cool Blue Halo](#) show at Tribeca last year and despite the fact that the output from the sound board was mono, the quality was excellent. I am looking forward to recording some things of my own.

Absolutely wonderful is the previously-mentioned firmware upgrade that allows me to completely circumvent the horrid proprietary software that comes with the device. Upon connection, the player shows up as a removable drive, and I can use explorer to drag and drop music files or anything else I want onto the internal 1 gig of storage provided. Simply because of this, the funtionality of the player has expanded dramatically. On any machine, I can hook this thing up and use it just like a USB key. I really don't understand why any company would bother developing a custom software solution when they can just implement a removable drive and allow explorer to do what explorer does best.

I believe I also mentioned how it takes a double A battery. I am all for my cell phone taking a custom lithium rechargable battery, but it's also nice to be able to swap it out when it runs dry, to be able to buy a replacement battery at any drug store for a dollar and to not have to carry a charger around with you all the time.

The FM tuner is great. With my [Palm Zire 72](#), this was one thing I really missed when using it as an audio player. The automatic scanning definately needs some work though. It found and filled its 20 preset slots before it got to 90 MHz.

All in all, I'm pretty happy with it. I've only had the thing for a few hours now, but I have a feeling that I'll still be happy with it for quite a while.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-15 at 22:42:39.

Now this is funny.

In a .NET windows forms application, paste this code into one of your windows' code files:

```
protected override void OnPaint(PaintEventArgs e)
{
    base.OnPaint( e );
    this.SpecialSecret( e.Graphics );
}

public void SpecialSecret(Graphics g)
{
    g.Clear(this.BackColor);

    int maxSize = 4;

    int maxFine = 1000;

    Brush b = new SolidBrush(Color.Green);

    for (double t=-Math.PI;t<Math.PI;t+=Math.PI/maxFine)
    {
        double R = (1+Math.Sin(t))*(1+0.9*Math.Cos(8*t))*(1+0.1*Math.Cos(24*t))*this.Width/10;

        float x = this.Width/2+(float)(R*Math.Cos(t));

        float y = this.Height/2-(float)(R*Math.Sin(t));

        g.FillEllipse(b,x,y + 30,maxSize,maxSize);

        g.DrawString("www.dotnet.us ;)",this.Font,b,this.Width/3*2,this.Height/3*2);
    }

    g.Dispose();
}
```

}

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-03-11 at 19:54:28.

Computer for my living room

I need a computer for my living room. The one I had in my entertainment unit went tits-up the other day. It couldn't even get past the boot screen (after the POST)...sometimes it would bluescreen too! To be honest, I wasn't totally happy with it anyway; the fan noise was extreme.

So, now I'm looking for a combination of a machine of modest performance and a quiet case that doesn't end up costing me a fortune. The old chip was an Athlon 1800+, but as long as it'll play XVID videos and DVDs it's fine with me. I can reuse most of the other hardware, such as the DVD-ROM, RAM, and video card, so all I really need is the board and chip, and case.

Anybody have any suggestions for components that would fit the bill?

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-03-10 at 10:31:30.

Canada's not so liberal when it comes to the Internet

I'm not sure how reliable [this is](#), but it seems that the Canadian government has plans for their own version of [Carnivore](#), the "Lawful Access" initiative. It's amazing to me how a country who can legalize filesharing can come up with this sort of ass-backwards concept of allowing wiretaps (digital or not) without a warrant.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-08 at 20:40:55.

Deadwood Season 2!

One of my favourite shows from last year is back: Deadwood started its second season last night. I was surprised to like it because it was a western, but the sheer realism of the sets and the passion and quality of the actors draw you in.

I'd recommend it to anybody who hasn't had the seen it yet; those who have don't need me to.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-03-07 at 19:51:24.

The elusive internet café

I am sitting in what used to be commonly called an “Internet Café”, but what are now commonly referred to as “Cafés”; more specifically, Uncommon Grounds on Argyle Street (interestingly enough, that URL didn't show up until the second page of search results for "uncommon grounds halifax" on google). However, I am unfortunately relegated to composing this blog entry in Word, rather than the webpage itself because I can't connect to any access points whatsoever. Very disappointing.

I have enjoyed a very nice coffee and a ham and gouda sandwich, but I feel rather misled, not only by the lack of Internet in this internet café, but also by the lack of power outlets. In fact, this place is so lacking in power outlets, that it can only have been by design. There's only one other person in here with a laptop, and we're forced to sit next to each other because the only outlet in the place is here.

Ok, let's think about this: If you're going to bill yourself as an Internet Café, then perhaps the principle things you should have, besides coffee, would be uh...Internet, and power. Come on people.

[Edit: Ok, I found out later that the internet thing was because I had to actually register with them. Fair enough. I should have found that out, but the lack of power outlets is still reprehensible.]

[Edit2: Found out later still that if they did indeed have wireless internet at this location, then I would have to register with them. They don't currently, but it's in the works, I'm promised.]

Now, if I were to review the place as a pure café rather than an Internet café, then they would surely fare much better. They have great coffee and damn good food at prices that are considerably lower than Starbucks. It's all good on that front.

There are a number of clever idiosyncrasies that make this place pretty cool: The Andy Warhol-style pop-culture murals on the walls, the fact that everything is stainless steel, and the way they serve the coffee for “eat-in” customers in clear glass glasses. Second, but certainly not in my mind, are the tip jars; yes, they have more than one. Every day there is a trivia question posed to the customer with three possible answers, and a tip jar for each one. It's like you're supposed to “vote” for your answer by tipping. Personally, I think they seed one of the incorrect answers so obsessive-compulsive people like me will feel an unconscious desire to fill up the correct answer bowl with money. Damn them! A daddy-long-legs isn't even a spider!

On the down side, this particular location doesn't seem to have nearly the comfy seating area that the other two Uncommon Grounds locations do. There are only two plush leather seats in the whole place, and nary a couch to be seen. It's much smaller than the others, but man, this hard backed bench is doing nothing for me.

In conclusion, if you're just looking for coffee and a bite, then any U.G. will do, but don't bother hanging out in the Argyle Street one...It's like they designed it to make you want to leave.

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-03-06 at 13:47:03.

There's a new Pick in town.

My friend (and boss) Jeff Pick just had his second kid. Another boy...I'll let him explain the situation:

“ On Thursday March 10th @ 11:43AM, Crystal and I (well, mostly her as I simply held the camera) unleashed another child containing my (apparently very cute) genes into this world! ;)

Ethan James Pick was born 8lbs 4oz, and seems to be doing just fine! Mom and dad are tired, but still hanging strong in there. Should be home from the hospital (finally) sometime on Sunday ... if everything continues to go as well as they have been!

Dangerous...Hopefully this one's more like his mom :P

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-03-05 at 15:44:01.

Crash course in BBCode

I'm sure more than a few of you have wondered, "*WTF is up with all this BBCode shiznit? OMGWTFLOLBBQ!!!!!!11!!1!one*". Well, I'm here to explain as best I can.

In short, BBCode is a pseudo-mark-up language very similar to HTML that you can use to make text bold, post working links, format your text, etc.

Read on for more.

Q: If BBCode is like HTML, why not just use HTML?

A: That's a valid question. And it comes with just as valid an answer: Since the rest of this website is also shown with HTML, Joe User, who thinks he knows what he's doing, enters a comment or a blog post, or whatever, with some HTML in it. But Joe didn't close one of his tags. That could potentially screw up the rendering of the rest of the page and nobody wants that.

Not allowing actual HTML in user-contributed content also prevents the malicious use of the `<script>` tag in cross-site scripting attacks.

Q: Ok, I get it. How do I use it?

A: BBCode is very similar to HTML, but instead of surrounding your tags with `<` and `>`, you're going to use `[` and `]` (square brackets). Let's go through the tags together so you can see what they all do. For display purposes, I'm going to use `<>` instead of `[]`, because `[]` would actually get interpreted as BBCode.

Align

`<align=left>`This text is aligned left`</align>`

This text is aligned left

`<align=center>`This text is aligned center`</align>`

This text is aligned center

`<align=right>`This text is aligned right`</align>`

This text is aligned right

B

The word `bold` will appear bold.

The word **bold** will appear bold.

BG

<bg=red>This line's background will be red</bg>

This line's background will be red

<bg=#ccddee>This line's background will be some other colour.</bg>

This line's background will be some other colour.

Code

The code tag will cause whitespace not to be ignored, so you can format things with spaces.

```
for( i=0; i<5; i++ )  
  
{  
  
    // This is code.  
  
    // Whitespace is not ignored.  
  
    DoYourThing();  
  
    DoWhatchaWannaDo();  
  
}
```

Color

<color=red>This text will be red.</color>

This text will be red.

Email and MailTo

<email=email@example.com>Link Text</email>

Link Text

i

<i>This text will be in italics.</i>

This text will be in italics.

Image and img

<image=http://spine.cx/images/topics/spine-icon.jpg>



Link and URL

<link=http://weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/>Link Text</link>

Link Text

Quote

<quote>This text will be quoted</quote>

“ This text will be quoted

S

<s>Strikethrough</s>

Strikethrough

Size

<size=9>Size = 9</size>

Size = 9

<size=10>Size = 10</size>

Size = 10

<size=11>Size = 11</size>

Size = 11

U

<u>underline</u>

underline

Originally posted on Wednesday, 2005-03-02 at 10:25:01.

Two more visits to the doctor

After my throat swab for strep came back negative, my doctor called me back in for a blood test. Two days and another appointment later, it turns out I have mononucleosis.

Lucky for me, the only symptom I really seem to be experiencing is the swelling of tonsils and lymph nodes. Unlucky for me, that one symptom is making up in spades for the lack of the other ones.

Any of you guys ever get mono? Did it lay you on your ass?

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-03-01 at 17:04:10.

A visit to the doctor

For the first time in around 10 years I felt sick enough to make an appointment to see a doctor. Honestly, the last doctor I went to that wasn't in an emergency room was my pediatrician.

What can possibly have been so bad as to prompt me to take these drastic measures? Well, I could barely swallow (no jokes please). My tonsils were the size of red, pulsating, golf balls. I was going to take a picture, but I thought that would be too much. Oh yeah, I almost forgot about the PAIN. Usually these things just go away after about a week (or less), but this one stuck around; with a vengeance.

I try not to take a lot of drugs (save alcohol and caffeine of course), especially antibiotics, because I'm paranoid about one day the world being taken over by antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This is also why I am against all the hand-sanitizers and the anti-microbial soaps and all that junk.

Bacteria are out there and we're going to come into contact with them, there's no doubt of that. I think it's better that we experience that and let our antibodies build up our immune systems like they're supposed to. If you can do something naturally, then it's *got* to be better than pumping your body full of drugs.

I get why we need to sterilize operating theatres, it's not like I'm advocating the ban of these anti-microbial solutions, but operating, cutting someone open, isn't exactly what I'd call natural.

Just don't chop your vegetables on a raw chicken and for the most part, you'll be fine.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-02-25 at 12:58:53.

Fire in Fairview

This guy has some pretty good photos of the fire that ravaged that apartment building in Fairview on Sunday.



Photo by Shaun Lowe

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-02-22 at 10:17:44.

Windows XP firewall is useless

My brother sent me an interesting email today. It doesn't totally surprise me.

“ By adding a new key to the registry in *HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE / SYSTEM / Services / SharedAccess / Parameters / FirewallPolicy / StandardProfile / AuthorizedApplications / List* you can circumvent the whole purpose of the firewall with out the user's interaction or knowledge. Spyware & Adware manufacturers already do this.

More information and a little rant at:

<http://habaneronetworks.com/viewArticle.php?ID=144>

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-02-21 at 14:43:17.

Why aren't there bathroom standards?

Toothbrush handles have been getting conspicuously girthier in past years, but the diameter of the holes in toothbrush holders hasn't kept pace. Toothbrushes are fat (phat?). It's getting so it's hard to find a "normal" toothbrush anymore.

It's not even that I mind the fat brushes; they fit better in your hand. But I'm relegated to using a cup to hold them.

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-02-20 at 22:02:25.

Goodbye to the Wave?

I was reading in the Halifax Herald today that due to renovation of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and Sackville Landing park, they may be tearing down the Wave. That sculpture that you climbed on as a kid (or maybe still) may soon be no more.

I get why. People climb on that thing all the time, and I guess the city could be liable for any injuries sustained. Still, I think it sucks. That sculpture defines that part of the waterfront. This excerpt from the article really surprised me though...

“*Skateboarders are also known to use it as a ramp, while baby strollers, bicycles and even a unicycle have been spotted wheeling up and down.*”

Baby strollers? Who the hell are these irresponsible parents wheeling their young up sharp inclines onto 3.7 meter high sculptures?

And who can get away with calling that oversized slab of concrete a park? Shouldn't a park have some semblance of grass?

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-02-14 at 14:25:08.

Party at the Frosst's. I think my body is rejecting it.

Oh my. Alcohol is evil. I've suspected it for some time, but now my hypothesis has been confirmed. I just can't seem to handle it like I used to. Drinking the measuring cup full of rum didn't help, I'm sure.

Ray, Jeanine and I had planned to go skiing in the morning, but that turned out to be not practical nor possible as I was still drunk when I woke up. It's 11:08 now, and we still haven't ventured off of the couch. Watching Mythbusters and drinking tea seems much easier on my body.

Originally posted on Sunday, 2005-02-13 at 11:00:43.

LokiTorrent.com shut down

LokiTorrent.com, one of the few remaining big torrent sites has been shut down by the MPAA. Makes me really glad I live in Canada. Good thing the majority of the torrent sites out there are not in North America.

As long as I can get my TV shows, I'm happy. How's this for irony: I cancelled my cable, because I can download my television shows using the internet service that my cable company provides.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-02-11 at 18:26:11.

Razor blades

How much does it really cost to make a razor blade? Per ounce, they must be more valuable than gold. I do not understand how 8 blades can come to more than \$20. Granted, I'm buying them for my Mach 3, and those are probably the most expensive ones out there, but I think they *do* give you the best shave.

You'd think they could make them last longer too, all they're cutting is hair. I've had a pair of scissors for many years, and they still cut everything just fine, no sharpening! Razor blades seem to dull enough to scrape the hell out of your face in less than a week.

It's a scam, I'm telling you. Gillette just merged with Proctor and Gamble in a *\$57 Billion* deal. Razors are big business.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-02-10 at 11:17:53.

Spine.cx gets rewritten

Over the past few days, I've been working on a new code stream for spine.cx. Something not so cluttered and encumbered with PHPNuke code that I never really used anyway.

So far, it's mostly functional. You can post blog entries and comments. I posted this message from the new beta site. You can check it out if you want. Use the same username/password that you do for the normal spine.cx.

Please let me know what you think!

Update! I've changed the database to reflect the "blogging" paradigm on the beta site. Anyone who has ever submitted an article to spine.cx is now credited as being the primary author, and now has that post in their blog.

I am also thinking about changing the way spine.cx works. Think about this: Each user now has his or her own weblog. People can post to their own weblogs, and the more interesting articles can get chosen to be displayed on the main page as well. I think that would be a pretty cool way to go.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-02-10 at 00:15:53.

Whidbey Beta 2

I was at an MSDN event tonight, regarding security in .NET. That wasn't so interesting in itself, although the presenter was good. The really cool thing was the exposition of some of the cool new features in Visual Studio 2005 (Whidbey). The things I was most impressed with were the "refactoring" and the renaming capabilities.

Refactoring allows you to highlight a bit of code, then right-click on it, and go Refactor/New Function. This will take that bit of code, find all the variables it was using, and set up a function for that bit of code with all the variables as parameters. Fucking cool shit.

Renaming is like a search and replace in context. Say you had a variable 'name'. Not an uncommon thing. But you also use the text 'name' in a bunch of your comments, or other variables like 'username'. You can use the renaming feature to only search and replace the text where it is referencing the variable in question. I can see that one being extremely useful.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-02-08 at 23:31:47.

So, they're going to do another bridge study

Sometimes I just don't understand what goes on in the minds of politicians. From things as big as the "war on terror", to things in Canada like the sponsorship scandal, to right here at home with the commissioning of a \$65k study for find out that there's traffic on the bridges. Brilliant!

I really think the solution will ultimately come down to Halifax having a public transit system on par with other major cities. I don't know if not having a subway is going to hurt is detrimentally in the long run, but it sure seems like it would have been a good idea now. If the existing transit system was half decent (i.e., not having to wait for your bus for the better part of an hour, and when it gets there not having it be as crowded as free donut day at the fat farm) then more people would use it. The more people that use it, the less cars would be on the road.

Have you ever noticed how many cars driving during rush hour have only one person in them? That's insane! I'm guilty of it myself, of course, but it really doesn't make much sense. Not to mention the cost of parking.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-02-08 at 11:08:16.

User 'blog functionality

For all you kids who like to 'blog, spine.cx now has a solution for you. Check out the box on the left side with the red title bar. You can post all you want, and you'll have a section of the website to call your very own, complete with hierarchical comments, just like the stories on the main page. You also get your own rss feed at no extra charge. When you're looking at your blog, just tack on "&op=rss" to the URL, [like this](#). From time to time, I may even select a story posted in a 'blog to be featured on the main page.

I don't know how popular this feature will be with spine.cx users, but the kids sure seem to like their 'blogs these days.

Originally posted on Tuesday, 2005-02-08 at 10:34:40.

Best new show on TV this season

So, what do I think is the best new show on TV this season? House, M.D. It's kind of like a cross between CSI and E.R. Every week, they have a patient with a mysterious illness and the doctors use their noggins to solve the case.

But the best part of the show isn't the plot, nor the detective work, nor the medical setting. The thing that makes the show is the Dr. House character. He is the single most surly, cynical, bastard of a man that has ever graced the small screen. This alone makes the show worth watching. Merely viewing the man and his constant stream of sarcasm and insults are enough to entertain me to no end. My only hope is that they can keep the show fresh. Here's to a second season of House M.D.

Originally posted on Monday, 2005-02-07 at 14:16:16.

MGM is a movie butcher

According to an article I've just read on [Slashdot](#), at least 315 of MGM's so-called "widescreen" DVD releases have actually been the Pan & Scan versions with the top and bottom of the picture cut off. This basically means, when you buy the widescreen version, thinking you're getting the original print of the movie, you're actually getting *less* picture than the people who bought the P&S version. This is absolutely appalling to me.

There is currently a class-action lawsuit against MGM for this heinous act of flagrant disservice to movie-lovers everywhere. You can see the list of affected DVDs [here](#) or go to mgmdvdsettlement.com. You can return your hacked up discs for either a new one, or US\$7.10 each.

Originally posted on Friday, 2005-01-28 at 09:52:58.

Car accident redux

Last week, I got my car back from the collision shop, looking as good as new. They even cleaned it inside and out, it was awesome. Since the hairy man had no insurance (nor a drivers licence), I had to pay a deductible, even though I was not at fault; a reduced deductible, but a deductible nonetheless. I found out that my insurance company will go after the driver, and if they can get any money out of him, I'll get my money back. I guess that's as good as I can hope for.

I happened to be at the scene of the accident earlier today (it *is* near Futureshop after all) and I received an unexpected bit of joy.

It seems as though the Hairy Man has abandoned his car in the very spot where I last saw it. Exactly one month later, it is still there. I could not fucking believe it. Anyway, I was able to get some much better pictures of the damage I did to his car. Enjoy.

Originally posted on Saturday, 2005-01-22 at 14:09:45.

MSN Messenger Virus

I don't know if it's been announced anywhere lately, but I believe there's an MSN Messenger virus floating around out there. Last night, from three different contacts that I rarely talk to, I received file transfers of .pif files called "naked_party.pif" and other crap like that. If that's not a virus, I don't know what is.

Anyway, thought you peeps should be on the lookout for such things. Don't get caught with your pants down.

Originally posted on Thursday, 2005-01-20 at 10:38:17.