

REPORTING THE ARTS II

NEWS COVERAGE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN AMERICA

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Based at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, the National Arts Journalism Program administers fellowships for journalists in the fields of arts and culture. The NAJP also serves as a forum for the discussion of challenging and timely issues at the crossroads of arts and culture, journalism and public policy, through publications, panels and conferences that bring together professionals from these fields.

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OCTOBER 2003

- 1 *Portland Monthly* hits the newsstands
Adam Weinberg becomes the director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City
- 2 The 39th Chicago International Film Festival opens
South African writer J. M. Coetzee wins the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature
Cirque du Soleil brings its show *Alegria* to Portland, Ore.
- 3 William Steig, an illustrator for *The New Yorker* and author of *Shrek*, dies at 95
A tiger mauls Roy Horn of *Siegfried & Roy* during his show at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas
- 4 "El Greco to Picasso: Paintings from the Phillips Collection," featuring 53 paintings, including works by Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, opens at the Denver Art Museum
Gus Van Sant premieres his controversial new film *Elephant*, which was inspired by Colorado's Columbine shootings, in Portland, Ore.
- 5 A show of models and drawings by the late Samuel Mockbee—recipient of a MacArthur foundation "genius" grant—and his Rural Studio opens at the Birmingham, Ala., Museum of Art
Irish singer Damien Rice wins the Shortlist Music Prize, an award honoring up-and-coming musicians
- 6 Providence Performing Arts Center celebrates its 75th anniversary
- 7 Arnold Schwarzenegger is elected governor of California
The Center for Architecture, designed by Andrew Berman, opens in New York City
Carnegie Hall and the New York Philharmonic call off their plans to merge
- 8 The Belfast writer Ciaran Carson, author of *Breaking News*, wins the Forward poetry prize
General Electric, owner of NBC, acquires Vivendi Universal, creating the media conglomerate NBC Universal
- 9 Queen Elizabeth II knights Roger Moore, the actor who played James Bond, agent 007
The Denver International Film Festival opens
The Liberty Bell is placed in its new home at Philadelphia's Liberty Bell Center. The installation is part of a \$300 million expansion of Independence Mall
- 10 *Kill Bill*, Quentin Tarantino's action-adventure thriller opens nationwide
Sherlock Holmes, a rarely produced stage adaptation of a story about the famed Arthur Conan Doyle detective, opens at Houston's Alley Theatre
- 11 Portland curators launch Core Sample, a weeklong visual arts show featuring 30 exhibits that explore the question of "Regionalism but Not Provincialism"
Houston Latino Book & Family Festival opens
- 12 *The Denver Post* reports that artistic director Gloria Gonzalez has resigned from The Denver Civic Theater and taken another job at New York's Queens Theater in the Park
- 13 More than 12 million photos from the Boer War through the 1970s, including pictures of D-day and the Beatles, are made available online by British Pathe
- 14 Australian writer D.B.C. Pierre wins the Booker prize for his first novel, *Vernon God Little*
James Lawson, the dean of American carillon players, dies at 84
- 15 The Biltmore Theater, which had closed in 1987, reopens on Broadway as a third stage for the Manhattan Theater Club
The Louis Armstrong House—the jazz-trumpeter's home in Queens, N.Y.—is opened to the public
- 16 Houston's Menil Collection names Josef Helfenstein as director
- 17 *Sylvia*, starring Gwyneth Paltrow, opens nationwide
Providence radio station WPRO-AM hires Joan Rivers as talk show host to replace Rush Limbaugh temporarily

PART I: OVERVIEW

- 18 The Mori Art Museum, designed by architect Richard Gluckman, opens in Tokyo
The famed Catalan author Manuel Vazquez Montalban dies at 64
A revised version of composer Marvin David Levy's 1967 opera *Mourning Becomes Electra* opens at the Seattle Opera
- 19 Magician David Blaine descends from the small transparent box suspended over the Thames River that he had been living in since September 5
- 20 Frank Gehry's \$274 million Walt Disney Concert Hall opens in Los Angeles
Character villain actor Jack Elam, who appeared in 100 films, including *High Noon* and *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, dies
- 21 Singer-songwriter Elliot Smith, whose Oscar-nominated song *Miss Misery* appeared in *Good Will Hunting*, is found dead in Los Angeles at age 34
Omara Portuondo, the Cuban vocalist featured in the *Buena Vista Social Club*, sings at Tacoma's Pantages Theater
Stephen Sondheim's *Bounce* opens at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.
- 22 The Hamptons International Film festival opens with 119 films
- 23 Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music celebrates the 80th birthday and music of its alumnus Ned Rorem with a Roremania Festival
Filmmaker Michael Moore speaks to more than 8,500 people at the Memorial Coliseum, in Portland, Ore., as part of a 39-city tour promoting *Dude, Who Stole My Country?*
- 24 *The Guardian* reports a Christie's cover-up of the finding that a work by Dutch painter Jacob Duck, which the house planned to auction, had been looted by the Nazis in 1937 from a couple later killed at Auschwitz
- 25 A retrospective of more than 200 photos by Diane Arbus opens at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
The exhibit "One True Thing: Meditations on Black Aesthetics," featuring paintings, sculptures and photos by Kerry James Marshall, opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- 26 *The Denver Post* music critic G. Brown writes a preview article on a Simon and Garfunkel concert; the following month he resigns after it is revealed that he plagiarized parts of the piece
Hundreds of women pose nude in New York City's Grand Central Terminal for photographer Spencer Tunick
- 27 The Picasso Museum opens in the artist's native city of Malaga, Spain
A statue of Ernest Hemingway is unveiled at El Floridita, a Havana bar and restaurant he regularly visited
- 28 Neeme Jarvi, the music director of the Detroit Symphony, is named music director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra
Contestants for the Turner Prize go on display at the Tate Britain gallery in London. The show posts a warning that the objects are not appropriate for viewing by those under 16
- 29 Italian tenor Franco Corelli dies at 82
A *Law & Order* television episode features a plot based on the Station nightclub fire in West Warwick, just outside Providence, R.I., in which 100 people died
- 30 Tim O'Brien discusses his book, *The Things They Carried*, at Chicago's Harold Washington Library Center. The novel was the 2003 selection at "One Book. One Chicago."
The Chicago Humanities Festival begins
The Houston Grand Opera premieres an art deco staging of *Julius Caesar*
- 31 Painter Thomas Kinkadee heads a group that agrees to pay \$32.7 million for Media Arts, the seller of replicas based on his art

INTRODUCTION

ARTS COVERAGE IN A NEW CENTURY

Five years ago the National Arts Journalism Program published *Reporting the Arts*, the first comprehensive analysis of how the arts are covered in mainstream American news media. As we promised then, the study was “first of all an effort to create a baseline for future examination of trends in journalistic coverage of the arts in the United States.”

With *Reporting the Arts II* we are not only revisiting the same 10 communities and their local papers, and reexamining arts coverage in the national press and on broadcast television. We are also expanding our report by taking a closer look at the burgeoning areas of the alternative press, online arts coverage, reporting on arts by minorities and in the ethnic press and cultural programming on National Public Radio, among other topics. We are doing this with the aim of further gauging the health of arts journalism in America and capturing the changes swirling around the field as we set off into this new century.

The trends are not encouraging.

While more Americans are participating in cultural activities than at any time in our history, and although the arts have evolved to unprecedented size and complexity, the

resources that metropolitan newsrooms allocate to the arts are generally flat or in retreat.

During the past five years, none of the newspapers that we tracked in this study has increased the amount of editorial space devoted to news, criticism or other types of journalism (not including listings) about arts and entertainment. Even with listings, only one paper expanded its arts-and-culture newshole. At some dailies, the coverage has declined sharply.

The majority of newspapers are running fewer articles about arts and culture. Dailies are shoehorning shorter pieces into shrinking newsholes and assigning a larger share of stories to freelancers, syndicators and wire services than five years ago. Stories about the “high” arts and hard reporting about commercial and nonprofit cultural institutions continue to take a backseat to the traditional staples of previewing and reviewing popular entertainment, such as the release of the latest movie, CD or national concert tour.

Moreover, with few exceptions, papers almost everywhere are devoting more of their arts space to listings. Editorial space for arts journalism is being squeezed from two sides: a near-universal decline in the overall amount of

space dedicated to the area, and by a frequent expansion of listings.

In fairness, it must be said that the arts are not being singled out for cutbacks. Papers everywhere are shrinking, and in most of the dailies we studied, other sections are shrinking faster. The size of arts sections has generally declined relative to sports sections. However, they have gained in prominence compared with hard-news sections at most newspapers, and vis-à-vis non-art feature sections, such as dining and travel, at many dailies.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that most papers dedicate less newsprint to the arts at a time when there is more art to write about. Reportage and criticism about the arts are not keeping up with society.

GAPS AND TENSIONS

The widening chasm between the amount of newsworthy cultural activity and the actual coverage allotted to it is creating tensions inside newsrooms and cultural communities. At the newspapers there is an emerging awareness that the existing structures of arts journalism are overloaded and outmoded. Editors and writers frequently complain that incremental adjustments to the preview-review model of coverage cannot keep up with rapid changes in the cultural environment. As more news is forced down the same pipeline, the limitations of the arts-journalism infrastructure become increasingly evident.

For artists and arts organizations, the dearth of adequate exposure and critical feedback creates mounting frustrations. Many producers of culture, from offbeat theater groups to large Hollywood studios, are experimenting with new ways of circumventing the mainstream media to attract and inform audiences (see Chapter 29).

Drawing on a detailed analysis of local and national dailies in October 1998, *Reporting the Arts* documented a robust commitment to cultural journalism. Although, as the study noted, the coverage appeared “in a mix of heavily featured, once-a-week or twice-a-week entertainment sections,” in which listings accounted for up to half the space, the research also revealed that some of the papers we studied were making significant efforts to upgrade their coverage.

Reporting the Arts was the first study of its kind. There were no benchmarks for comparison. Yet there was reason for hope. The country was in a phase of economic and cultural expan-

KEY FINDINGS

Arts sections have maintained their relative positions of prominence at metropolitan newspapers, gaining ground slightly vis-à-vis hard-news sections and losing ground to sports sections.

Newspapers as a whole are shrinking. So a stable position in a declining environment translates to less coverage than it did five years ago.

No metropolitan newspaper in our study increased the size of its newshole for arts journalism. Of the 15 we tracked, seven cut back severely, five cut back moderately, three maintained roughly the same levels.

Articles are shorter now than they were five years ago. Almost every newspaper cut the average length of its art stories: At seven of the 15 newspapers they are now at least 20 percent shorter.

All the cutbacks in the story count were directed at articles with a staffer's byline. Metropolitan newspapers run as many freelance, syndicated and wire service articles on the arts now as they did five years ago.

The overall newshole for the TV grid and arts listings, as opposed to articles, has not eroded. In newspapers' weekend arts supplements, the listings often increased in size.

Journalism about movies and entertainment television suffered across-the-board cuts at metropolitan newspapers. Coverage of music, the performing arts and publishing avoided such general cutbacks—and gained in relative prominence.

The New York Times remains preeminent in the volume and diversity of its arts coverage. Only the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* in our study devoted even as much as half the *Times*' space to arts and culture.

Network television journalism is split. The nightly newscasts continue to pay minimal attention to arts news. The morning programs have doubled their interest in the past five years, focusing more than ever on celebrity culture and mass entertainment.

The tabloid television news programs—*Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood* and *Extra*—teem with celebrity soundbites and entertainment clips. Yet almost half their content concerns gossip, scandal and non-show-business stories rather than coverage of mass entertainment itself.

sion. At the same time, a refreshing openness to the arts had taken hold as the “culture wars” of the previous decade faded to a memory. Cities were discovering the arts as a means of revitalizing downtowns. The dotcom economy sparked a sense of unimaginable opportunity for both old- and new-media organizations.

Since then, the country has witnessed the bursting of the stock-market bubble, a recession, a terrorist attack and two wars. The turmoil has left marks on cultural and media organizations. In the arts, years of investments into new facilities and programming gave way to belt-tightening. News organizations likewise trimmed back their budgets and expectations due to declining advertising sales, losses from online ventures and, in some cases, unexpected outlays for war coverage. In the midst of these adjustments the arts have not been foremost on people’s minds.

HARD FACTS

Adding to the challenges for newspapers are several long-term trends that are diminishing the resources that even the most well-meaning news organizations can devote to the arts.

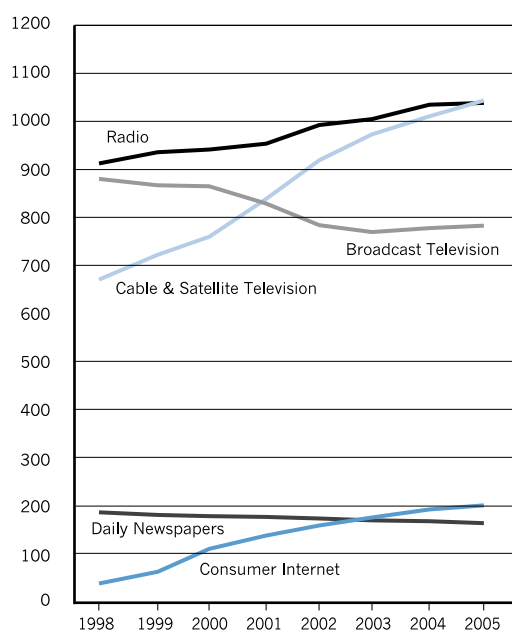
Electronic media are supplanting newspapers. Average weekday newspaper readership dropped to 55.4 percent in 2002 from 58.6 percent in 1998—a steady erosion since the 1960s, when 80 percent of adults read newspapers.¹ Americans today spend no less time in front of the TV than five years ago, but they are listening to more radio and spending a lot more time online. The year 2003 was the first in which an average American spent more time online than reading a newspaper.

This is part of a larger phenomenon—the broad-based decline in reading the printed page. Book reading is on its way to becoming a minority activity in the United States, dropping by 7 percent between 1992 and 2002, to no more than 56.6 percent of adults.² Newspapers are coping with the same societal shift from the printed page to the pixilated screen. And declining circulation translates into smaller news budgets all around.

The news industry is also late in adjusting to America’s changing demographic landscape. In California, for example, more than half of Asian and Pacific Americans, blacks and Latinos identify ethnically specific media as their main source of news, entertainment and advertising.³ While the growing strength of minority and non-English news outlets comes as welcome news (see Chapters 20 and 21),

Newspapers Lag Behind

hours per person per year using consumer media



Source: Veronis Suhler Stevenson

many leading metropolitan dailies are losing readership and advertising revenue because of their lackluster success in attracting minority audiences.

These pressures place hard limits on how much space and staffing newspapers can devote to the arts. Maintaining a commitment to cultural coverage requires motivated newsroom leadership as well as internal advocacy by writers and editors. It demands new ideas that make the most of scarce resources and help journalists do a better job of telling readers about the energy and diversity—and also the failures and shortfalls—of America’s cultural life.

PRIORITIES

Despite the downward trends, it is undeniable that, over the long term, newspapers must rely on arts and entertainment coverage in order to grow and retain their readership. It is a question of purpose and means of survival for newspapers in an age of media saturation.

With their once-a-day publication schedules, newspapers are losing their hard-news franchise to electronic sources. Local arts coverage, though, is under no such threat. This is one reason why most dailies focus so heavily on covering local cultural news (see Chapter 21).

Moreover, arts and culture stories often deliver the kind of depth, nuance and perspec-

tive that's missing from television. They can also compete with the world of specialized Web sites and blogs that commands an ever-larger share of culture-savvy readers' attention. And despite having to fend off such new challenges, papers gain from the arts as an economic lifeline. Far from being a drag on newsroom budgets, the arts pages attract healthy advertising revenues, and they have the potential to be a magnet for readers from relatively untapped segments of the public, including youth, minority and female audiences.

Most significant, the so-called "copyright industries"—industries built substantially on creative content, including but not limited to the nonprofit and commercial arts—have expanded in recent years. They now comprise a sizable part of the nation's economy and lay claim to a growing share of America's workforce (see Chapter 2). The arts have become more important to the lives and livelihoods of communities. They are something no newspaper can afford to ignore. Covering A&E is not just a cultural or civic responsibility, undertaken to satisfy a vaguely defined public mandate. As editors and publishers increasingly recognize, these journalistic areas are moving inexorably from a secondary, "back-of-the-book" status toward the core business of every mainstream news organization.

NEW APPROACHES

The reports from the 10 metropolitan areas featured in this study document how newspapers everywhere are searching for the right mix of topics and sections to deliver the most cogent arts coverage to their readers. Meanwhile, journalism about the arts continues to gravitate to other media, which is why we have included analyses of changes in arts coverage on the radio (Chapter 16), television (Chapters 18 and 28) and the Web (Chapter 17).

While newspaper editors monitor these developments, they are also experimenting with new kinds of journalistic assignments (for example, allowing critics to range more freely within and between art forms) and devising more versatile article formats (such as condensed weekly roundups and critics' journals). Many papers are developing novel listings styles (especially capsule reviews) and eye-catching visual presentation techniques (snappy boxes and teasers, charts and color photography).

In addition, some papers are reassessing the role of their daily and weekend arts sections, to counter the "arts ghetto" effect, and

going head-to-head with alternative weeklies by launching special supplements targeted at young readers (Chapter 15). The division of labor between the printed paper and the online edition remains a work in progress at most newspapers.

These changes have introduced a measure of innovation into arts coverage, but only to a point. Interesting initiatives and outstanding editors and writers exist everywhere; but what is remarkable on the whole is how little the routine formats and procedures of arts journalism have evolved over the years, especially in newspapers. For example, the discipline-based system of daily arts journalism departments—theater, visual art, dance, film, music, etc.—is an inheritance of the past. But no newspaper has broken out of this mold to embrace the fluid eclecticism of our cross-disciplinary culture. No matter how much the landscape has changed, the main sections and staffing charts of the papers we analyzed are surprisingly similar to what we found five years ago. In many papers they have been static for a much longer time.

STRATEGIES

In thinking about a comprehensive strategy for arts coverage, newspapers typically navigate between two extremes. The traditional model emphasizes the paper's filtering role. The key figures in the effort are the editor and the critic. The promise to readers is: "Our experts will select the most noteworthy artistic productions and elucidate their importance, meanings, strengths and weaknesses for you."

In recent years the emphasis has been shifting towards the other extreme. As editorial copy around the TV grid and the weekend listings shrinks at most local dailies, what is growing is the amount of capsule information about all the cultural offerings in the community. Many papers see arts coverage as a service to time-strapped readers: "Only you, the reader, can know how to spend your leisure time; our job is to supply information about your options, with comprehensive listings and brief reviews to suit every possible interest or need."

Meanwhile, editors and publishers at many papers are pushing for a third kind of arts journalism. The economic contributions and organizational complexities of the arts are more widely appreciated today. Arts news reporting, as distinct from arts criticism, appears to be gaining ground as a strategic priority across the industry. The bellwether *New York Times*, for example, has reduced its emphasis on reviews

while increasing the amount of arts coverage it runs in its hard news sections.

Making arts journalism “harder” would elevate its prestige in newsrooms. Editors often pine for “critics who could pick up the phone.” But finding a balance between criticism and reporting is not easy. Different traditions, skills and temperaments are involved. There is also a potential for conflict of interest when critics, whose job it is to judge and sometimes take sides in cultural debates, are asked to report dispassionately about the artists and organizations they cover. Similarly, artists and organizations may be reluctant to speak to reporters who, doubling as critics, may have panned their work.

These issues remain unresolved in newsrooms, but one prognosis is certain: The reevaluation of the role of critical reviews is shaping up to be the defining battle in newspaper arts departments for years to come.

IN THIS REPORT

Reporting the Arts II is the result of a two-year effort by a team of more than 40 people. Most of the research and writing was done by the 2003-04 class of National Arts Journalism Program fellows, professional journalists drawn from news organizations across the United States, as well as two journalists from the Netherlands. Additional essays were filed by some 2002-03 fellows, NAJP alumni and freelance writers. The content analysis of newspaper and TV coverage was supervised by Andrew Tyndall, a media analyst and publisher of the *Tyndall Report*. A dedicated group of Columbia University students was responsible for painstakingly coding nearly 600 editions of the 20 newspapers in our study.

The report begins with an overview of the changing cultural landscape and the economic contributions of the arts, based on recent research findings, followed by a comparative look at the coverage in 17 local and three national dailies. The largest section of the report (Chapters 4-13) surveys the cultural life and local news media of the same 10 cities that we featured in our last study, with a special emphasis on their daily papers. To compile these chapters, NAJP fellows visited all the cities and conducted extensive interviews with artists, journalists and cultural managers.

Next, the study takes a closer look at trends in national media, including public radio, broadcast television, alternative weeklies and the Internet. Other sections take up arts jour-

nalism by, for and about Latinos and Asian Americans, as well as coverage of arts abroad.

In a departure from our last report, the volume concludes with a selection of Critical Perspectives on key issues in arts journalism and especially criticism. These essays are offered as a counterweight to the statistical results in the earlier chapters. Quantitative findings are essential for a realistic understanding of how the news media cover the arts—but they go only so far. The eight articles included here, written by leading critics and reporters, delve further into the aesthetic and ethical dilemmas underlying contemporary American arts journalism.

TO KEEP IN MIND

First, the cities and newspapers scrutinized here do not, statistically speaking, amount to an accurate portrayal of American arts journalism. Other clusters of case studies might have yielded somewhat different results. We are confident, though, that the larger picture of transforming newsrooms and communities is accurate for the country as a whole today.

Second, October is not a typical month of the year. We chose it because it's a busy time for arts coverage. The cities and the papers—which were picked to encompass a wide range of types—add up to an illustrative cross section of communities and news organizations, analyzed at the peak of their annual performance.

Third, our goal here is not to deliver a “report card” on one or another of the featured papers. We're grateful to them for their willingness to subject themselves to the analysis and, as such, to serve as a mirror for industry-wide trends.

Fourth, while we touch upon a wide spectrum of media, the main emphasis throughout remains on newspapers, still the most widely consumed local news source.

Fifth, the quantitative content analysis at the heart of this study, and especially over-time comparisons, are subject to error. Obtaining, filing, examining and coding thousands of articles in hundreds of papers amounts to a complicated process rife with opportunities for mistakes. These are compounded when measurements happen at two points in time and are made by different groups of coders. (A methodological summary appears in the Appendix.) We have emphasized only trends that were discernible even when we were accounting for a double margin of error.

KEY

Throughout this report we feature an arrow symbol indicating broad trends in aspects of arts coverage.

WHAT THE ARROWS MEAN:

-  increase or decrease between +/- 10%
-  increase between 10%-30%
-  increase more than 30%
-  decrease between 10%-30%
-  decrease more than 30%

GOING FORWARD

Some of the most urgent issues confronting arts journalism today cannot be resolved in a study like this one. Beyond the obvious question of writing quality, which is almost impossible to gauge systematically, several thorny dilemmas appear only in passing on these pages. These range from ethical issues—such as accepting “freebies,” plagiarism and copyright-infringement—to various kinds of conflicts of interest. These topics await future NAJP studies.

The backdrop to all such questions is a rapidly changing culture where the rules of artistic

creation, distribution and consumption are being rewritten on a daily basis. In an environment of flux, can the protocols of arts journalism stay the same?

The last five years have added new dimensions to our nation’s artistic life. But years of growth and adaptation have also revived concerns that the ecology of arts journalism is ill-equipped to reflect the energy and eclecticism of the arts in America. This report is intended to help the news media catch up to new cultural realities, and transform its own routines in the process.

THE EDITORS

¹Source: Newspaper Association of America, based on the 50 top markets measured by Scarborough Research; available at www.naa.org.

²Literary reading is down 14 percent, with not much more than a third of male adults now reading any kind of literature at all. From: *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. National Endowment for the Arts. Research Division Report #46. Washington, D.C.: June 2004. According to the report, which is based on Census figures, 56.6 percent of U.S. adults read a book in the 12 months prior to the 2002 SPPA study and 46.7 percent read some literature.

³Félix Gutiérrez for USC Annenberg’s Institute for Justice and Journalism. “Communicating To and About All Californians.” Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 2002. The report cites surveys by New California Media.

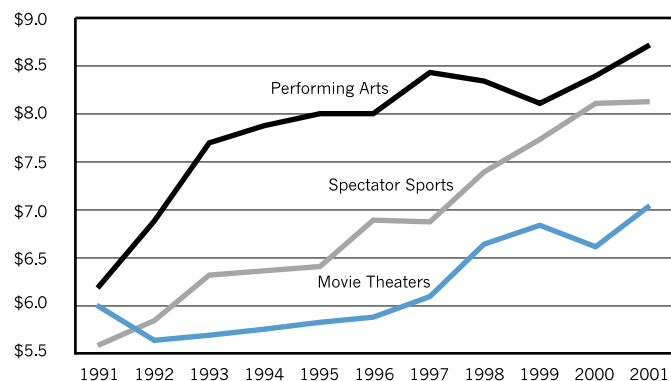
THE ARTS TAKE CENTER STAGE

BY WILLA CONRAD

From music to poetry, painting to dance, it seems obvious that the arts, whether professionally presented or enjoyed as a community expression, are an integral part of American life. This used to be something anecdotally observed, but research in the past 10 years has put hard numbers to the role the arts play, not just in the choice of Americans' pastimes and entertainment but also as a mainstream economic force. Whether encountered in church or the workplace, on a stage or in a museum or school, the arts are becoming an unprecedented part of life in America—and now we have the statistics to show just how surprising this growth has become in the past decade.

Widespread information, now easily available on the Internet as well as in print, indicates that the arts have become a core industry and interface more directly with consumers' imaginations—and pocketbooks—than ever before. For instance, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) reported that consumers spent \$10.6 billion, or \$37.20 per person, at performing arts

Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts Movies, and Spectator Sports: 1991-2001



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

events in 2001.¹ That was \$1.9 billion more than they spent on movie tickets and \$500 million more than they paid to attend sports events. And between 1991 and 2001, more was spent on the performing arts than on movies or sports—\$6.2 billion in 1991 and \$8.7 billion in 2001.²

Similarly, a National Endowment for the Arts study of public participation found that in 2002, 157 million people—or about 76 percent of American adults—attended, read, or listened to some form of artistic expression.³ While no comparable figures are available for sports viewership, according to the BEA study, admissions to

Percent of U.S. Adults Participating in the Arts at Least Once in the 12 Months Ending August 2002

Shown in Percent	Attended/ Visited/ Read	Watched or Listened to on TV/Radio/Rec. Media/Internet	Personally Performed or Created	Took a Class	All Forms of Participation
Performing Arts	31.7	61.8	12.6	2.7	69.0
Music	18.8	47.9	8.1	1.8	51.9
Plays	22.3	21.0	3.5	.05	33.2
Dance	8.7	13.7	4.3	.08	20.5
Visual Arts	41.9	26.3	28.9	2.2	58.8
Historic Sites	31.6	na	na	na	na
Literature	46.3	18.2	2.0	1.0	50.0
NET TOTAL	65.1	56.0	43.9	4.8	76.3

Source: 2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

both spectator sports and cultural events increased significantly from 1991 to 2001—40.3 percent for the arts and 44.6 percent for sports—pitting them as rival growth industries.⁴

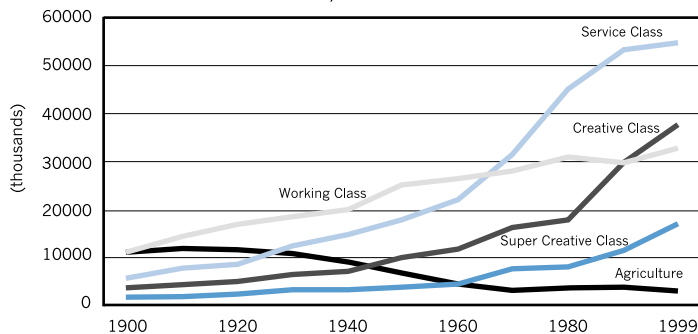
Despite these rosy numbers, from 1998 to 2003, column inches dedicated to the arts remained at best stable at most newspapers, and in some dailies arts coverage has been rapidly declining. Yet during the same period, sport sections have increased their prominence substantially.

Why the disparity between audience size—the traditional yardstick editors use to determine coverage—and the amount of newspaper ink? “The intensity of readership of sports pages is great but narrow,” explains Douglas Clifton, editor of the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, who notes that

when limited column space is doled out, perceived volume of readership is as important as the behavior of actual readers. “It’s an entire segment of readers who will either buy or not buy a newspaper based on their satisfaction with sports coverage. In other areas—including news and arts—there isn’t this on/off switch.”

It would seem that the press, as well as society as a whole, needs a larger view of how art and artists fit into the global picture. Economist Richard Florida has been studying the field for years. In his influential 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida not only trumpets the importance of culture but also equates the work of artists with that of patent holders, medical researchers and engineers. His argument is clear and persuasive. The creative sector is no longer confined to a few inventive geniuses like Edison and Einstein. Instead, it is filled with a multiplicity of individuals representing a driving force within the American economy.

**Urban Growth and Development:
The Class Structure, 1900-1999**

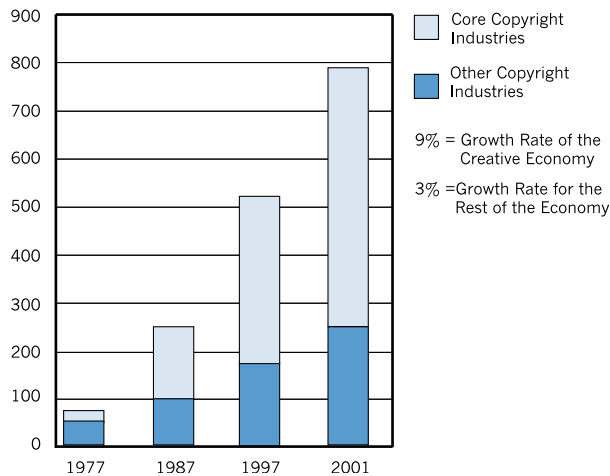


Source: Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books, 2002

For instance, the number of copyright industries—those that rely on legal ownership of intellectual property, including arts and literature—nearly doubled between 1977 and 2001, making up nearly 6 percent of the total work force.⁵ During the same period, the proportion of gross domestic product powered by the so-called “creative economy” has grown from \$100 billion to nearly \$700 billion. According to Steven Tepper, associate director of the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public

The Creative Economy: The Copyright Industries are a Growing Part of GDP

(in billions of 2001 dollars)

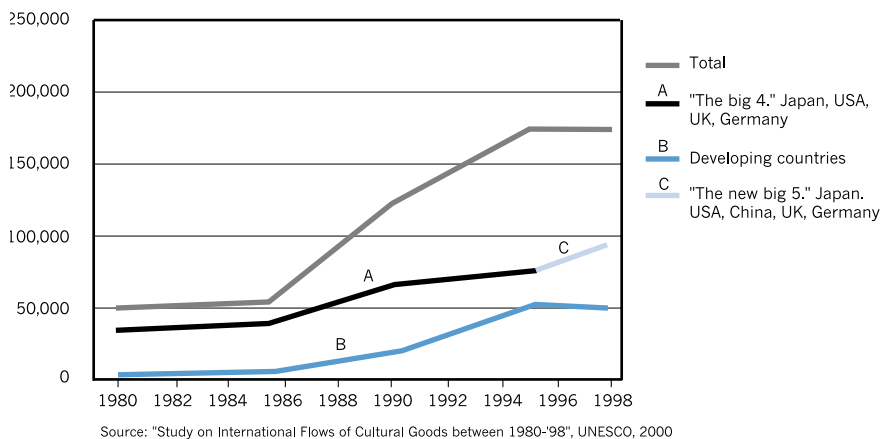


Policy, this is a growth rate three times that of the overall economy.

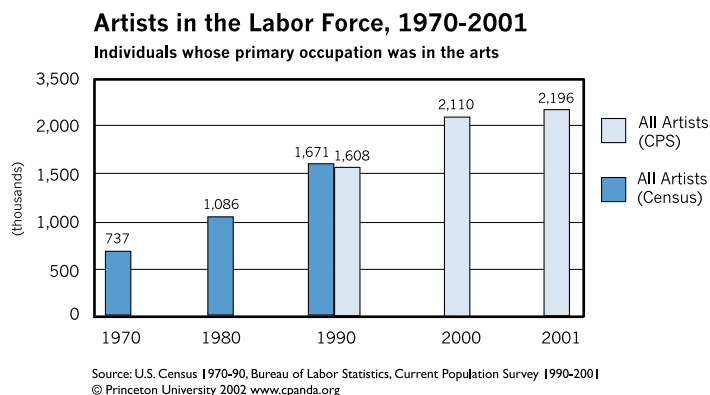
More impressive is what is happening with the dissemination of American ideas. According to a 2002 report, core copyright industries made up a greater volume of U.S. exports than auto manufacturing, electronics or agriculture.⁶ A 2000 study by UNESCO noted that international trade in such cultural “goods” as literature, music, visual arts, cinema, photography and television grew exponentially between 1980 and 1998, rising from \$95 billion to \$387 billion.

World Exports of Cultural Goods, 1980-1998

(in millions of dollars)



Most of that trade was between five countries: the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Japan, though by 1998 China had become the third-largest source of cultural exports.⁷



Throughout the U.S., those in the arts constitute a growing part of the work force. In 1970 the U.S. Census counted 737,000 self-labeled “artists.” By 2001, that number had tripled to 2,196,000. Between 1990 and 2000 all artist occupations had increased by 31.2 percent, compared to only a 13.1-percent increase in the total civilian labor force.⁸

Naturally, the rise in the number of artists has meant growth in the number of artistic organizations. The 2002 Economic Census logged a 26-percent increase since 1997 in cultural organizations with employees,⁹ while the number of museums and historical sites grew 20 percent, a brisk expansion reflected in *Reporting the Arts II*. In several of the cities studied, communities experienced rapid growth until the economic recession of 2001 began chipping away at audience attendance and fundraising. As the economy slowed, budget cuts and layoffs swept newspaper offices, and publications struggled to maintain coverage.

Perhaps another way to look at the relationship between communities, arts, and the media is by examining how deeply cultural activities affect the general population. The NEA’s 2002 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* found that nearly two-thirds of American adults attended cultural events, visited historic sites or read literature during the one-year period ending August 2002. In all, 5 million more people went to an art museum or attended a jazz, classical-

music, opera, theater or ballet performance than were logged in the 1992 NEA report.

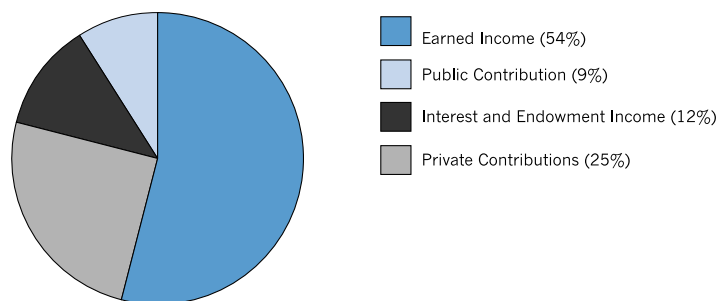
Although American journalists don't typically cover arts activity in religious settings, recent surveys have shown that this is the most common way Americans connect with the arts. A 1999 Princeton University study on the prevalence of arts in religion showed that 85 percent of surveyed places of worship sponsored activities such as an adult choir, a drama, a crafts fair, a liturgical dance performance or a group discussion of art, literature, or poetry.¹⁰

So a large part of America is regularly exposed to the arts, either through places of worship, individual creative activities, or attending performances and exhibits. But in arguing for media coverage, the easiest case to make is also the oldest. Study after study has shown that arts consumers—as well as the organizations that produce art—regularly spend money on travel, hotels and restaurants, a direct translation of aesthetics into hardcore economic impact. A 2002 report by Americans for the Arts showed that nonprofit organizations generate \$134 billion a year in ancillary economic activity, including \$24.4 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues.¹¹

While cultural activity is an increasingly powerful generator of wealth and jobs, it still can't be viewed in the same way as other parts of the economy, argues Shalini Venturelli, an associate professor at American University's School of International Service, in a recent treatise on shifting policy trends. "Unlike automobiles, toothpaste, appliances or textiles, information products are not consumed one unit at a time.

Sources of Cultural Support, 1998

General Revenue Sources for Arts-and-Cultural Organizations



Source: National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support, 2002 (National Survey)
(Philadelphia, PA The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2002)
© Princeton University 2003 www.cpanda.org

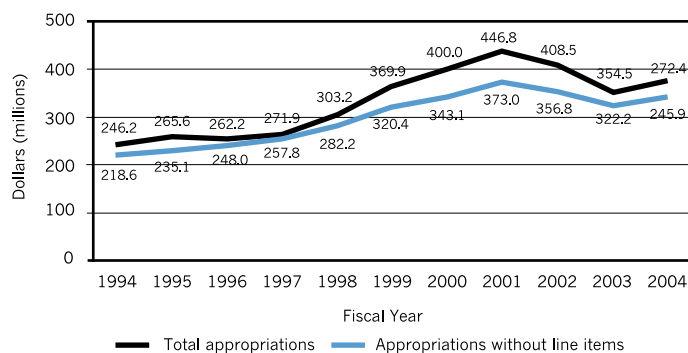
Rather, each product unit is designed to be utilized repeatedly by many, thus becoming more valuable with use.¹²

Nonprofit arts organizations also uniquely depend on government funding. For many groups, this reliance has made for a precarious existence. Throughout the late 1990s, federal funding for the arts decreased while local and state support increased. Then the post-September 11 recession resulted in three consecutive years of reduced state appropriations.¹³ As a result, for the first time since 1996, national per capita spending of state dollars dropped below the \$1 mark to 93¢,¹⁴ a trend strongly reflected in this study, which found several arts communities reeling from declines in state funding.

According to the Americans for the Arts 2002 study *National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support*, in 1998 nonprofit organizations also took 25 percent of their income from the private sector, 12 percent from investments and 9 percent from public funding.¹⁵ Yet while arts groups suffered from reduced public revenues, private philanthropic foundations have—at least until the recent recession—maintained a commitment to funding despite diminishing endowments. Estimated cultural contributions by all U.S. foundations doubled to \$3.7 billion between 1996 and 2000.¹⁶ Since the recession, foundation giving to other sectors has dropped precipitously,¹⁷ but the arts receive only 5 percent less than they did before.

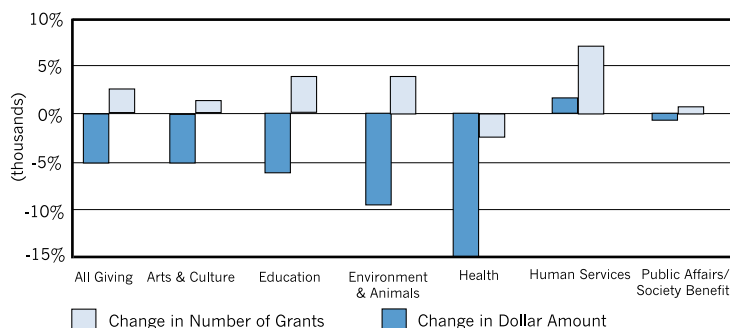
So with all the money and jobs generated by the arts, why is the press often a no-show? The newspapers studied in this report tended to exhibit a “hold tight” approach toward allotment of space. Interestingly, most editors perceive

State Arts Agency Legislative Appropriations Fiscal Years 1994-2004



Source: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, *Legislative Appropriations Annual Survey: Fiscal Year 2004*

Changes in Foundation Grant Dollars Between 2001 and 2002*



Source: The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends*, 2004 Based on a sample of 1,005 larger foundations.

*Includes subject areas accounting for at least 6 percent of grant dollars or grants.
Includes Civil Rights and Social Action, community Improvement and Development, Philanthropy and Voluntarism, and Public Affairs.

their arts coverage as a given. “There is a hierarchy of what newspapers cover, and I think the arts have moved up that hierarchy,” says Clifton of *The Plain Dealer*. “The real struggle is over the amount of space and tension in resources you devote to the fine arts vs. popular arts.”

Meanwhile, statistical evidence continues to

build that the arts are no longer considered a fringe, elitist form of entertainment, but a vibrant economic part of mainstream America. The next big leap for American arts journalism would be a full embrace of that reality, and a commensurate change in the lens through which the media views our culture’s creativity.

NOTES

¹Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Consumer Spending on Admissions to Performing Arts, Movies and Spectator Sports: 1991-2001*, July 2003, www.bea.gov.

² The BEA defines “admissions” as ticket purchases and performing-arts events as legitimate theater, opera and nonprofit entertainments, but also includes rock concerts. Consumer spending on spectator sports includes admissions to professional and amateur athletic events and racetracks.

³ *2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts*, released July 2003, www.arts.gov/pub/Research.html.

⁴See Note 1.

⁵Steven Tepper, associate director of the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, lecture on the Creative Economy, 2003.

⁶Source: Stephen Siwek, *Copyright Industries in the US Economy: the 2002 Report*, Washington, D.C.: Economists Incorporated and the International Intellectual Property Alliance, 2002.

⁷ *Study on International Flows of Cultural Goods*, 1980-98, Paris, UNESCO, 2000; cited on UNESCO’s Web site under “Culture, trade and globalization.”

⁸ Source: U.S. Census (1970-1990); Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (1990-2001); Princeton University’s Cultural Policy and the Arts National Data Archives.

⁹ *Advance Comparative Statistics for the U.S.*, 2002 Economic Census, U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov).

¹⁰ Wuthnow, Robert. 1999 *Arts and Religion Survey*, (computer file). Princeton, N.J.: Gallup Organization (producer).

¹¹ *Arts & Economic Prosperity: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts Organizations and Their Audiences*, 2002, Americans for the Arts.

¹² *From the Information Economy to the Creative Economy: Moving Culture to the Center of International Public Policy*, Shalini Venturelli, Associate Professor of International Communication Policy, School of International Service, American University. Center for Arts and Culture, Cultural Comment Series, www.culturalpolicy.org.

¹³ National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Legislative Appropriations Annual Survey: Fiscal Year 2004.

¹⁴*ibid.*

¹⁵ *2002 National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support* study, Philadelphia, Pew Charitable Trusts.

¹⁶ Lawrence, Steven, Dia Ganguly. 2002. *Foundation Yearbook*, 2002. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, p. 2; Renz, Loren. 2002. Arts Funding Update, 2002. New York, NY: The Foundation Center.

¹⁷ The Foundation Center, *Foundation Giving Trends*, 2004, based on sample of 1,005 larger foundations.

THE DAILIES

OLD FORMATS, NEW CHALLENGES

BY ANDREW TYNDALL

Reporting the Arts II has taken a fresh look at newspapers across the United States. And once again we have found that the arts maintain a well-established niche in metropolitan dailies. Their arts and lifestyles sections—the backbone of which is the television listings grid—are part of the well-rounded regular daily fare, running alongside business and sports and backing up the news pages. And at these newspapers the weekend arts supplements—with a strong dose of full-page advertising—play a leading role among the papers' weekly feature sections.

When *Reporting the Arts* appeared in 1999, we found these two sections printing a robust number of arts and culture articles. Both small and large papers were especially successful when they wrote about events in their backyards, whether the opening of a new museum, a performance by a local musician, a show by an avant-garde artist or the efforts of a civic group.

Since then the prominence of the arts sections—stated as a proportion of each newspaper's total number of pages—has marginally grown, with only a few exceptions. Yet in nearly every one of the newspapers we monitored, the newsholes for A&C coverage—the actual space

dedicated to the field, measured in column inches—have declined.

How can this be? How can the arts be more prominent in newspapers yet less fully covered?

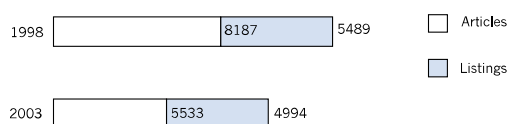
The answer is simple. Newspapers as a whole have shrunk in the past five years. The A&C beat has taken a hit along with the rest of the journalistic departments. While arts sections have been more successful than news or business at withstanding cutbacks, they have been less successful than sports, whose position in the newspaper pecking order has improved dramatically.

METROPOLITAN DAILIES

ARTS JOURNALISTS HAVE adopted various survival strategies to maintain viable coverage in a shrinking world. In October 2003 we revisited the same 10 cities we studied five years earlier—Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Houston, Miami, Philadelphia, Portland, Providence and the San Francisco Bay Area—to observe what has changed in the communities' cultural life and local media coverage. We have once again analyzed each community's main news publications, looking at the same 15 papers we studied in

Arts-and-Culture Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings



October 1998 along with two additional titles. Together the publications yield a second snapshot of how news organizations around the country are covering culture and, more important, how their approaches to arts coverage have evolved over the years.

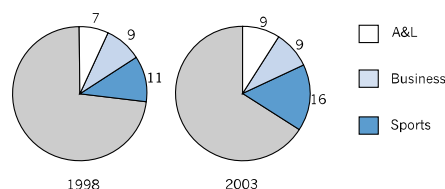
Our findings reveal a varied picture of the ways the different publications have adjusted to the sometimes widespread cuts in the amount of overall space allotted to arts coverage:

- Some newspapers slashed their story count, running many fewer articles; some cut the length of stories to make the same number of articles fit in a smaller space.
- Some beats—especially movies, television and the decorative arts—suffered bigger cuts than others, such as music, performance and publishing.
- Some newspapers shifted their effort from journalism to listings; others relied less heavily on staffers and more on syndicators and freelancers; many transferred resources from the daily A&L sections to their weekend supplements.
- Some newspapers, whose effort on the arts beat was exceptional five years ago, have now cut back to merely average.
- A few newspapers suffered business disasters, and their arts coverage—along with every other journalistic element—was decimated.

While specific coping mechanisms vary widely among papers—as the examples of the papers analyzed in this study show—the years 1998–2003 have proved challenging ones for arts coverage. Looking forward to the next five years, we believe the outlook for the weekend arts supplements is stable. At the daily sections we found straws in the wind of looming radical change.

Prominence of Daily Sections

percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L, business and sports section



BUSINESS CUTBACKS

No newspaper we studied has made a major increase in its commitment to covering arts and culture over the last five years. Only one—the *Chicago Tribune*—registered even a marginal increase in the size of its overall arts newshole. None increased the number of column inches assigned to A&C articles, as opposed to listings.

Of the 15 newspapers we tracked, the biggest cutbacks in A&C coverage took place at the *San Francisco Examiner*. Arts enthusiasts should not take that personally, however. For, since 1998 the newspaper has been sold and gutted in its entirety. Slashing cuts also occurred across the bay at *The Oakland Tribune*, which laid off 7 percent of its staff and halved the space it allocated to arts journalism.

Meanwhile in Colorado, *The Denver Post* and its rival the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* ended a century-old newspaper war, formed a joint operating agreement and scaled back weekend publication. The space for A&C journalism at both papers fell by about a third—yet at the same time the prominence of their arts sections in the overall pagination count actually increased.

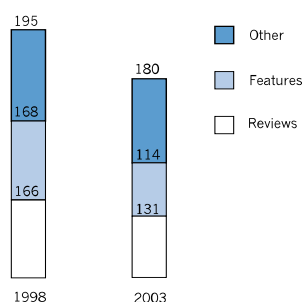
ABOUT THESE CHARTS

1998 averages are based on 15 newspapers.

2003 averages are based on 17 newspapers

Story Count

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

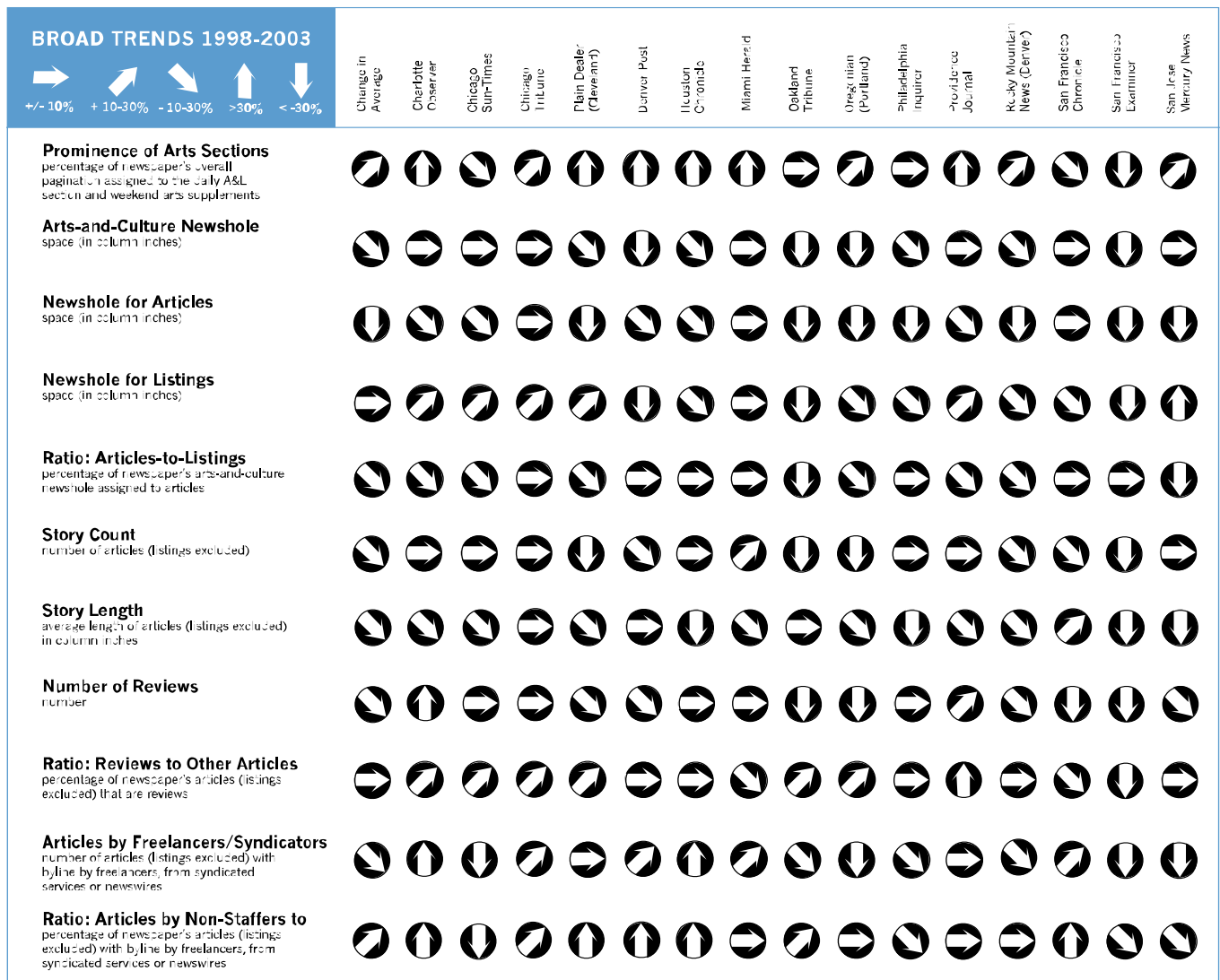


THE SHRINKING NEWSHOLE

There were four other newspapers that exacted significant cuts in their A&C newsholes, leaving them at least 20 percent smaller than in October 2003. In Portland *The Oregonian*, which was a leader in music and movie coverage in 1998, cut both beats in half, falling to well below average. *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland halved the number of articles filed with a staffer's byline and abandoned its unique arts-specialist Entertainment section. Following industry trends, it merged arts and culture with lifestyle in the aptly named new section Arts & Life. As a consequence, the volume of its daily A&C journalism was cut in half. *The Plain Dealer* ended the leadership role it played five years ago; by October 2003 its daily contribution was merely average.

The Philadelphia Inquirer and *Houston Chronicle* maintained their story counts at substantially the same levels as five years ago—the *Chronicle* actually published slightly more A&C articles—yet reduced their average length by a third. The upshot was that both newspapers cut back their newsholes from above average in October 1998 to merely normal in October 2003. And at the *Chronicle* there was a pronounced shift in the workload—away from staffers to using syndicated fare from the wire services instead.

It should be noted that the cutbacks at four of these newspapers—*The Oregonian*, *Oakland Tribune*, *The Plain Dealer* and *Houston Chronicle*—are overstated somewhat. Each title failed to include one edition of its weekend arts supplements when sending that day's paper to



our coding operation and was unable to respond to our repeated requests for a back-up copy. Their A&C coverage is proportionately underrepresented. However, the missing sections would have accounted for only a small fraction of the overall cutbacks we found at these newspapers compared with five years earlier.

HOLDING STEADY

The resources devoted to A&C at the remaining seven newspapers, though, remained substantially the same, with the papers' overall news-holes no more than 10 percent smaller than when we measured five years earlier. These examples of stability ranged from big-city titles—the *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* in Chicago and the *Chronicle* in San Francisco—to the medium-size *Miami Herald* and *San Jose Mercury News*, to titles in two of the smallest cities in our study, *The Providence Journal* and *The Charlotte Observer*. All seven newspapers spent less space on A&C journalism than they did five years earlier—but six (all except the *San Francisco Chronicle*) compensated by increasing the volume of their listings data.

SHRINKING ARTICLES

A major factor in the across-the-board reduction in the amount of space devoted to journalism on the arts is that newspaper articles have grown shorter. For A&C pieces the approximate average length dropped from 15 to 13 column inches. Some papers cut their average by as much as 5 inches. Only the *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Chronicle* bucked the trend. The A&C beat may not be unusual in this regard: Other sections of the papers may also have adopted a pithier approach. It was outside the scope of our study to make that comparison.

Similarly, it may be that newspapers have simply cut these column inches from their news-holes, or they may have kept the space but replaced text with bolder headlines, snazzy graphics and larger photographs. Our study simply measured the space designated for writing about A&C. On that basis, articles have shrunk.

Nevertheless, shorter articles do not necessarily mean fewer pieces. We have already mentioned that the *Houston Chronicle* had a higher story count than five years ago; so too did *The Miami Herald* and *The Charlotte Observer*. The totals at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Providence Journal* were substantially unchanged.

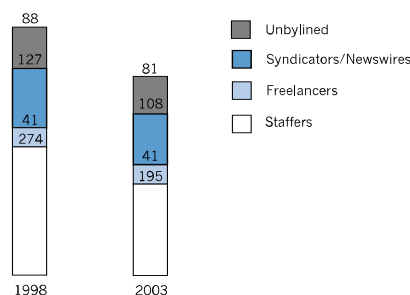
OUTSOURCING

Generally speaking, the newspapers' own staffers were not so lucky. There were cutbacks in the number of bylined articles at all the papers we tracked except for *The Miami Herald*.

Some of the slack was taken up by wire services, and the resultant shorter articles led to an increase in unbylined material. One group that survived relatively unscathed, understandably, was freelancers: they increased their story count at 10 of the 15 newspapers we monitored. The *Chicago Tribune* was the freelancer's best friend five years ago and increased those assignments in October 2003, averaging almost five articles per day, a 27 percent increase.

Story Bylines

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded) filed by staffers, freelancers and articles taken from syndicators and wire services



MOVIES AND TELEVISION HARD HIT

Coverage of movies and TV has been especially hard-hit during this period. One obvious explanation is that these beats absorbed the lion's share of the space reduction, since they were the places from which significant space could still be cut.

In October 1998 all but one of the newspapers devoted more resources to movie journalism than to any other single artistic discipline. Back then, because of the voluminous TV listings grid, every newspaper devoted more overall space—articles and listings combined—to television than to any other beat. In two, TV was tied with movies.

By 2003 movies were the leading journalism beat at only eight of the newspapers, and TV was relegated to overall second place in four of them. The grid itself was usually not cut back drastically. For given the proliferation of programming on TV, that would be difficult. At only three titles did the grid suffer erosion in excess of 30 per-

cent. Instead, TV writers took the hit. They suffered a 30 percent cutback in column inches at 12 of the 15 newspapers we tracked.

LOCAL ART FORMS SPARED FROM CUTS

By contrast, coverage of local art forms suffered smaller cuts. For unlike television, movies and other products of national media and entertainment conglomerates, much of the music and almost all theater and the performing arts that newspapers cover are created locally. Papers therefore found themselves uniquely qualified to cover them, and they continued to do so.

This was one example where we observed a reallocation of resources instead of outright cutbacks. In nine of the 15 newspapers we tracked, either music or the performing arts or both attracted larger newsholes for articles than in 1998.

NETWORK COVERAGE IS A CASUALTY

TV is a key consideration as newspapers decide how much prominence to give to their daily A&L sections in relation to their weekend arts supplements. The TV program grid—containing information that is at once timely and fleeting—is the indispensable backbone for the daily A&L section. And five years ago that skeleton was fleshed out with well-rounded reviews, features, news and gossip.

The decline of TV as a central A&C beat over the past five years is one of the major findings—one might say, surprises—of this study. Only the *San Francisco Chronicle* increased the size of the newshole it allocated to television journalism. Some TV pages trimmed the story count, while others simply cut the article length. All this came at a time when the major networks were steadily losing audiences.

A notable casualty was articles dealing with daytime drama, a staple of the broadcast networks. The voluminous syndicated soap opera story-line synopsis was regularly featured in nine of the newspapers we studied five years ago, but in only four in October 2003. TV reviews were not singled out for cutbacks. Their volume was reduced in proportion to all other TV journalism, accounting for an average of 21 percent of the TV newshole five years ago and 19 percent in the current study.

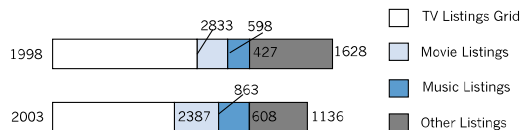
MOVIES: FEWER ARTICLES, MORE LISTINGS

The absolute volume of movie journalism was larger than the television beat at every newspaper we monitored both five years ago and in

2003. However, starting from a larger base, the size of the cuts leveled at movie writing was in many instances greater—and unlike TV, movie reviews did receive a disproportionate share of the cuts.

Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



Yet the trends in movie coverage were less dismal than for TV as several newspapers changed their approach to the movie beat by substituting articles with listings, in the form of unbylined thumbnail reviews with accompanying theater showtimes. The *San Jose Mercury News* led this trend, transforming its movie content in five years from 64 percent articles (36 percent listings) to 74 percent listings (26 percent articles). The *News's* movie listings were actually more voluminous than its TV grid. Following in the same direction, although in less extreme fashion, were *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland and *The Providence Journal*.

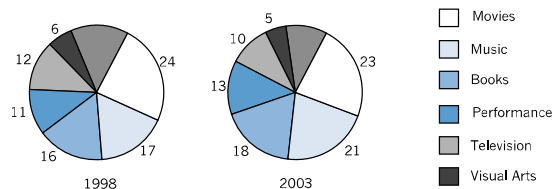
A MIXED PICTURE FOR OTHER ARTS BEATS

There were no such overarching trends in the coverage of most other arts disciplines. Music, despite the travails of the recording industry during the past five years, experienced no equivalent setbacks as a topic for journalism. Coverage suffered cutbacks at some newspapers, saw stability at others and at several received increased attention, especially at *The Miami Herald*.

A trio of performing arts stories boosted out-of-town coverage of that field: the tiger mauling at *Siegfried & Roy's* Las Vegas show, the starv-

Journalism on Arts Disciplines

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to coverage of movies, music, books, performance, television and the visual arts



ing-in-midair stunt by David Blaine in London and the Bolshoi Ballet's feud over its supposedly fat dancer. However, most metropolitan newspapers devote disproportionate space to reviews and features of the local theatrical and performing arts scene. News stories—even headline-grabbing ones such as these—tend to be less detailed, and so their occurrence had only a small impact on overall performance coverage.

Books continued to be the most review-heavy of all arts disciplines. In this area, too, some newspapers increased coverage, notably *The Charlotte Observer*, and others cut back. Of all disciplines, publishing was the one where the implosion at the *San Francisco Examiner* left the biggest void compared with five years ago, when the *Examiner* abandoned the joint release of its weekend Datebook section with its crosstown rival the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The *Chronicle*, now working alone, made no such cutbacks and is still a leader in books coverage.

SPACE: A LUXURY AT LARGE PAPERS

Our study looked at both large newspapers based in big cities and medium-size newspapers whose readership was more regional in scope. Obviously, bigger newspapers offered more coverage of A&C than the smaller regional ones. Of the newspapers we studied, the *Chicago Tribune* and *San Francisco Chronicle* carried the most column inches in October 2003. They were similarly ranked first and second five years earlier.

Their extra coverage, though, is a function of their overall bulk rather than a greater proportionate commitment to the A&C beat. What those two biggest newspapers were able to provide that the other metropolitan dailies did not was coverage of the more esoteric so-called high arts. Thus, of the 17 newspapers we studied in 2003, the *Tribune* and *Chronicle* had the most stories on such topics as local theater, jazz, opera, fiction book reviews, painting and photography. And as we observed five years ago, both newspapers carried regular architectural articles, a beat virtually ignored elsewhere.

Interestingly, their leading role did not extend to all disciplines. Classical music was most heavily covered by Cleveland's *The Plain Dealer* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the two papers that were the leaders in 1998. *The Miami Herald* wrote most frequently on dance, the *Houston Chronicle* on haute couture, *The Charlotte Observer* on libraries—and *The Providence Journal* led all other newspapers in its coverage of museums and sculpture.

BLEAK TIMES FOR DECORATIVE ARTS

Of all the art forms we looked at, the decorative arts underwent the most drastic cuts, proportionally speaking. Back in 1998 the economy was booming and such topics as haute couture, interior design, furniture, arts-and-crafts, artisan wares and objets d'art were routinely covered in nonarts feature sections.

By October 2003 the stock market bubble had burst, and recovery from the resulting recession had not yet kicked in. Perhaps the decorative arts, consisting of high-priced pieces to be bought with the discretionary income of the affluent, are more sensitive to economic cycles than other areas of the arts. For whatever reason, they suffered a steep decline in coverage. At such papers as the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Houston Chronicle* and *The Charlotte Observer*, these beats have been virtually eradicated.

DAILY SECTIONS

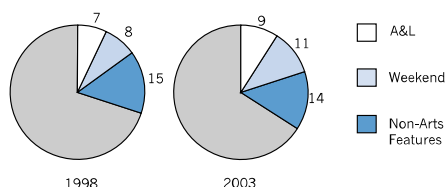
In our 1999 study we outlined the two different ways newspapers presented the arts—focusing either on daily or weekend specialist sections. The daily presence relied on the so-called A&L section, which also goes by such titles as Living or Life or Arts & Lifestyle. As noted, the backbone of these areas is the TV program grid, movie advertising and editorial matter. Weekend sections, meanwhile, typically appeared in the form of a pullout supplement, often in tabloid format, containing both articles and listings with a longer shelf life.

The two sections have retained a stable position in the papers during the past five years. Together they accounted for 16 percent of an average newspaper's pagination in 1998, growing slightly to 19 percent in 2003. This apparent growth merely meant that they shrank at a slower rate than other sections, except for sports, which increased their average size from 11 percent of a newspaper's pages to 16 percent. In the four tabloid newspapers in our study—*San Francisco Examiner*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* and *Chicago Sun-Times*—sports was far more dominant, larger than the daily A&L section and the weekend arts supplements combined.

The relatively constant size of the daily A&L sections belies the erosion of their content. Their TV listings grid remained in place, but there was less A&C journalism to flesh it out. Only four of the 15 newspapers we studied compensated for the across-the-board erosion in television jour-

Prominence of Arts and Feature Sections

percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections



nalism by increasing their A&L section coverage of other arts beats.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* was an exception. Its Datebook section picked up much of the slack left by the *San Francisco Examiner* and its television coverage actually increased. Elsewhere, the Living section at *The Charlotte Observer*—which was minuscule five years ago—and *The Miami Herald's* newly launched Tropical Life produced more daily A&C journalism than they did in 1998. Both accomplished this by expanding non-TV coverage. In Charlotte the number of pieces on classical music and theater increased, while in Miami it was popular music and dance. In Denver the *Rocky Mountain News* increased the size of its daily section while discontinuing Sunday publication.

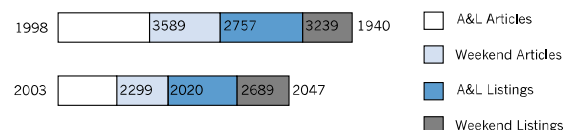
WEEKEND SUPPLEMENTS

By contrast, four other newspapers increased their commitment to A&C journalism on the weekends. *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland and *The Providence Journal*—which launched its Thursday tabloid Live in the intervening years—both boosted the level of their weekend journalistic output from substantially below average to middle of the road. And both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* shifted their focus to the weekends. The weekend newsholes at the two newspapers were the two largest we monitored. As a result, both Chicago papers as well as *The Providence Journal* increased their count of reviews. The two Chicago newspapers were the only local ones in our study to file at least 200 separate reviews during October 2003. And while *The Providence Journal's* total was still below average, it registered the biggest increase since 1998.

At the majority of newspapers, however, the increased emphasis on the weekends came from an effort to deliver listings rather than journalism. Of the 15 local newspapers we tracked, 11 increased the ratio of listings to articles in

Daily and Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements



their weekend newsholes, and 10 increased the actual volume of listings. A pair of Bay Area newspapers—the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The Contra Costa Times*—was preeminent as listings providers.

ADVERTISING

One reason behind the increase in the relative prominence of weekend arts supplements has nothing to do with journalism. Advertising-only sections are now less prevalent. And almost every newspaper has reformatted its sections so that advertising is more integrated with editorial matter. All but three of the 15 reduced the proportion of pages devoted to advertising-only sections. This means that editorial sections, including the weekend arts supplements, automatically take up a large share of the total pagination.

Using a simple measure of the volume of full-page advertising, these weekend supplements are much more ad-heavy than the daily A&L sections. For example, assigning a rule-of-thumb of at least 10 percent of an entire section being devoted to full-page ads, the weekend supplements at 12 of the 17 newspapers we monitored in October 2003 qualified. The daily A&Ls reached that 10 percent mark only at three of the papers.

IS THE FUTURE ARTS OR LIFESTYLE?

Our study indicates that the underpinnings of the weekend arts supplements are sturdy. They have relatively heavy ad support and a growing system to generate complementary listings specializing in movies and, to a lesser extent, music and performance. Their longer shelf life make them amenable to the longer-form feature-preview-review format of journalism—as opposed to shorter breaking news and gossip—which accounted for 46 percent of all articles published in October 2003 but 69 percent of the A&C journalism newshole.

For the daily A&L sections the future is less clear cut. They have less full-page advertising support than their weekend equivalents and a growing disconnect between their massive listings provision and their eroding daily journalism.

At *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, one of the newspapers to make the heaviest cuts in the past five years, its daily A&L section was reformatted to conform to industry norms. Back in October 1998, *The Plain Dealer* separated arts from lifestyle by publishing two separate sections, Entertainment and Lifestyle. Those two beats have been collapsed into Arts & Life. With *The Plain Dealer* throwing in the towel, the stand-alone specialist daily arts section—undiluted by lifestyle features—was nowhere to be found in the metropolitan newspapers we studied. In October 2003 we found it only at *The New York Times*, and even there it had only half the prominence of five years earlier.

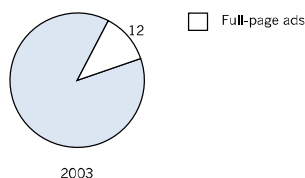
Our study suggested two possible futures for the daily A&L section. At *The Philadelphia Inquirer* its Magazine has disappeared as an A&C section on two of the five weekdays, offering Health/Science instead on Mondays and Home/Garden on Fridays. The trend at *The Inquirer* is to offer a proliferation of weekly feature sections and to undercut the place of the arts in the traditional daily troika of sports-business-A&L.

The Miami Herald has taken the opposite tack. It has slashed the volume of advertising-only sections from 18 percent of pages to zero. In its place the *Herald* increased the pagination for its daily A&L section from 6 percent to 14 percent of the newspaper's entire output when it launched the tabloid *Tropical Life*. With 13 percent of its pages sold as full-page ads, no other metropolitan newspaper in our study attracted such financial support to its daily A&L section. As for content, *Tropical Life* is still an arts

section, but not dependent on TV. It increased its story count, compared with five years ago, and increased its focus on the local music scene and dance.

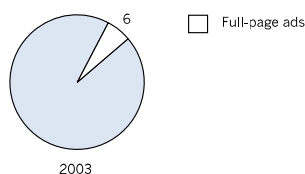
Advertising Support for Weekend Arts Supplements

percentage of pages in weekend arts supplements filled by full-page advertising



Advertising Support for Daily A&L Sections

percentage of pages in daily A&L sections filled by full-page advertising



The big decisions about arts journalism at the metropolitan dailies over the next five years will be how to resolve the role of the TV grid within overall feature coverage. Should the arts take a leadership position in daily local coverage, with other feature beats folded underneath its banner? Or is the arts one important weekly feature beat among many varied lifestyle themes, any of which can accommodate a TV grid without needing to make room for arts journalism? *The Miami Herald* points toward the former, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* toward the latter.

AS FOR THE NATIONALS

WHEN IT CAME TO the national papers, *The New York Times* once again led all others in arts and culture coverage. The volume of the Gray Lady's output remained greater by an order of magnitude than at any of the metropolitan newspapers we monitored. This was especially true when contrasted with the diminutive coverage at the two other national dailies, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. The *Times's* newshole for arts and culture journalism was more than twice as big as those at any of the metropolitan newspapers in *Reporting the Arts II*, except for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

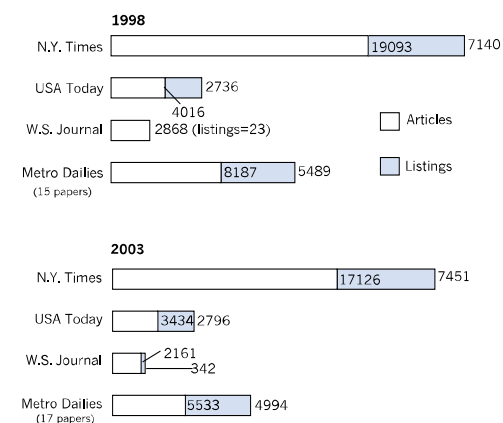
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Compared with figures from October 1998, the overall coverage at the *Times* stayed roughly the same size. Its volume of listings went up slightly while its newshole for articles went down, but its total number of articles increased. There were almost 1,000 A&C pieces published by the paper during October 2003. This larger number of articles in a smaller overall newshole amounts to a shorter average article length, a trend seen across the country. Even after the cuts, however, the average article in the *Times* was longer than at any local newspaper we studied.

The *Times's* mix of artistic beats was unlike that found at any metropolitan newspaper, and it has changed little in the past five years. The *Times* was the only newspaper we monitored to devote more space both to the performing arts and to books than to any other single arts discipline. And popular music received a lower priority than average. It was the only newspaper to file more articles on classical music than on pop and

Arts-and-Culture Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings



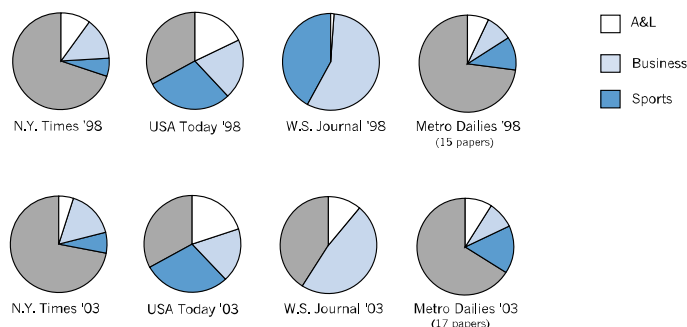
rock. Television, it seems, was treated as an afterthought. The *Times's* overall story count on the performing arts remained constant compared with five years ago, with a slight change of emphasis—there was more on theater, less on dance and opera. In addition, the *Times* led in coverage of both the visual and the decorative arts. The paper's story count for photography and architecture was more than double that of any other newspaper in our study; its coverage of painting has almost doubled compared with five years ago.

As at the metropolitan daily newspapers, we found cutbacks at the *Times* in movie journalism, with a large reduction in the volume of movie reviews. There was, however, no reduction in TV journalism corresponding to the ubiquitous trend at other newspapers. Back in 1998 TV represented an already low 5 percent of the paper's A&C newshole for articles. It has not changed since.

Nevertheless, such is the massive volume of the *Times's* overall A&C effort that even those beats that receive a small share of the newspaper's attention proportionately are still huge in absolute terms. For example, its "tiny" TV coverage consumed more column inches than at every metropolitan newspaper we monitored except for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Its "low" proportion of listings was more massive than at all but two metropolitan newspapers.

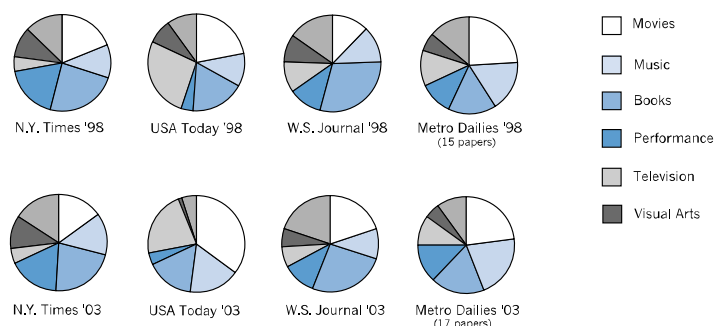
Prominence of Daily Sections

percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L, business and sports section



Journalism on Arts Disciplines

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to coverage of movies, music, books, performance, television and the visual arts



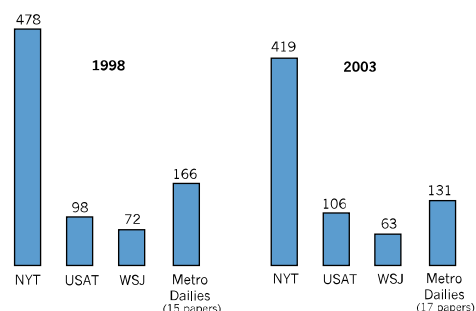
Its “reduced” journalism on movies was second to none. Only in its coverage of pop-and-rock music was the *Times* not the leader. Its story count in October 2003 was no greater than the average at the 17 metropolitan daily newspapers in our study.

The reduction in the number of reviews was most evident for movies but was also found for fiction books and the performing arts. This too needs to be placed in context. While on a daily average there were two fewer reviews filed in October 2003 than in the same month of 1998, the absolute volume was still enormous, with more than 400 in the entire month. And while the proportion of the newshole for reviews also fell from 53 percent to 42 percent, that 42 percent was still bigger than at any metropolitan newspaper we studied, even the review-heavy *Chicago Tribune*.

The major change at the *Times* since 1998 has been the downsizing in the relative importance of its daily Arts & Living section. In 1998 The Arts section accounted for 10 percent of the entire newspaper’s pagination. Yet by 2003 it had fallen to 5 percent. The daily arts section is smaller even than its diminutive sports section,

Reviews

number of reviews



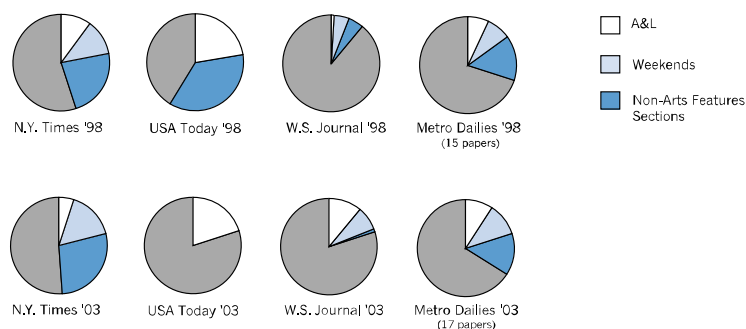
which, at 7 percent of the pagination, is much less prominent than at metropolitan daily newspapers.

The reduction in daily pages devoted to The Arts was reflected in its newshole. The monthly space for articles in the daily section was reduced from more than 9,000 column inches to less than 5,000. In October 1998 The Arts carried almost half the *Times*’s entire journalistic effort

for A&C; five years later it represented little more than one quarter. Only one metropolitan newspaper we monitored, *The Charlotte Observer*, ran a lower percentage of its overall A&C coverage in its daily arts and lifestyles section.

Prominence of Arts and Feature Sections

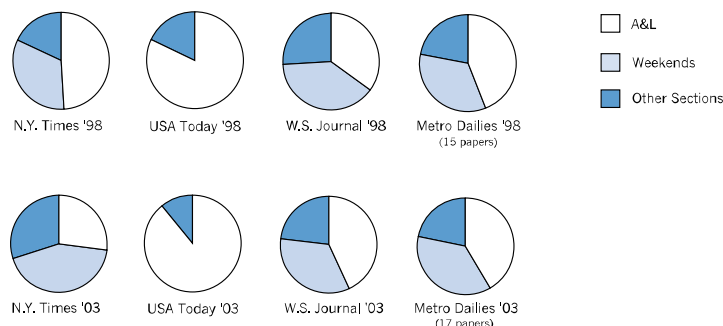
percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections



Some of the *Times*’s daily arts coverage shifted to its daily news sections. The major change, however, appeared in its ballooning weekly feature sections. These sections—the weekend arts supplements plus the weekly nonarts features—comprised only 25 percent of an average metropolitan newspaper’s pages; at the *Times* they occupy 44 percent of the newspaper’s entire pagination, up from 35 percent five years ago. Of these, the weekend arts supplements—Friday’s Weekend, Sunday’s Arts & Leisure and Sunday’s Book Review—accounted for 43 percent of the *Times*’s A&C journalism, up from 33 percent in October 1998. The *Times*’s nonarts feature sections provided a home for architecture and the decorative arts: fully 82 of the 99 articles in these categories were found outside the specialist arts sections. No metropolitan newspaper ran as many as 30 such articles outside their arts sections.

Distribution of Arts-and-Culture Coverage

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to daily A&L sections, weekend arts supplements and other sections



A likely explanation for the small size of the daily arts section and the bulked-up weekend arts content is that it is a business-driven decision, not a journalistic one. A thoroughgoing problem found among the metropolitan newspapers was the mismatch between the pagination of the various arts sections and their full-page advertising support. Almost all had steady support at the weekends and skimpy revenues in the daily A&L sections. The *Times*, by cutting back its daily pagination so drastically, has avoided that problem and kept its editorial-to-advertising ratio in kilter (26 percent at weekends versus 21 percent in the arts). No metropolitan A&L section came anywhere close to The *Times*'s 21 percent. Only three surpassed the 10 percent threshold.

USA TODAY

Of the two other national daily newspapers we studied, neither *The Wall Street Journal* nor *USA Today* assigned a high priority to A&C. Both devoted a slightly smaller newshole to the beat than they did five years ago.

USA Today's specialty continued to be TV. Fully 48 percent of its overall A&C newshole—articles and listings combined—is assigned to TV. Only two other newspapers we studied exceeded 40 percent. *USA Today* was also the only newspaper to devote at least 20 percent of its A&C articles newshole to TV. The total volume of *USA Today*'s TV coverage has changed little in the past five years—its grid was slightly larger and its space for articles accordingly smaller.

Movies—the other quintessentially national art form—were the other area the paper covered disproportionately, occupying 35 percent of *USA Today*'s newshole for articles, more than at all but one newspaper we monitored. By contrast its journalism on the performing and visual arts was

minimal. In the entire month of October 2003, *USA Today* ran only two articles on classical music, two on jazz, two on dance, three on the visual arts and none on opera.

What distinguished *USA Today*'s coverage was that it skewed away from reviews toward treating A&C as news. Only two newspapers published more news stories on the arts beat in October 2003, and *USA*

Today was one of only four newspapers in our study to run more news articles on the arts than reviews. The paper's reputation for brevity was also vindicated. While its total number of articles remained almost constant, the average length has shrunk. In 1998 *USA Today* was the only national or metropolitan paper to run A&C articles with an average length of less than ten column inches. By 2003 another inch fell off that average, bringing it down to less than half the average length found at the *Times*.

Since it appears only on weekdays and thus lacks any weekend arts section, *USA Today*'s overall A&C newshole was tiny—smaller than all but two of the 17 metropolitan newspapers we monitored. However, comparing its daily A&L section, *Life*, with similar sections elsewhere, *USA Today*'s effort was not so skimpy. Only the *Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* had bigger newsholes for articles in their daily A&L sections, though seven newspapers carried more voluminous daily listings.

Movies and Television Journalism Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to articles (listings excluded) on movies and television



The pagination structure for *USA Today* is simple. It has only four sections: News, Sports, Business and Life. Sports is king. In October 2003 it was larger than either Business or Life, as it had been five years earlier. With 29 percent of the pagination, *USA Today's* Sports section was much more prominent than in the metropolitan newspapers we monitored. Life is now marginally bigger, at 20 percent of the newspaper's pagination, and has switched places with Business during the last five years. Because of its simple structure—assigning the entire content of the newspaper to just four sections—Life was larger proportionately than any other daily A&L section in our study, and Business, too, was larger proportionately than any other except, obviously, for the *Journal*.

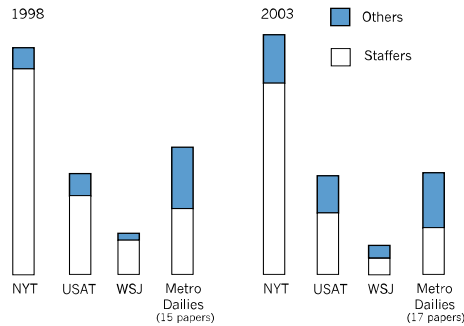
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Wall Street Journal has reorganized its section format since 1998. It introduced a daily Personal Journal and a Weekend Journal as a place for more arts, lifestyle and feature coverage. In practice, however, these changes made little difference in the volume of A&C coverage, which was small five years ago and a little smaller in October 2003. No metropolitan newspaper we studied ran fewer A&C articles. Only one devoted less space to them, and no newspaper had a smaller total A&C newshole for articles and listings combined.

For a newspaper with so many stock listings, the *Journal* avoided them when it came to the arts. Alone among all the newspapers we monitored, the vast majority of its A&C newshole was devoted to articles. Without a television grid, the *Journal* was the only newspaper in our study to

Story Bylines

number of arts-and-culture articles
(listings excluded) filed by staffers and others

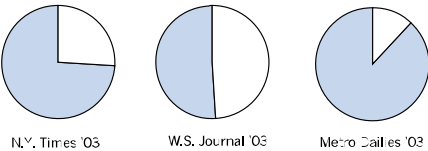


assign less than 10 percent of its overall A&C newshole to TV. Music, too, received a smaller share of attention than at any of the other newspapers. Instead the *Journal* assigned to book publishing, architecture and the decorative arts a higher proportion of A&C articles than did any other newspaper. Now, as five years ago, the overwhelming amount of the paper's book reviews consisted of nonfiction titles.

Going against the trend, the *Journal* was one of only three newspapers in our study to increase the length of its articles. With an average of almost 18 column inches, they were longer than at any other newspaper, even the *Times*. Several metropolitan newspapers in our study dealt with a shrinking A&C newshole by maintaining their story count and slashing the average length of articles. The *Journal* did the opposite. Its articles were slightly longer than they had been five years earlier. However, the daily average number of stories dropped from a meager six to a paltry four.

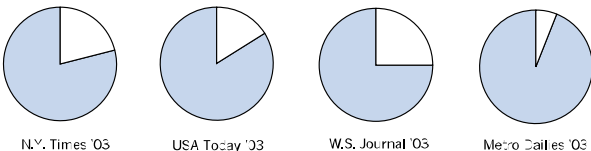
Advertising Support for Weekend Arts Supplements

percentage of pages in weekend arts supplements filled by full page advertising (USA Today is weekdays only)



Advertising Support for Daily A&L Sections

percentage of pages in daily A&L sections filled by full page advertising



Charlotte, North Carolina

Chicago, Illinois

Cleveland, Ohio

Denver, Colorado

Houston, Texas

Miami, Florida

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Portland, Oregon

Providence, Rhode Island

San Francisco Bay Area, California

•Portland

•San Francisco

Denver •

PART II: LOCAL MEDIA



CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Charlotte.

Charlotte is a city of the New South. This means the city's energy, government and public policies tend to focus more on the future than the past. Drive, or better yet walk, through the center of town today and you'll find few buildings from the city's history as a 19th-century trading crossroads and textile center. Although the early 20th century brought considerable industry and growth to the town, urban renewal in the 1970s leveled nearly half the central wards' houses and churches to make room for plazas, malls, skyscrapers, performance venues, a sports stadium and condominiums. The now-vibrant city core is referred to only as Uptown. There is no "down" in Charlotte's civic image of itself.

The arrival of the banking and insurance industries meant tremendous pressure—and money—directed toward creating a quality of life that would attract top executives. Charlotte was one of the first cities to incorporate cultural development into its municipal and political structure as an economic-development tool. "Being pro-culture is the business environment here," says Tom Gabbard, president of the Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts, Uptown's largest performing venue.

The boom-and-bust economics of the late

'90s provided a chance to test the "Charlotte model" of arts support. Though most arts groups saw a dip in ticket sales and donations after the September 11 terrorist attacks, no major arts organization has gone under or failed to regroup. Most were riding a wave of budget and ticket-sales growth right up to early 2002, when county and city funding to the centralized Charlotte-Mecklenburg Arts & Science Council (ASC) all at once dropped about \$2 million—or 13 percent of the council's \$15.2 million budget. State funding to the council likewise has been cut from a high of \$170,000 in 2000 to \$94,000 in 2003.

An October 2003 analysis released by Americans for the Arts found that municipalities using the United Arts Fund model tend to be more durable in tough economic times. This certainly seems the case in Charlotte. "I don't think the corporations can help more than they have," says Regina Smith, ASC vice president of grants and services. "But individuals are stepping up more, and that is the piece that is the bright spot." There's no arguing with the council's success in attracting private money. Since 2001, its United Way-style workplace fundraising campaign has brought in more than \$10 million each year in individual donations.

*"Being
pro-culture is
the business
environment
here."*

Tom Gabbard
president

*Blumenthal Center for
the Performing Arts*

The corporate model of hierarchy and efficiency is reflected in all of the city's major cultural institutions, which include the Mint Museum of Art and Mint Museum of Craft + Design, the Charlotte Symphony, North Carolina Dance Theatre and Opera Carolina. Each has major, long-standing corporate sponsorship and is part of the 28 affiliates of the powerful ASC.

The council, which issues approximately \$12 million in grants each year, also nurtures both public and private partnerships of the kind that built the Blumenthal Center and the McColl Center for Visual Art. In November 2003, for instance, the council released a 25-year Cultural Facilities Master Plan that laid out \$236 million worth of new, renovated or expanded facilities. Among the suggestions were buildings for the Mint Museum, two theater companies, North Carolina Dance Theatre, an African-American Golf Hall of Fame and a modern-art museum. "It's a measure of the council's bullishness for the future," Gabbard says of the plan.

There is a downside to this quantification and coordination of the arts, however. Grassroots and fringe groups have, until recently, tended to be squeezed out. This started to change in 1999 with the appointment of Harriet Sanford as president of the ASC. During her tenure, which ended in February 2004, the ASC instituted a granting program that has funded about 60 emerging groups, among them folk-music collectives and the BareBones experimental theater company.

Still, the city lacks the kind of organic growth in marginal and nontraditional arts that noncentralized funding can produce. "As far as mainstream activities being any more contemporary, or what I'd call 'edgy,' I don't see that happening," says sculptor Paul Sires, co-owner of Center of the Earth Gallery, in the popular former mill neighborhood on North Davidson Street (NoDa). "You'll see contemporary works at North Carolina Dance Theatre, but it's a small section of the normal fare."

Things have improved in some areas, notes John Grooms, editor of Charlotte's alternative weekly, *Creative Loafing*, "while others are dead in the water." Jazz performances are practically nonexistent. Performance art happens in Charlotte, but it's very rare and is treated almost as "a freakish, 'underground' thing." And while art galleries show interesting work, there's still very little activity in visual arts related to some of the city's groups, like that of



THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

the burgeoning Latino community. One area where everyone seems to agree the city has dramatically improved is in adventurous theater, with the emergence of eight new small companies in the past five years.

Undercapitalization is a huge issue for Charlotte arts groups. Besides the museum, the Charlotte Symphony and others are also considering, or in the midst of, endowment drives. Even with access to a shared \$38 million

endowment fund raised by the ASC, they remain vulnerable to fluctuating ticket sales and donations. But, as is typical for Charlotte groups, there is an air of cautious optimism.

As a result, all the largest arts groups are employing austerity methods to survive and even flourish. “Even during these challenging economic times, we’ve been able to launch an endowment campaign,” says the Mint’s executive director, Phil Kline, whose institution has managed to stay about even with its \$5.6 million budget, while at the same time increasing attendance from 102,525 in 1998 to around 175,000 at present. And thanks to a Ford Foundation grant, the museum has already doubled its endowment to about \$9 million.

Last fall, the Charlotte Repertory Theatre revamped its season and dealt with an accumulated deficit of about \$300,000. The Charlotte Symphony, the city’s largest performing group, whose budget nearly doubled to \$7.5 million between 1997 and 2003, recently logged a \$652,000 deficit. It also survived a seven-week musicians’ strike in fall 2003. North Carolina Dance Theatre, perhaps the only Charlotte group that regularly tours to New York City and other locales, has been logging deficits since 2000 and had seen attendance dip by 10 percent prior to 2003.

There is a widespread belief among city arts leaders that Charlotte is supporting and producing more art than other similar-size cities precisely because the centralized arts council provides a forum. However, statistics compiled by Americans for the Arts suggest that, compared to other peer cities using the United Arts Fund model, Charlotte actually produces about the same amount of art, or even less. For instance, an October 2003 analysis ranked

Charlotte below nearby Raleigh, N.C.—a town with a smaller population—in the number of arts groups per 25,000 residents. Still, the city is clearly in the top 10 arts producers among UAF cities, and is significantly more productive than similar-size locales that don’t use centralized funding. The point, perhaps, is that local perception helps spur giving and build civic pride, regardless of what the actual numbers show.

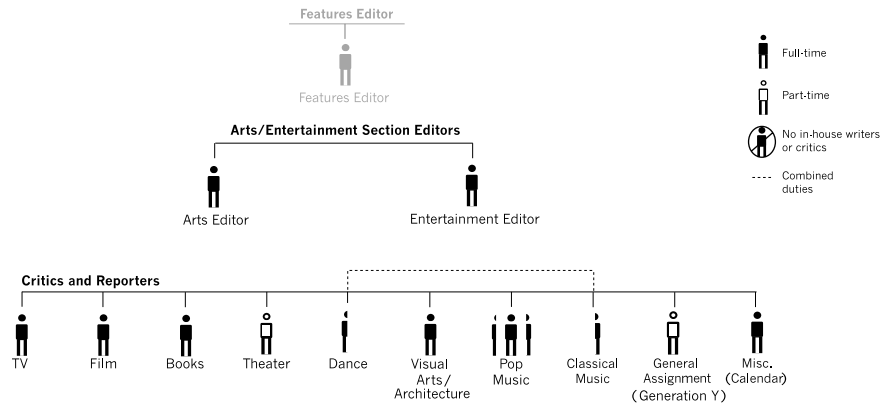
Coordinated public discussion of quality of artistic thought is still almost nonexistent in this numbers-obsessed city. There are, though, significant signs that Charlotte’s arts are growing in caliber and content. In 2001 the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra attracted the renowned Christof Perick, director of the Dresden Opera, as its new music director, and beefed up its offerings. Similarly, in 2000, Opera Carolina joined four other co-commissioning companies to stage Carlisle Floyd’s new opera *Cold Sassy Tree*, while Charlotte Repertory Theatre in 2003 attempted to launch a production of *The Miracle Worker*, starring Hilary Swank, and send it to Broadway. Ultimately it did not travel to New York, but it represented a milestone nonetheless.

So, while economic hard times have taken their toll on Charlotte’s arts, the city’s cultural institutions have steadily pushed forward. “You always wonder when we will reach a plateau, but the growth has been extraordinary. We haven’t topped out yet,” says *The Charlotte Observer*’s visual-arts critic, Richard Maschal. After more than three decades at the paper, Maschal has watched Charlotte’s arts community change exponentially. “Once upon a time the question was ‘Gee, can we take a next step to professionalize?’ Now, I think quality is on the horizon.”

BY WILLA CONRAD

“You always wonder when we will reach a plateau, but the growth has been extraordinary. We haven’t topped out yet.”

Richard Maschal
visual-arts critic
Charlotte Observer

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**The Charlotte Observer**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

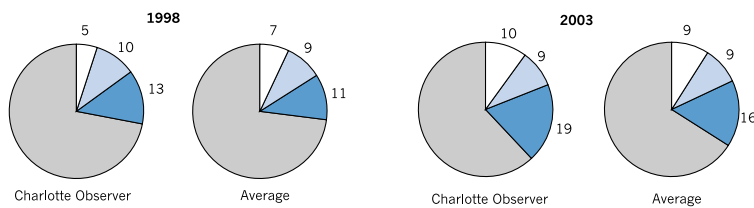
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

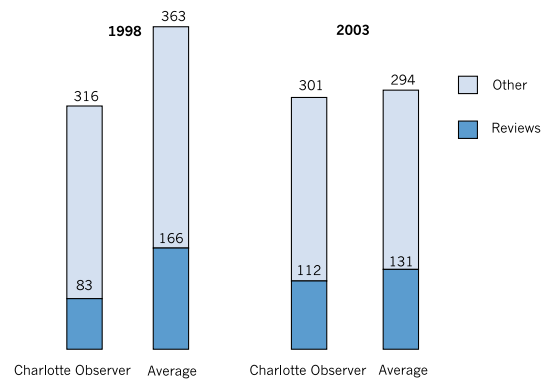
In-house arts staff:

Prominence of Daily Sections

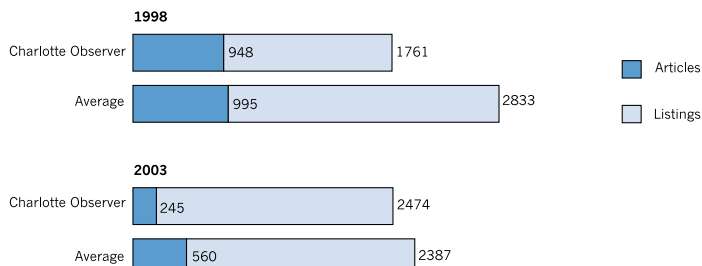
percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L , business and sports sections

**Story Count**

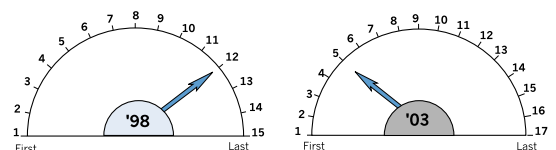
number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

**Television Newshole**

space (in column inches) devoted to television articles and listings grid

**Books Journalism**

ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) devoted to books articles (listings excluded)



Five years ago *The Charlotte Observer's* daily Living section accounted for a mere 5 percent of the newspaper's overall pagination. By October 2003 it doubled its share to 10 percent. The *Observer* also had the distinction of being one of only two seven-day-a-week metropolitan newspapers to devote more pages to its daily arts-and-lifestyles section than to its weekend arts supplements *Entertainment & Things to Do* and *Arts & Books*. Yet when compared with other papers in *Reporting the Arts II*, the arts and culture newshole in the *Observer's* Living had only increased from minuscule to below average.

Since 1998 the *Observer* both expanded and contracted its arts and culture coverage. It did this by increasing its story count and shrinking its average article length from 14 column inches to 10, an amount shorter than at any other metropolitan newspaper in our study.

Five years ago we noted that the *Observer* devoted a higher-than-average 20 percent of its arts and culture journalism newshole to books. The paper continued to concentrate on books, now giving them 25 percent of the space. It doubled its review count, especially of non-

fiction works, and in October 2003 gave extensive coverage to the public library's Novello Festival of Reading as well as the sensational trial of Michael Peterson, a North Carolina novelist, who was convicted of killing his wife. Other areas to receive added attention were classical music and local theater. Both increased their space from almost nonexistent to slightly above average.

Cutbacks did occur at the *Observer*. Television journalism almost disappeared, swallowed by a mushrooming daily grid in an overall TV newshole that remained constant. In 1998 articles on TV accounted for 17 percent of the journalism arts and culture newshole. That shrank to 6 percent, an amount lower than at any other metropolitan newspaper in *Reporting the Arts II*. Back in October 1998, pieces on the decorative arts and furniture, interior design, fashion and crafts routinely appeared in the *Observer's* non-arts feature sections. The newspaper has since consolidated its arts and culture reporting within its specialist arts sections, and decorative arts coverage has been virtually eliminated. **Andrew Tyndall**

ARTS COVERAGE IN CHARLOTTE: A CRITICAL VIEW

MEDIA COVERAGE OF the arts in Charlotte has retained the same basic contours over the past five years. The city's daily newspaper, *The Charlotte Observer*, continues to be the dominating source, informing the public of both the long view and the minutiae of the town's cultural life. The alternative weekly newspaper, *Creative Loafing*, has gained prestige in its arts coverage yet remains a distant second. Smaller papers—ranging from such relative newcomers as the *South Charlotte Weekly* and several Spanish-language newspapers to established ones like *The Charlotte Post*—continue to include arts coverage and even occasional critical reviews. And while *Charlotte Theatre* magazine recently appeared on the market, *The Leader*, a longtime local weekly that regularly covered the arts, has gone out of business.

When it comes to breaking news in the arts, though, the *Observer* still functions virtually without competition. During the fall of 2003 it was the *Observer* that broke the news, and did the most complete coverage, of a musicians' strike at the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra; a finance-driven reduction of the Charlotte Repertory Theatre's season; and the release of a new, 25-year facilities plan by the powerful Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

The *Observer's* dominance warrants a closer look. Like many U.S. newspapers, it hit the peak of go-go '90s ad revenues in early to mid-2001, and has since trimmed 20 full-time newsroom employees, or about 10 percent of its staff. In the past five years, its daily circulation has slipped to 231,369 in 2003, down from 243,990 in 1998, and to 282,215, down from 298,114, on its Sunday edition, though its news hole has grown by 7.5 percent.

Interestingly, the arts and business staff—both small divisions in the newsroom—were spared the reductions and actually grew. "Essentially, we felt that, because they were not really huge departments, any losses there would be tough," says Jennie Buckner, who resigned as the *Observer's* top editor in May 2004. Back in 1998, arts staff positions included nine full-time and one part-time. By fall 2003 that roster had grown to 11 full-time, four staffers who do part-time arts coverage, three freelance and one new full-time arts editor.

While the *Observer's* staff has grown, the city's art scene has exploded, with more than eight new theater companies, various smaller dance and music groups, and the emergence of programming during the normally dormant summer months. Keeping up is a constant battle. "We've dramatically increased the freelance money we spend," says features editor Mike Weinstein, "but there's a lot more to cover, a lot more to decide whether to review or not cover."

The arts haven't escaped the editorial and budget grind. While the *Observer* did hire a new theater critic in early 2004, dance is still covered by freelancers, a shift that has been noted both within and from outside the *Observer*. "Something gets lost in the shuffle," says longtime movie critic Lawrence Toppman. "It's like we try to cover the mountaintops, the peaks, but don't pay as much attention to what's in the range." As a result, Toppman says, the paper is not thinking "philosophically about the big picture." Travel budgets have also been cut, forcing the paper to rely more heavily on wire stories. Long-standing coverage of regional events like Charleston's Spoleto Festival U.S.A. and Durham's American Dance Festival has been pared down, and trips to keep current with national trends have been eliminated.

The *Observer's* primary space for arts coverage continues to be a weekend tabloid section and Sunday arts section, though arts stories now regularly make their way to the front of the daily features sections. Recent cover stories included a profile of Broadway composer Jim Wann, pieces on Omimeo Mime and symphony write-ups. Overnight reviews continue to run haphazardly in the news section, and a daily page dedicated to arts and entertainment, launched in 2000, survived the budget cuts as a half-page.

Covering or previewing arts events rather than providing an in-depth evaluation of a show is a longstanding editorial compromise at the *Observer*. In our 1998 report, the paper logged the smallest number of reviews, in part, argues Buckner, because Charlotte was one of the smallest cities studied. Back then, the *Observer's* daily arts and leisure section made up a mere 4 percent of its overall pagination. This policy grates on the paper's few longtime staff. "You do a lot of educating within," says visual-arts critic and former editor Richard Maschal. "You don't get a lot of feedback on pieces more in the critical vein." By 2003 the paper increased the amount of its coverage to 10 percent of its pagination. This increase, though, only gave the *Observer* an aver-

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Mike Weinstein
features editor
Charlotte Observer

age pagination when compared to the other papers studied in *Reporting the Arts II*.

The scarcity of in-depth articles has been hard on the arts community. During the time when the paper was using a freelance theater critic, many noted that there wasn't enough thorough coverage of that field. "We've had some problems with the theater coverage in particular," says Tom Gabbard, president of the Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts, who perceived enough of an *Observer* bias against Broadway shows that he felt compelled to buy ads in the paper in order to publish "preview reviews." Even those satisfied with their coverage express frustration that population growth, along with the increase in the number of performing-arts groups in Charlotte, has left a serious knowledge gap for the reader. "I don't believe there is a culture in Charlotte media that fully recognizes or appreciates the arts as a huge factor in community life," says the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra's president and executive director, Richard Early. "There is tremendous coverage of NASCAR and of the [NFL] Panthers," he says, "and I recognize there is a TV audience associated with that. But far more people than the 70,000 regular Panther season-ticket holders interface with the arts community."

At *Creative Loafing*, the city's primary alternative voice for the arts, a generational shift in its family ownership has resulted in a notable expansion. With a circulation of 62,000, *Creative Loafing* in 2003 doubled its length to between 96 and 112 pages. And in a bid to position itself as the critical medium of choice, the paper also increased by 50 percent the space devoted to arts coverage. It currently produces about three reviews for every one preview. At the same time, *Creative Loafing* added two freelance visual-arts writers.

Charlotte's TV and radio stations continue to

cover the arts with event-driven features, steering clear of critical or discerning editorials. The advantage of immediacy in key moments—such as the orchestra strike—is counterbalanced by a lack of the perspective that print media's specialized writers can offer. Celebrity-driven happenings, though, can be live-media bonanzas for local arts groups, as was Debbie Allen's visit to the Afro-American Cultural Arts Center in December 2003 for a master class, when she was featured on several TV stations as well as in the papers.

The city's strength in arts-broadcast media continues to be based in four public-radio and three public-TV stations. Radio includes WDAV-FM, with classical programming; WFAE-FM, blues, jazz and Celtic; WNSC-FM, all jazz; and WNCW-FM, eclectic contemporary. WTVI, the Charlotte-based public TV station, is supplemented by Raleigh's WUNC-TV, which broadcasts occasional dance programs statewide, and WNSC-TV, an affiliate of South Carolina public television.

The Internet, a marginal force in 1998, has matured into a legitimate arts-information source, particularly for event listings and offbeat features. The *Observer's* Web site, Charlotte.com, now gets 1 million hits a month. And while a new Charlotte-oriented Web site, Artsavant.com, has appeared, it is not seen as a serious competitor since it only rounds out the niche market.

The biggest change in Charlotte's media is to be found on Internet sites, while print and broadcast influence remains about the same. There is a perceivable qualitative uptick in arts writing at the *Observer* and *Creative Loafing*. There is also the hope that continued population growth and an increase in the number of arts groups might soon force an equivalent expansion of space.

BY WILLA CONRAD

*"I don't
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munity life."*

Richard Earl
president and
executive director
*Charlotte Symphony
Orchestra*

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



Because Chicago is one of the country's largest cities, and because it sustains an established and varied cultural life in virtually every art form—from opera to architecture, jazz to standup comedy—what might amount to a seismic shift in the cultural landscape of a smaller city seems to register here as little more than anecdotal change.

It is therefore possible to report that the arts scene in Chicago is the same as and yet completely different from what it was five years ago, when we issued *Reporting the Arts*. There have been welcome changes, ranging from a new Shakespeare Theater at Navy Pier to the expansions of Symphony Center, the Mexican Fine Arts Center, Adler Planetarium and Shedd Aquarium. There were also renovations of dormant downtown theaters like the Selwyn and the Palace and the building of neighborhood facilities such as the Beverly Arts Center on the far South Side. New downtown destinations include the Harris Theater for Music and Dance—a headquarters for many smaller music, dance and theater companies—and a Frank Gehry bandshell near the Loop in Millennium Park. There are statistics of all stripes that register the sheer amount of cultural activity in the city. For exam-

ple, the more than 150 organizations that belong to the Chicago Dance and Music Alliance continue to offer 2,000 concerts a year, this in addition to the group's in-school programs, which reach more than 3.7 million students.

Yet despite the economic strength of non-profit arts organizations—a substantial \$1.96 billion statewide industry that grew 12 percent a year between 1996 and 2002, and during that time brought in \$10.2 billion to the state and \$8.8 billion to the Chicago economies—the last three years have been difficult and have posed financial challenges for many large as well as small institutions. Established organizations like the Chicago Symphony and Lyric Opera have faced deficits and/or drop-offs in corporate and individual donations. Many groups have endured what Julie Burros, director of cultural programming for the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, calls "huge money problems and severe money woes."

Stagnating city subsidies only marginally helped the strained operating budgets at many institutions. Chicago's City Arts program generates less than \$2 million a year, an amount that hasn't changed since the program's inception in 1990. At the same time, the city's lakefront muse-

"A generation is coming of age that doesn't believe in the importance of the arts. New money is being made. That's what you want to find."

William Mason
general director
Lyric Opera

ums have had their budgets undermined by reduced funds from the Park District, which distributes money from property taxes, providing roughly 15 percent of the total revenue for 10 museums. While operating subsidies for this group remained constant at about \$43 million between 1999 and 2001, there was a catastrophic 75 percent drop-off in subsidies for capital projects—\$4.8 million, down from \$20.7 million.

Chicago, with its seemingly incalculable number of arts organizations, is thus constantly in flux. To say that many music groups or dance companies or galleries or storefront theaters will not be around in five years is only to recognize that those that disappeared over the last five years were replaced by others, and that this loss and replenishment will continue. With the advent of tight times, managers of the city's varied institutions are learning that they must quickly find ways of dealing with financial, marketing and development challenges.

Constant change in the Chicago theater is emblematic of the permutations in the city's arts scene. According to Marj Halperin, director of the League of Chicago Theaters, an organization representing approximately 150 of the metropolitan area's 200 commercial and nonprofit theaters, the city reached an artistic milestone in the last five years. Media, corporate funders and individual donors, along with the theater industry, all "increased their recognition" of Chicago's importance during this period, she says. According to Halperin, the 2001 pre-Broadway run of *The Producers* was a "big signal" that Chicago could become a key city for commercial producers, as was the successful transfer to Broadway of the Goodman Theater production of *Death of a Salesman*, starring Brian Dennehy, which won four Tony Awards.

But those artistic successes were a high-water mark for the city that promised a prosperous future, yet was ultimately undermined by a weakening economy in 2000 and 2001, and by the economic fallout of September 11. Halperin, in common with other civic and arts-institution leaders, is cautious about the financial future. For even though the live-theater industry in Chicago generated approximately \$823 million in direct spending for the city between 1996 and 2002, many theaters have been hobbled by the recession. Production and attendance are both down. "The major issue is the economy," says Halperin. "It was in a tailspin before 9/11, but 9/11 pushed it over the edge. Private, government and corporate funding sources were all hit. Though we're better off than either coast, we may



CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

never recover." And while the number of theater companies in the city—including neighborhood-based storefront theaters as well as world-renowned groups like Steppenwolf—has remained fairly constant, Halperin notes, "they're not the same theaters." Significant groups such as Roadworks, which Halperin calls "one of the bright, upcoming theaters," announced a hiatus. The city has lost iconic companies like Wisdom Bridge and Body Politic. And a starker shift and more telling effect of the economic downturn is that companies once producing five shows a year may now do only three or four.

Such cutbacks and closings do not necessarily mark a trend, however. "Theaters do close, even the great ones," Halperin says. "I get calls every time a theater closes asking, 'Is this the end of avant-garde theater in Chicago?' If a year goes by and there isn't a hot new company from Northwestern or University of Illinois, that's the year something significant has changed in Chicago theater."

Though the Lyric Opera and Chicago Symphony Orchestra have larger endowments than other city institutions, they too have been facing economic hard times. In 2002-03, the opera had a deficit of \$1 million, its first deficit in more than 15 years. The symphony was similarly hobbled. Corporate contributions to the Lyric, according to general director William Mason, fell significantly during the last five years, from about 19 percent to 13 percent of the annual budget. The decline was exacerbated by corporations' moving out of the city and directing their money elsewhere. The shifting direction of the remaining corporate giving indicates troubling long-term problems, Mason says. Young executives with money to give might not even have traditional art institutions on their philanthropic radar. "The direction of corporate giving changes when a company changes its CEO. A generation is coming of age that doesn't believe in the importance of the arts. New money is being made. That's what you want to find." In addition, the older idea of corporate giving as community and artistic support for worthy organizations has

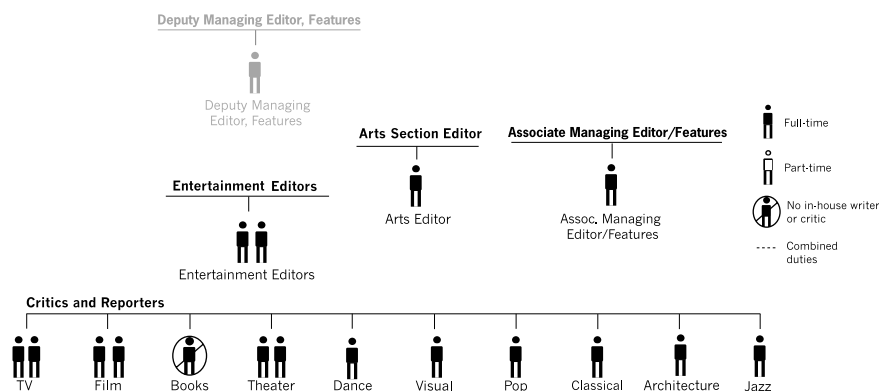
mutated. Now many corporations donate only in return for marketing and branding opportunities.

Corporate giving is also down at the Art Institute, one of the city's premier institutions. Such philanthropy, though, has not been as crucial to that organization, says James N. Wood, the museum's longtime president, who is retiring this year. The institute is in the midst of expansion plans and has commissioned a new building from the Pritzker prize-winning Italian architect Renzo Piano. "We're not there yet," Wood says of concerted efforts to raise the projected \$198-million price tag. "Depending on the pace of fundraising, we may break ground in a year and finish three years from that." But even though the Art Institute appears to have been spared many of the hardships felt elsewhere, Wood knows money is tight not only in Chicago but also across the country. Echoing the thoughts of many others throughout the city, and summing up the challenges of the recent past and perhaps even the long-term future, he admits, "These are difficult times. We are all struggling."

BY BILL GOLDSTEIN

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Marj Halperin
director
*League of
Chicago Theaters*

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**Chicago Tribune**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

Arts-and-culture newshole:

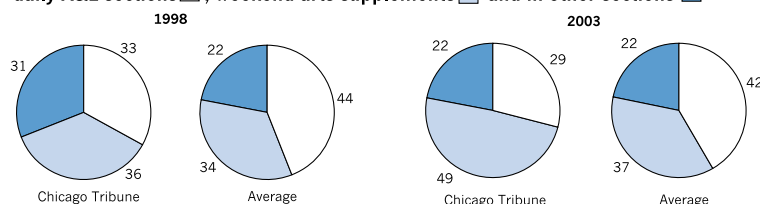
Number of arts-and-culture articles:

* In-house arts staff:

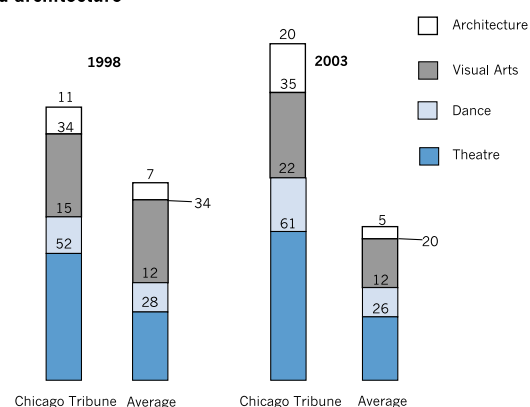
*Staffing chart and comparison does not include general assignment reporters.

Distribution of Arts-and-Culture

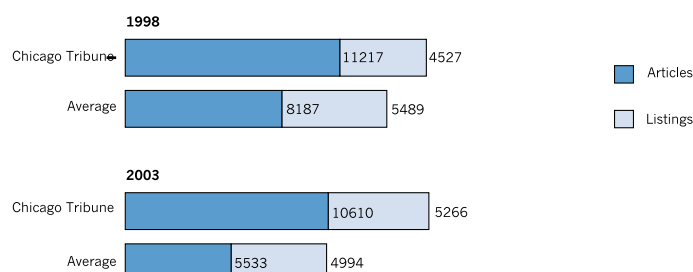
percentage of arts-and-culture newshole (listings excluded) appearing in daily A&L sections , weekend arts supplements and in other sections

**Performing & Visual Arts**

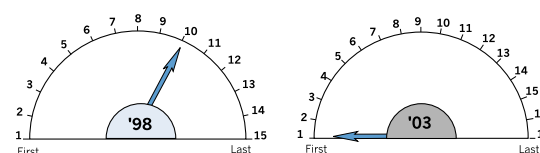
number of articles on theater, dance, the visual arts and architecture

**Arts-and-Culture Newshole**

space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings

**Books Journalism**

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to books



THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE was the only one of the newspapers we monitored to increase its overall arts and culture newshole since 1998. All the increase was to be found in its weekend arts supplements, variously titled Weekend Entertainment, Friday, A&E, Books, Movies and TV Week. These articles represented almost half the newspaper's entire volume of journalism devoted to A&C, a higher percentage than in any other newspaper in October 2003.

The *Tribune* provided the most comprehensive coverage of any of the local newspapers in *Reporting the Arts II*, according to an array of key criteria. It ranked number 2 for overall A&C volume (articles and listings combined); and number 1 for the size of its newshole for articles, number of articles published, average story length, number of reviews and the story count on such disciplines as books, the performing arts, the visual arts and architecture. While the trend over the past five years has been toward articles of a shorter length, the *Tribune* was an exception. It was one of only two metropolitan newspapers to

run articles averaging longer than 16 column inches.

The *Tribune's* daily arts-and-lifestyles section, Tempo, received little prominence, representing only 5 percent of the paper's pagination in both 2003 and 1998. Tempo may have been a small section proportionately, but among the metropolitan newspapers we studied, only the daily newshole of the A&L section of the *San Francisco Chronicle* was bigger. Back in 1998 substantial daily journalism on A&C was found in the *Tribune's* hard-news sections; that has been largely consolidated in the specialist sections in the past five years.

Television and books were the two artistic areas in which the *Tribune* made a major shift of resources. Its newshole for articles on TV was halved since 1998, while books grew from 15 percent to an astonishing 26 percent of the entire A&C newshole. This included a non-journalistic innovation in its books section one weekend: running copious extracts from four different novels. —AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN CHICAGO: A CRITICAL VIEW

THE RIVALRY BETWEEN the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the city's two major dailies, is fought along the traditional fronts—scoops, staffing, circulation. But in probably no other city does the face-off between competitors also occur along architectural lines. For pedestrians and drivers going north along the Michigan Avenue Bridge across the Chicago River, the headquarters of these different newspapers frame the view uptown, in the heart of the city.

The Chicago Tribune Tower, finished in 1924, is one of the glories of the city's skyline and perhaps the most famous newspaper building in the world. Just across the river from this landmark is the uninspiring headquarters of the *Sun-Times*, a low, faceless building of dark-gray metal that will soon be torn down to make way for a Trump International hotel and condominium.

Newspapers, however, are more than just the structures that house them. And though the *Tribune's* architectural superiority is matched by its predominance in circulation and staffing, the journalistic battle is less one-sided than the buildings would make it appear. As some of the *Tribune's* staff suggest, the paper often moves as slowly as tectonic plates. "It pisses me off every day when a paper with 25 percent of our resources scoops us," says Scott L. Powers, entertainment editor for the *Tribune*, of its competitor. The *Sun-Times*—whose future ownership as we went to press was in question since press mogul Conrad Black had been blocked from selling his controlling shares in Hollinger International, which owns the paper—seems always to be getting in the way of its larger rival. As *Sun-Times* features editor Christine Ledbetter says, "We pride ourselves on being aggressive, immediate, gritty on how we cover news in arts and entertainment."

The *Tribune* has more trouble than the *Sun-Times* in reacting to arts-and-entertainment news for a very practical reason. The *Tribune's* daily Tempo section, which contains arts, culture, media and technology stories, is printed not overnight but one or more days in advance—a practice universally condemned by *Tribune* editors, who have waged a long and generally unsuccessful campaign against the money-saving preprint. (The Monday and Saturday sections were recently moved to a normal schedule.) "It



CHICAGO TRIBUNE

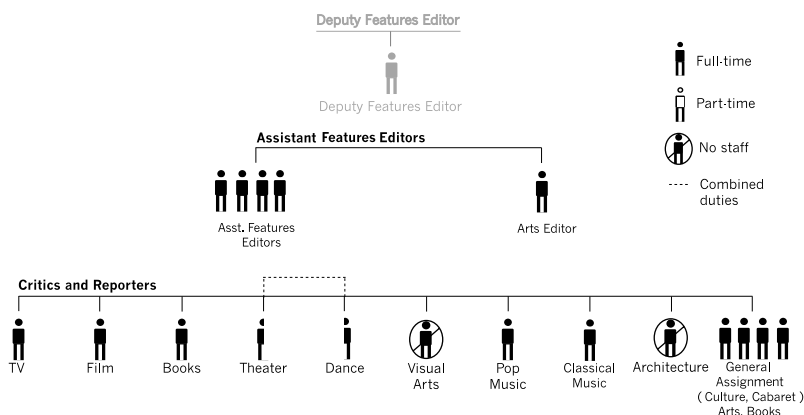
dulls our journalistic impulses," says Powers. Tim Bannon, the paper's Tempo editor, adds, "It is unfathomable that a newspaper of this size can't have a next-day features section."

Whether Tempo stories should be on page 1 has also long been a matter of philosophical debate at the *Tribune*. Some have argued that arts stories should be featured prominently in news sections, while others, including current managing editor for features Jim Warren, have called for reserving them for Tempo, thus mak-

Owner: Knight Ridder

Daily Circulation: 486,936

Sunday Circulation: 378,371

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**Chicago Sun-Times**

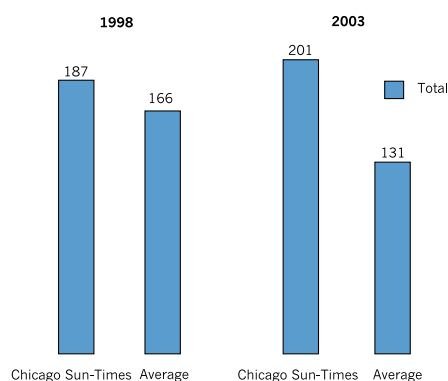
1998-2003

Daily circulation: ➡

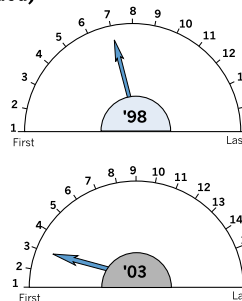
Arts-and-culture newshole: ➡

Number of arts-and-culture articles: ➡

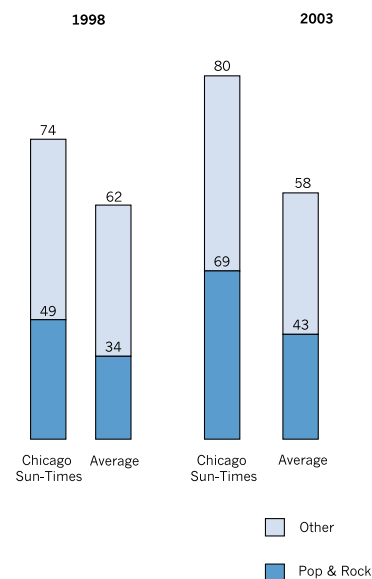
In-house arts staff: ➡

Reviews number of reviews**Newshole for Journalism**

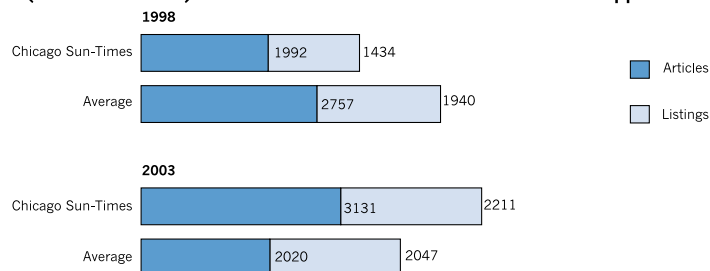
ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

**Music Journalism**

number of articles (listings excluded) on music

**Weekend Supplements**

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in weekend arts supplements



MOVIE CRITIC ROGER EBERT's national reputation as a reviewer epitomizes the caliber of columnists and the overall review-heavy story selection at the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The newspaper specialized in reviews on cinema and performance. At the *Sun-Times* those two beats combined account for 44 percent of its newshole for arts and culture articles, more than at all but one newspaper we studied.

The *Sun-Times*, like almost every other metropolitan newspaper in our study, has cut back its commitment to arts and culture journalism. But because its cuts have been more moderate than elsewhere, the paper has found itself vaulting to a leadership position in the field. Five years ago the journalism newshole at six of the 15 metropolitan dailies we studied exceeded that at the *Sun-Times*. By 2003 only two of the 17 were larger. On the other hand, the *Sun-Times* filed a lower-than-average volume of listings, which is typical for a tabloid. Listings accounted for only 40 percent of its overall arts and culture newshole.

Tabloids generally give the arts less prominence than broadsheets,

and the *Sun-Times* was no exception, with only 15 percent of its pages assigned to specialist arts sections, the daily A&L Showcase and the supplement Weekend Plus. The skimpiness of the *Sun-Times*'s daily Showcase was accounted for in part by the paucity of full-page ads.

Both the *Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* have shifted resources over the past five years from their daily arts sections to their weekend supplements. In the case of the *Sun-Times*, this represented a reduction from an unusually high reliance on Showcase—59 percent of the entire arts and culture journalism newshole—to a near-average 41 percent. In the process television journalism was cut substantially, while music and books were boosted. The *Sun-Times*, specializing in covering the pop and rock scene, published more music articles in October 2003 than any other metropolitan newspaper we monitored. However, the paper's transfer of resources toward book publishing has not pushed the *Sun-Times* into a leadership position. Back in 1998 books were virtually ignored; in 2003 the volume of coverage rose—all the way up to below average.—AT

ing that section stronger and more cohesive. But after September 11, the practical reality of news coverage meant that there was a limited chance of getting arts stories on the newspaper's front page. This was further reduced by a redesign and the move to a smaller web. To mitigate the impact of the day-late Tempo section, the *Tribune* prints several reviews every day in Metro. But Powers is convinced that the general public isn't even aware that these pieces exist. "Nobody reads it except for publicists," he says. "I'm sure it puzzles readers why entertainment news is on Page 2 of Metro, but we're thankful it's there." The thinking is different at the *Sun-Times*, where, according to Ledbetter, significant arts-news stories should be put in main news sections rather than being kept in the paper's daily Showcase department.

At the *Sun-Times*, according to Ledbetter, there have been no layoffs in the arts editorial staff during the last five years, and no vacancies were filled, though an assistant features editor, concentrating on theater, was added after October 2003, the month of our study. Similarly, the *Tribune* has had some turnover, but no changes in headcount, according to editors. The January 2002 retirement of Richard Christiansen, "dean" of Chicago theater critics, caused a shift in that essential beat. It is now divided between two people, reporter Chris Jones and critic Michael Phillips, formerly of the *Los Angeles Times*. "Theater—that is the game here," says Powers of the dominant role the stage has long played on the Chicago arts scene. This reality is reflected at the *Sun-Times*, where its theater and dance critic, Hedy Weiss, accumulated about 350 bylines last year. "She's one of our stars," says Ledbetter. "We have to beg her to stop writing. There's not enough space." *Reporting the Arts II* shows how seriously both papers take the arts. The *Tribune* was the only publication studied by the National Arts Journalism Program actually to increase the size of their overall arts-and-culture newshole since 1998.

Neither the *Sun-Times* nor the *Tribune* has the personnel resources to enforce the distinction between reporter and critic; exigencies of time and space require trade-offs. The belief at the *Tribune* seems to be that while losing criticism inches to reporting may run counter to the interests of arts institutions, which thrive on

publicity, the shift makes the paper more interesting to readers. "Newspapers always have to be asking, 'Whom are you writing for? Is a review what the consumer wants?'" says Bannon of the *Tribune*, whose architecture critic, Blair Kamin, won a 1999 Pulitzer Prize for criticism. The *Sun-Times* likewise prides itself on its own stable of voices, from Roger Ebert on movies to Wynne Delacoma on classical music, and Ledbetter notes that, in general, the evolving relationship between critic and reporter means that "Newspapers don't have the luxury of having that distinction." James N. Wood, outgoing president of the Art Institute of Chicago, says he is less concerned about the disappearance of the critic who exclusively writes criticism than he is worried over whether "high culture can get continued coverage."

The circulation figures for the two newspapers reveal a vast divide. Daily circulation of the *Sun-Times* in late 2003 was 486,936, up from 468,170 in 1998; Sunday was 378,371, down from 402,917. The *Tribune's*, meanwhile, was 693,978 daily in 2003 and 675,690 in 1998; Sunday was 1,000,570 in 2003 and 1,005,175 in 1998. The difference might be even larger than it seems. In June, the *Sun-Times'* management admitted that they had overstated circulation during the past few years, though at the time *Reporting the Arts II* went to press in August 2004, the level of inflation was not clear. Publisher John Cruickshank announced in spring 2004 that the paper plans on "getting to the bottom of this investigation." Interestingly, the Web audience for the *Sun-Times* is marginally larger than its more dominant competitor, yet visitors to the *Tribune* Web page spent more than twice as long at that site than those on the *Sun-Times'*.

As at many other major metropolitan daily broadsheets, the arts staff of the *Tribune* works, or senses itself laboring, in the shadow of *The New York Times*—this despite the fact that the *Tribune* is itself a well-financed publication with a large, dedicated staff that holds sway over much of the Midwest. "We have to do true enterprise stories that you won't find anywhere else," says Powers of the need to distinguish the paper from its East Coast rival, which has a small but increasing circulation in Chicago.

In an attempt to lure larger and potentially

"We pride ourselves on being aggressive, immediate, gritty on how we cover news in arts and entertainment."

Christine Ledbetter
features editor
Chicago Sun-Times

younger audiences, the *Tribune* in 2002 launched the afternoon tabloid *Red Eye*. In response, the *Sun-Times* quickly started up *Red Streak*, setting off what a *Sun-Times* spokeswoman called at the time “an old-fashioned newspaper war.” It is far from clear to the editors whether the tabloids—whose ostensible audience is the elusive 18-to-35-year-old demographic—are actually building readership. The Tribune Company also bought *Chicago Magazine* in 2002, and has so far kept its editorial operations separate from the paper’s. Yet the consolidation worries observers who fear it will result in a dearth of voices in arts journalism.

There is, additionally, the *Tribune* site, Metromix, which has arts news as well as listings. The listings compete with those found in the *Chicago Reader*, a pioneering leader among alternative weeklies, with a circulation at the end of 2003 of 129,191. According to editor Alison

True, there is “an insane completeness” to the *Reader*’s listings, which are compiled and edited by more than 30 people. True notes that over the last five years the *Reader* has featured more arts coverage because “it’s always been our mission. What we are is a guide to the city.” It also started a suburban edition that contains only listings.

Jim Warren, the *Tribune*’s managing editor for features (and an NAJP advisory board member), acknowledges that the *Tribune* on its own offers its readers a potentially confusing array of choices—the flagship publication, its Metromix Web site and the *Red Eye* tabloid. “We’re giving so many people so many little slices. Is it diversification or fragmentation?” he asks. For Chicago itself, the critical question remains whether the *Tribune*, the *Sun-Times* and the variety of other newspapers and Web sites in Chicagoland will continue to chronicle the diversity of art forms offered in the city.

BY BILL GOLDSTEIN

“It is unfathomable that a newspaper of this size can’t have a next-day features section.”

Tim Bannon
Tempo editor
Chicago Tribune.



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Cleveland.

As Drew Carey says, Cleveland rocks. But the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum also lays claim to the world-renowned Cleveland Orchestra, a distinct source of civic pride in this struggling rust-belt city.

One reason for the orchestra's strong ties to the community is its roster of educational programs, which began with its founding in 1918 and continues today. More than 70,000 young people and adults annually attend concerts at Severance Hall, the orchestra's home, and more than 100,000 Clevelanders flock each year to free Fourth of July concerts and other events.

Despite its importance, the Cleveland Orchestra has experienced financial hard times in the past five years. At the end of 2002 it was \$1.3 million in the hole. So even though its enviable endowment should ensure that it will be around for some time to come, the orchestra still set out to cut costs. It suspended its national radio broadcasts, delayed repairs to Severance Hall and instituted a salary freeze for some employees and voluntary pay cuts for senior administrators. Still, the next year it posted an even bigger deficit: \$1.9 million on a \$36.1 million budget.

The city's other key treasure, the heavily endowed Cleveland Museum of Art, has faced a similar plight. In July 2003 it was forced to lay off employees, freeze salaries and cut pay by 5 percent for senior management in order to trim its \$33.3 million budget by \$3.3 million.

And these prestige institutions are the lucky ones. In the past five years, companies that have gone out of business include the Cleveland Ballet, once hailed as among the nation's top classical dance companies; the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, which served as the ballet's pit orchestra; and the Cleveland Signstage Theatre, a theater company for the deaf. For a city with such premier cultural facilities, the vexing problem is how to make sure other institutions don't also close their doors.

At the Cleveland Play House, the nation's oldest continuously operating nonprofit theater company, executive director Dean Gladden pointed—literally—to one of the reasons for the Cleveland arts scene's woes. "B.P. America, gone. TRW, sold last year," he says, reading names from a plaque installed in 1983 that honors corporate donors. "White Consolidated Industries, gone. LTV Steel Company, bankrupt. Gone."

In the 1990s, no fewer than 11 corporations

*"It's not just
arts for arts'
sake anymore."*

Kathleen Cervený
senior program officer
*The Cleveland
Foundation.*

moved their headquarters out of Cleveland. OfficeMax recently joined the exodus, leaving Cleveland alone among the top 20 largest U.S. cities to show a net loss of large corporate headquarters. "The single biggest area of concern is that Cleveland's corporate population has been declining and continues to decline," says Gary Hanson, the orchestra's executive director. "Consequently, corporate support for the arts has been declining."

And when the corporations moved or shut down, plenty of management-level and other jobs went with them. Census figures show that the region lost 1.3 percent of its population during the 1990s, while the U.S. population as a whole grew by more than 13 percent. What's more, young people moved out of the area at a rate more than twice the national average, including nearly 20 percent of those 25 to 34 years of age. "We try new things every year, and our subscription base is still diminishing," says Gladden, who has seen Play House subscribers dwindle from 14,000 in 1983 to 7,000 this season. "Instead of saying they don't have time, they're saying, 'We're worried about our jobs.' Or they don't have a job, and they're trying to save money."

Another demographic shift that has hurt institutions like the Play House is movement from inner-ring suburbs like Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights to communities farther outside the city such as Solon, Hudson and Bainbridge. For those residents, a trip to and from Cleveland for a night's entertainment is now more complicated and time-consuming.

Meanwhile, the city's cultural community has faced problems common to arts groups nationwide. Post-September 11, ticket sales dropped, and the falling stock market caused a decrease in foundation support and private giving. For example, the Cleveland Foundation's arts grants totaled \$8.6 million in both 1999 and 2002 but dipped to \$7.1 million in 2003. At the same time, the Cleveland-based George Gund Foundation reduced its grants overall by \$1 million, falling to \$19 million in 2002 and \$18 million the following year. "I think it can be stabilized, but I think we'll lose more organizations," says Marcie Goodman, executive director of the Cleveland Film Society, which was pulled back from the brink of bankruptcy in 2003. "I don't see population increasing. I think it's more a matter of just stabilizing and building a more devoted audience, and reaching out to new audiences."

Making matters worse is the fact that

Cleveland is one of the few cities its size with little public funding for culture. The city spends less than \$100,000 on the arts—despite a study released in 2000 that showed the arts and cultural industry generates more than \$1 billion in economic activity and employs 3,700 full-time workers in the region. In fact, in order to fund the Cleveland Browns Stadium, the city enacted a parking tax that didn't exempt nonprofit groups; a percentage of their parking fees therefore goes to subsidize one of the richest pro sports teams in the country. And the city's major



THE PLAIN DEALER

investment in the popular arts—the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, designed by I.M. Pei and opened in 1995—draws mainly tourists and has not proven itself to be an incubator for arts-related businesses.

The last five years have been bleak, but those who toil in the nonprofit arts world are nothing if not optimistic. Some might even argue that hard times have given rise to positive developments, such as the formation of the Community Partnership for the Arts and Culture (C-PAC), which has become an arts-advocacy coalition and a clearinghouse for information.

In the meantime, help has gone out to some troubled groups in the form of the Cleveland Foundation's Advancement Program for Mid-Sized Arts Organizations. Announced in May 2004, the three-year, \$5 million initiative is designed to assist groups across a range of disciplines—Apollo's Fire: The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra, Cleveland Film Society, Cleveland Public Art, Great Lakes Theater Festival, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and Young Audiences of Greater Cleveland—in strengthening their balance sheets and developing a core of skilled leaders.

Furthermore, new troupes have arisen from the demise of old ones. Among the most innova-

tive and artistically well-regarded are Red, an orchestra formed in 2001 by former members of the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, and GroundWorks, a dance company founded in 1998 by former Cleveland Ballet dancer David Shimotakahara. Other new ventures are helping to revitalize the scene as well. A group called Sparx in the City, for example, has organized such events as a tour of 50 art galleries, designed both to highlight the arts and stimulate merchant activity in downtown Cleveland.

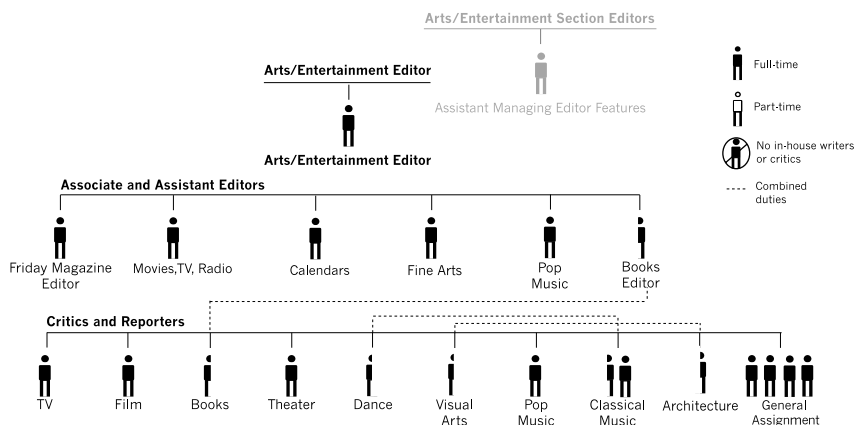
Perhaps the biggest change to come out of the troubled times is a new mindset about the role of culture in general. "It's not just arts for arts' sake anymore," says Kathleen Cervený, senior program officer of the Cleveland Foundation. "The arts have to make the case that they contribute to economic and community development, not just to the quality of life and perpetuating old elitist values."

Cervený, for one, sees hope even in the March 2004 defeat of Issue 31, a property-tax initiative that would have raised nearly \$21 million to help the local economy and cultural activity. "Even though it failed, the arts community was enormously energized," she says. "There was recognition overnight that the arts were a sector to be contended with."

BY VALERIE TAKAHAMA

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Marcie Goodman
executive director
Cleveland Film Society

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**THE PLAIN DEALER**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:



Arts-and-culture newshole:



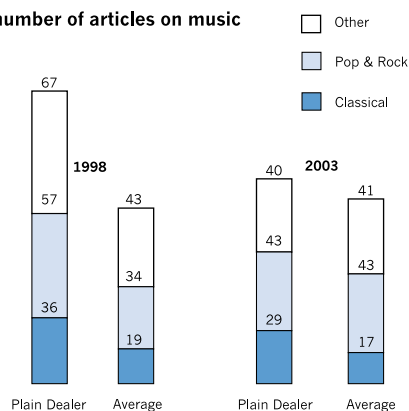
Number of arts-and-culture articles:



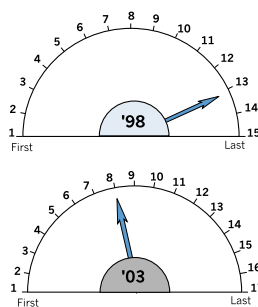
In-house arts staff:

**Music Journalism**

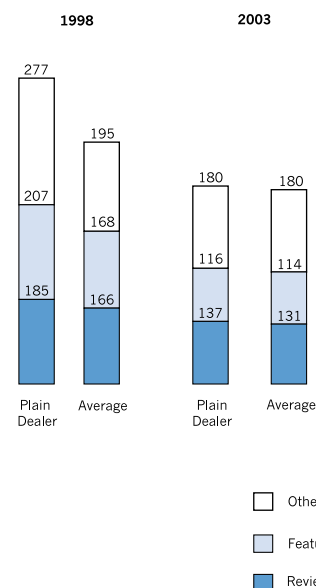
number of articles on music

**Weekend Journalism**

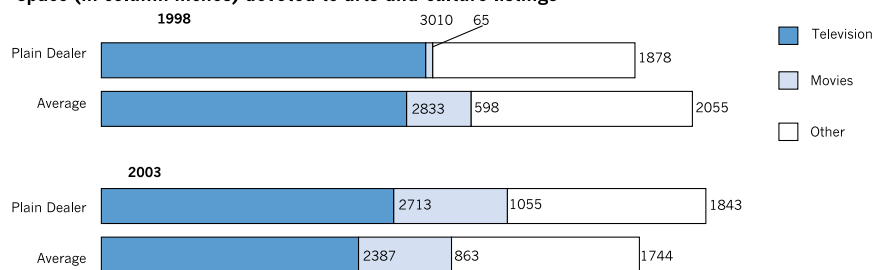
ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture journalism (listings excluded) in weekend arts supplements

**Story Count**

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

**Newshole for Listings**

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



WHILE EDITOR & PUBLISHER magazine gave Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* accolades for its improvements, the paper's newshole for arts-and-culture articles has nonetheless been devastated during the past five years. The monthly story count plummeted from more than 650 articles to fewer than 450, causing the paper to go from being a leader in the arts coverage in October 1998 to merely average in 2003.

These huge cuts were the result of a revamping of *The Plain Dealer's* daily arts journalism. Back in October 1998, its specialist arts section, entitled Entertainment, had a companion daily features section called Lifestyle. They have been merged into Arts & Life; the volume of daily arts journalism has been halved; and the new section has shifted its emphasis towards listings.

The Plain Dealer has also consolidated much of its weekly arts features into its previously undersized weekend supplements Friday!

and Sunday Arts. On the weekends *The Plain Dealer* was one of four metropolitan newspapers in our study to increase both the articles and listings newshole in its arts sections. Nonetheless, the increase was from unusually low to slightly below average.

Over the last five years, *The Plain Dealer* has transformed its movie coverage by introducing voluminous listings, which now take up more space than journalism. Music has also shifted toward listings, but less drastically. The cutback in the number of articles was not applied across the board. The paper continues to be a leader in covering classical music. Theater and book reviews also survived relatively unscathed. Dance and painting, however, were hard-hit. It also virtually eliminated coverage of the decorative arts, a beat in which five years ago *The Plain Dealer* was a leader, making it one of the specialties of its now-defunct non-arts feature section.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN CLEVELAND: A CRITICAL VIEW

AS CLEVELAND'S ARTS institutions struggle to maintain audiences and funding, cultural leaders hope for more from the media than calendar listings and thumbs-up reviews. "It's more than 'What did you think of the *Hamlet* that opened last night?' It's the meaning of *Hamlet* being produced in the community," says Charles Fee, producing artistic director of the Great Lakes Theater Festival. "Unless the arts are seen as central to the ongoing discussion about the health of the community, you can forget about being at the table for any decisions about the community."

As one of the oldest, largest and most influential institutions in that community, *The Plain Dealer* appropriately has taken a leading role in stimulating discussion about Cleveland's need to reinvent itself from a manufacturing hub to a center for medical research and the biotech industry. At the same time, the paper continues to reveal the important role of the arts in that transformation.

It's fitting, too, because the paper, which is owned by Advance Publications, has experienced a renaissance of sorts under the leadership of Douglas Clifton, who took over as editor in June 1999 and was named Editor of the Year in 2003 by *Editor & Publisher* magazine. "Readers and reporters alike credit Clifton for quickly transforming *The Plain Dealer*, Ohio's largest newspaper by far, from a middling metro that wasn't even considered the best paper in the state to one that now appears as if it belongs among the nation's 25 biggest dailies," the magazine reported, citing improvements such as better graphics, a 2003 Pulitzer Prize finalist in feature writing and a change in image and attitude.

Readers seem to like what they see. Despite Cleveland's depressed economy, the paper has scored marginal but consistent circulation gains in the last three years. In late 2000, circulation was 359,978 daily and 477,515 Sundays. By the same time in 2003, circulation had risen to 367,528 daily and 480,540 Sundays.

Arts and entertainment coverage has traditionally been strong at *The Plain Dealer*, as noted in the 1999 *Reporting the Arts* study. At that time, the paper had recently introduced a 6- to 12-page daily stand-alone called Entertainment, which has since merged with the feature section to create Arts & Life.

Now, in addition to the daily section, the main venues for arts and entertainment stories are the 90-page tabloid-size Friday! weekend magazine and the 14-page Sunday Arts section. While overall space for arts coverage has decreased, and the number of arts articles has plummeted from 669 in October 1998 to 433 in October 2003, *The Plain Dealer* has not reduced its arts staff correspondingly. And in terms of content, the paper continues to devote considerable resources to series and special projects such as:

- "Quiet Crisis," a group of news stories, editorials and panel discussions that looked at the region's problems and the need to create a development plan "or face economic extinction." It included a 4,600-word, A1 story by staffer Carolyn Jack that focused on the arts' ability to boost the economy and compared Cleveland's lackluster support for the arts and stodgy image to arts-friendly Seattle and its hip mystique.
- Coverage of the Cleveland International Piano Competition, an August 2003 event that generated more than two dozen reviews, features and news stories including a look at the economic impact of the Van Cliburn piano competition in the Fort Worth area. "It's something that deserves coverage," says Clifton. "We recognize that it isn't for everybody, but sports isn't for everybody, either."
- A five-part series on "The Forgotten Valley" by architecture and visual-arts critic Steven Litt. Published in November 2000, it focused on the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, a new kind of national park that celebrates "commonplace landscapes and historical sites" and is meant to spark preservation and renewal.
- An architecture competition initiated by *The Plain Dealer* in November 2003 to devise design plans for Whiskey Island, an area that includes the Cleveland Browns Stadium, City Hall and several docks. Organizers had anticipated a few submissions but instead received 38 proposals, which were unveiled in front of a standing-room-only crowd of about 300 people.

At the same time, the paper has continued its comprehensive coverage of the local arts

"Touring is a whole different world, and that broad kind of coverage makes touring make sense to our audiences."

Nikki Scandalios
spokewoman
Cleveland Orchestra

scene as well as its policy of sending writers out of town for major events like the South by Southwest music festival and to New York and Los Angeles to stay up-to-date with their beats. The Cleveland Orchestra's concerts in Vienna last fall, for example, marked *Plain Dealer* classical music critic Donald Rosenberg's 12th tour with the ensemble. Other Cleveland-area news organizations sending journalists on the tour included WCLV 104.9, a commercial classical music station based in Lorain; WKSU 89.7, a public classical music station in Kent; and WVIZ/PBS and WCPN 90.3 Ideastream, a public-media partnership based in Cleveland.

So what does all the attention mean to the orchestra? "They provided a lot of context for the readers and listeners in Cleveland to understand why it is so important to perform on the world's stages," says orchestra spokeswoman Nikki Scandalios. "In addition to print stories, there were radio stories, interviews, lots of information on their Web sites, tons of photos, blogs. Touring is a whole different world, and that broad kind of coverage makes touring make sense to our audiences. It adds a whole new level of value to our audience in Cleveland."

Other media outlets covering the cultural scene include the *Akron Beacon Journal*, which has a circulation of 139,200 daily and 187,456 Sunday and covers major events in Cleveland. And a couple of other players on the Cleveland media scene recently made news themselves. In January 2003, New Times Media, which publishes the Cleveland newsweekly *Scene*, and Village Voice Media, publisher of the rival *Cleveland Free Times*, reached an agreement that ended a Justice Department antitrust investigation. The deal that triggered the inquiry was con-

cocted in October 2002, when New Times Media paid \$2 million to Village Voice Media to close the *Free Times*. New Times Media then agreed to stop publishing *New Times Los Angeles* in exchange for \$11 million from Village Voice Media, which owns a rival Los Angeles alternative weekly. While there was no admission of guilt by either chain, each company was required to pay fines and fees of about \$375,000 and to sell the papers so they could be reopened in each city. Subsequently the *Free Times* reappeared in May 2003 with a 112-page issue and a circulation of 70,000, about 20,000 fewer copies than before it was shut down.

The Internet boasts a lively new upstart in CoolCleveland.com, a weekly e-newsletter started in late 2002. Delivered to subscribers' inboxes on Wednesday mornings, it lists the week's arts, entertainment and community events along with interviews of cultural leaders, politicians and liberal activists. It now claims tens of thousands of subscribers and has expanded its bailiwick to host art, tech and dance parties drawing 450 people at a time to venues throughout downtown Cleveland. So now, instead of locals bemoaning, "There's nothing to do in this town," Clevelanders have more ways to connect with the arts than they did even a few years ago.

All in all, city residents are probably as well served by the media today as they were five years ago. "I think the arts coverage in Cleveland is very good," says Charles Fee, who came to Great Lakes Theater Festival from Idaho in 2002. "They're reporting on and talking about the arts on a regular basis in all the print media. It's the first time in my life when I've felt like media coverage has played a major role in selling the idea that it's worth saving a company."

BY VALERIE TAKAHAMA

DENVER, COLORADO



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Denver.

Like some futuristic aggregate of crystals, Daniel Libeskind's addition to the Denver Art Museum (DAM) explodes into the sky in multiple directions, suggesting technological dominance, joy and optimism. It's a fitting image for a city whose destiny has been hitched to minerals ripped from the earth—gold, lead and shale oil—yet which also revels in the natural beauty of its muscular slopes and clear, cool streams. In spite of a tumbling economy, the near collapse of state arts funding and the bankruptcy of one regional institution, Denver artists and arts advocates are still betting on tomorrow. "Colorado is becoming a bellwether state," says local arts booster Gully Stanford, former managing director of the Denver Center Theater Company. "We have a stereotype—the outdoors—that we are somehow philistine and not cultivated. But in fact the evidence would prove otherwise. There is cultural literacy here."

Such robust confidence would have seemed more appropriate in 1998, the year the first *Reporting the Arts* study was undertaken. Back then, Denver was floating in the tech bubble. Buoyed by jobs in nearby Boulder, the population was rising and blueprints were being drawn for new arts facilities. Citizens ponied up \$62.5 million for the DAM addition and \$75 million to

renovate the decrepit Auditorium Theatre.

Then came September 11 and the recession. Unemployment hit 6.1 percent, prompting the state legislature to cap spending and slash the Colorado Council for the Arts budget from \$1.9 million to \$813,000. At the end of 2003, 9 out of 13 major Denver arts groups reported falling attendance, and the city was still leaking jobs.

Amid all this doom and gloom, in 2003 the area's major public funder, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District, still managed to maintain funding levels at nearly \$35 million, a reduction of only \$2.5 million from 2000. The city also elected a pro-arts mayor, John Hickenlooper, who is fond of paraphrasing *The Rise of the Creative Class*, a popular book that links arts development to a strong economy. Hickenlooper left untouched the \$893,000 budget for the Denver Office of Art, Culture and Film and led a successful drive for a \$6.5 million bond issue to put an arts specialist in every elementary school. Private sources contributed an extra \$60 million for DAM and \$42 million for the spectacular Newman Center for the Performing Arts, which gave the city its first acoustically fine music venue. A land grant materialized for the new Museum of Contemporary Art/Denver, and a museum dedicated to the late

"We have a stereotype—the outdoors—that we are somehow philistine and not cultivated. But in fact the evidence would prove otherwise. There is cultural literacy here."

Gully Stanford
former managing director
Denver Center
Theater Company

Denver modernist Vance Kirkland opened downtown.

But it is in the visual arts that Denver appears especially ready to fulfill its promise. Already known for a feisty alternative scene at Edge Gallery and Pirate: A Contemporary Art Oasis, the city is experiencing a new wave of gallery openings. Denver native Tyler Aiello and his wife, Monica, both artist-designers, are emblematic of the trend. Last year they opened Studio Aiello, a spacious gallery-studio complex, in a warehouse district northeast of downtown. "I think this is one of the more exciting times," says Tyler. "You have a lot of emerging artists who have been moving to Colorado who have shown around the country or abroad."

Rocky Mountain News arts and features editor Mike Pearson notes that the "vibrancy and youth" of the population, as well as its ethnic diversity, make it "harder to figure out what is Denver's identity, beyond sort of a western cow town. It's being influenced by people from all over now."

Indeed, the census reveals a much-changed city with rising youth and Hispanic populations. Excellent shows at the Center for Hispanic Art and Culture reflect Denver's new character, though an ambitious building campaign for the Museo de las Americas collapsed after the dot-com bust. The city's small black population continues to support its first-rate African-American dance company, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance.

Youthfulness has likewise contributed to the creative surge in Denver's theater scene, with spunky little troupes like Buntport and Rattlebrain Theatre popping up all over town. According to *Denver Post* critic John Moore, there were 53 theater groups in the area. Mainstream Denver theater, of course, hit prime time years ago when the Denver Center Theatre Company won a 1998 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater. As the company celebrates its silver anniversary, it reports that 76 of its 255 productions have been world premieres, including *The Laramie Project*, a regionally resonant drama that probes the hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

Colorado's fabled 300 days of sunshine per year turn Denver into a classical music lover's paradise in the summertime. The Santa Fe Opera, Central City Opera and Aspen Music Festival are all close at hand. During the rest of the year, though, clouds can gather. The Colorado Symphony, which rose from the ashes of the Denver Symphony in 1998, has vastly improved under the inspired leadership of Marin



THE DENVER POST

Alsop. She recently became music director laureate, and in 2005 she will officially pass the baton to Jeffrey Kahane. The symphony's most recent season was larded with crowd-pleasers. The nearby Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra went belly-up last year, reincarnated itself as the Colorado Springs Philharmonic and is now hanging on for dear life. "Denver is pretty conservative in its taste in the arts," observes Steve Seifert, executive director at the Newman Center. "*The Phantom of the Opera* has been to Denver at least three times, and it sells out instantly.

Colorado Opera is doing *La Bohème*, *The Barber of Seville* and *La Traviata*. That's intentional. They're going to sell out. It's the McDonald's factor. People know exactly what they're going to get."

In the Newman's gorgeous, acoustically perfect Gates Concert Hall—part of a complex that also includes the Lamont School of Music—Seifert is cautiously offering challenges: a mix of jazz, world music, chamber music and theater. The respected Colorado Ballet cut back its season, presenting four works including George Balanchine's *Rubies*. Meanwhile the company's new partnership with Kroenke Sports Enterprises—which owns Denver's hockey and basketball teams—is cause for celebration, as is its much-anticipated move to the new Lyric Opera theater facility, which it will share with Opera Colorado.

The popular-music artist most identified with Denver is, of course, the late folk singer John Denver. Recently, however, the area has generated several nationally successful jam bands—Big Head Todd, Leftover Salmon and the String Cheese Incident—which blend bluegrass, jazz, rock and world music. And lovers of another great popular art form, film, enjoy the highly respected Denver International Film Festival, which recently picked up a title sponsor, the local cable company Starz.

Finding a title sponsor in 2002 was a coup, particularly given Denver's highly centralized and somewhat problematic public-funding system, which depends almost entirely on the

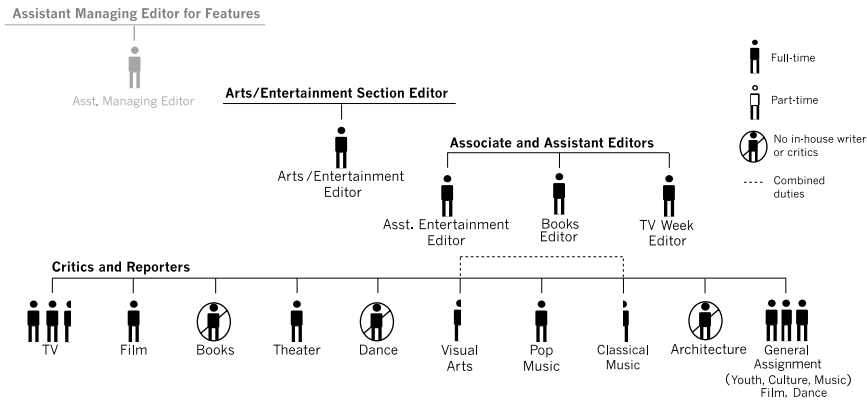
Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. The fund collects a .1 percent sales tax for arts and culture, and in 2003 distributed a whopping \$34,825,701 to more than 300 organizations throughout the seven metropolitan counties. Though it is the envy of arts advocates everywhere, its dominance creates a uniquely precarious environment. Centralization is a problem at the Denver Performing Arts Complex as well, where all the major companies—the Denver Center Theater Company, Opera Colorado, Colorado Ballet and Denver Center Attractions, which brings in touring shows—are clustered under one roof. On any given weekend, as many as 20,000 patrons flood into DPAC's eight venues, creating nightmare traffic. A new parking structure has alleviated some of the stress, as have suburban venues such as the recently expanded Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities and a new contemporary-arts center in Lakewood.

Denver's tendency to keep everything in one place may reflect its relative youth. For in spite of a popular boast that as a pioneer town it "had more theaters than hospitals," as an arts center it is just beginning to come into its own. With the new Gates Hall up and running and new homes for visual art as well as opera and ballet in the works, Denver clearly is better off now than it was in 1998. The odds seem to suggest that those betting on its future—from majors like the Denver Art Museum to upstarts like the Aiello and Buntport Theater—probably have their chips on the right number.

BY PAUL DE BARROS

"The Phantom of the Opera has been to Denver at least three times, and it sells out instantly. Colorado Opera is doing La Bohème, The Barber of Seville and La Traviata. That's intentional. They're going to sell out. It's the McDonald's factor. People know exactly what they're going to get."

Steve Seifert
executive director
the Newman Center

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**THE DENVER POST**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

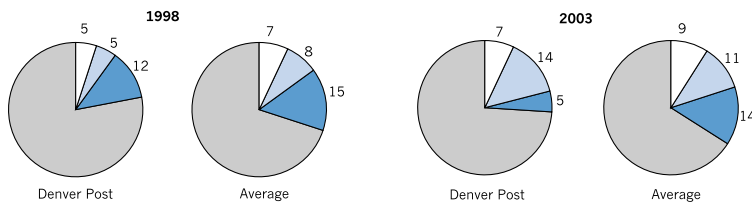
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

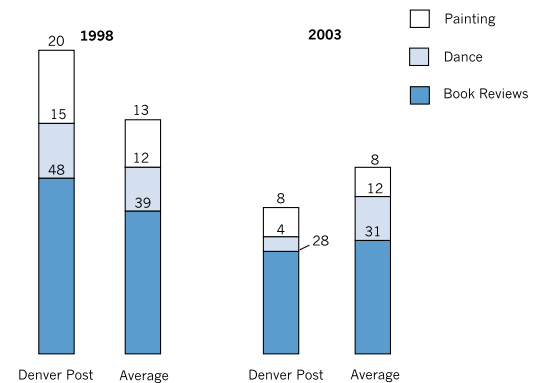
In-house arts staff:

Prominence of Arts and Feature

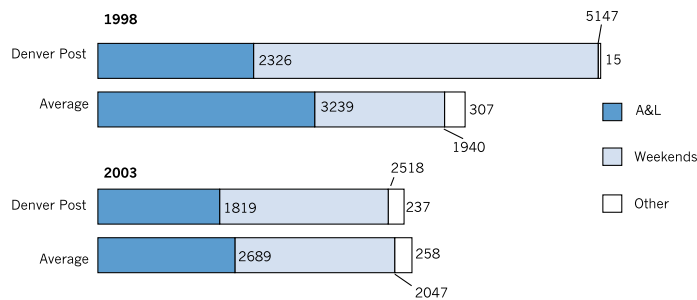
percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections , weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections

**Book Reviews, Dance & Painting**

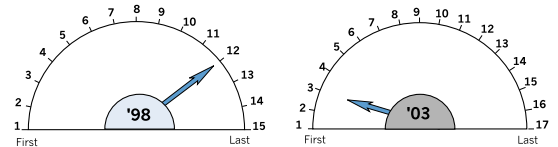
number of book reviews and articles on dance and painting

**Newshole for Listings**

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings

**Movie Journalism**

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to movies



BACK IN OCTOBER 1998 *The Denver Post* rivaled the *Chicago Tribune* in the total number of column inches of articles and listings devoted to arts and culture. Yet by October 2003, the *Tribune's* arts-and-culture newshole was more than 50 percent larger than the *Post's*. The paper has cut back on both its articles and its listings. The journalism was scaled back in *Scene*, its daily arts-and-lifestyles section, and listings were taken out of its weekend supplements, Friday's Weekend and Sunday's Arts & Entertainment. In October 1998, the *Post* was a leader among metropolitan newspapers as a source of listings. Five years later the volume of the *Post's* listings was below average.

The cuts in A&C coverage appear to be caused by retrenchment throughout the entire newspaper. Since we last looked, the *Post* stopped running a Saturday edition. It also reorganized its daily specialist sections, cutting the proportion of pages devoted to news (the "A" and metro sections) and increasing the prominence of the sports, business and A&L sections. So paradoxically, although *Scene* had its newshole cut, it increased its share of the newspaper's pages. The

same happened on the weekend, where the supplements doubled their share of the *Post's* pages, yet cut their newshole. Astonishingly, no other newspaper in our study assigned more prominence to the weekend arts than the *Post*.

Non-arts feature sections suffered instead, with a smaller share of the pagination of a shrinking newspaper. As a consequence, the decorative-arts beats—such as haute couture and crafts, which are usually covered outside the arts sections—virtually disappeared.

Scene has ceased to be a regular forum for reviews, their volume cut by more than half since October 1998. Overall, reviews for television and fiction books have been hardest hit. Other areas of the arts to suffer steep declines in coverage were dance and painting. The weekend cuts in listings hit movies hardest. In this the *Post* bucked an industry trend: Only two other metropolitan newspapers we monitored increased their ratio of movie articles to listings as the *Post* did. Our study coincided with the annual International Film Festival in Denver, helping to make movie journalism a specialty, occupying almost one-third of its entire A&C newshole.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN DENVER: A CRITICAL VIEW

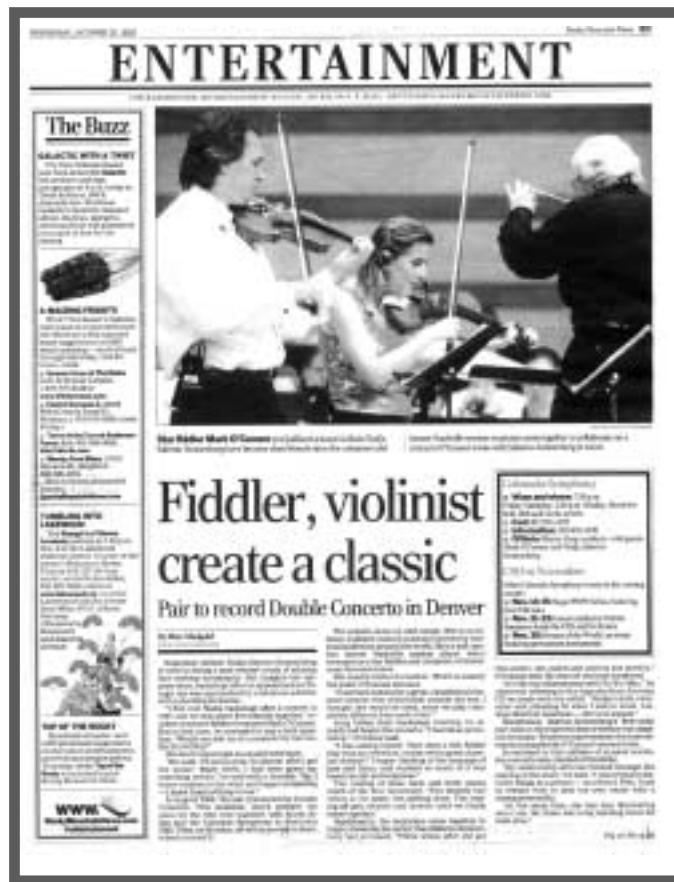
IN JANUARY 2001, when a joint operating agreement ended the century-long newspaper war between *The Denver Post* and the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, hopes soared that peace would bring prosperity—and long-delayed improvements—to arts journalism in the Mile High City. But after September 11 and the dot-com bust, big plans and hopes for new hires were put on hold. The outcome was not so much a disaster as an anticlimax: Denver arts journalism circa 2003 looks and feels pretty much the same as it did in 1998—lively, competitive, community-minded, consumer-friendly, populist and, with some exceptions, attentive to local arts. It is also chronically understaffed and more of a follower than a leader when it comes to arts coverage.

The agreement brought to a close a debilitating decade in which the *Rocky Mountain News* suffered losses of \$123 million—\$20 million in the first six months of 2000 alone. The first such accord between two morning papers, it merged the business operations of two dailies with very distinct personalities.

The E.W. Scripps-owned *Rocky* is a populist tabloid with a noisy cover and a daily arts/features insert called *Spotlight*—except on Saturday, when the whole paper becomes a fat broadsheet, the town's virtual "advance Sunday paper." The *Post*, flagship of the Denver-based MediaNews Group Inc., is a broadsheet with the upscale tone of a civic steward. Not as quick with a punch as the *Rocky*, the *Post* can nevertheless delve more deeply into a story. When the papers bring out combined editions on the weekend, circulation on Sunday, when the *Post* tops the masthead, is a whopping 783,274, compared to 610,024 when the *Rocky* leads on Saturday.

Some trends apply in both newsrooms, including a preference for entertainment over arts, both as section header and subject. Coverage of film, celebrities, bars and restaurants has increased, while arts education and ethnic and community arts receive fitful attention. Formerly ambitious book sections have been reduced to four pages. Neither paper has a critic devoted solely to architecture or dance. Arts stories rarely migrate into other sections, nor do they often get Page 1 play, even as teasers.

At the *Rocky*, arts coverage is heaviest on



DENVER ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

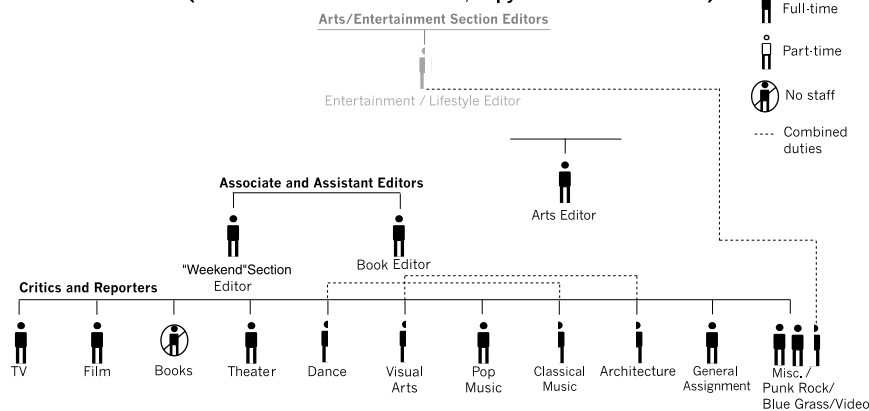
weekends. Friday's *Spotlight* is divided into *Entertainment*, favoring movies, and *Weekend at Home*, with a book section and reviews of videos, CDs and DVDs. Saturday features longer, in-depth articles. The penultimate news page offers *People & Prime Time*, made up of arts and celebrity news and occasional reviews. Looking to snag youthful readers, the paper recently enlisted two high school interns to cover video games and gadgets and dramatically upgraded its Web site. Comprehensive, service-oriented listings at both the *Rocky* and the *Post* are aimed at the same demographic.

The *Rocky* takes a utilitarian approach to reviews, using a grading system. "I tell the critics the same thing over and over again," says Arts and Features Editor Mike Pearson. "Their job is to be consumer reporters."

The paper has virtually the same arts personnel today as in 1998. One reporter is responsible for visual arts, architecture and arts funding, another for classical music and dance. There is only one popular-music critic. "They don't have the manpower," says rock publicist Wendi

*"I tell the critics
the same thing
over and over
again. Their
job is to
be consumer
reporters."*

Mike Pearson
arts and features editor
Rocky Mountain News

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**Rocky Mountain News**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

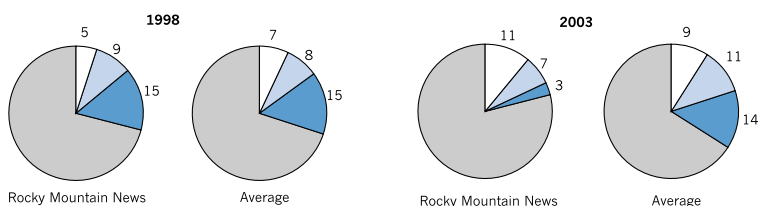
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

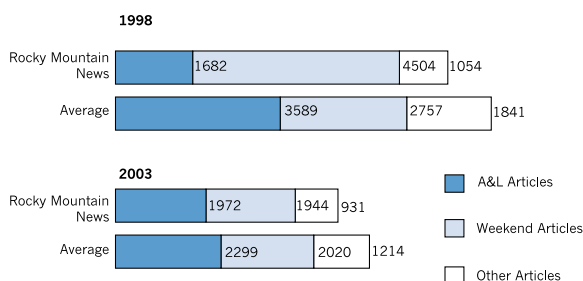
In-house arts staff:

Prominence of Arts and Features Sections

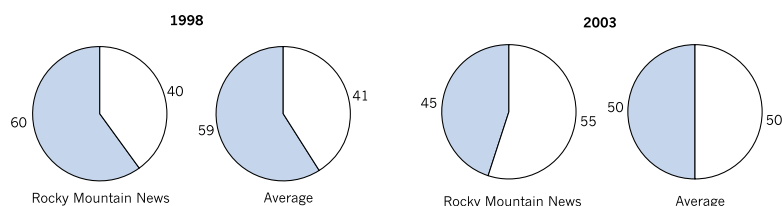
percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections , weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections

**Newshole for Journalism**

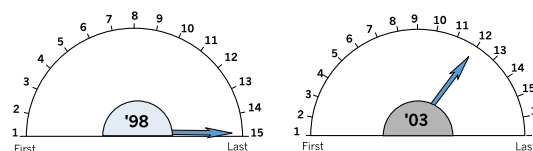
space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded) in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements

**Weekend Newshole**

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole in weekend arts supplements assigned to articles and listings

**Music Journalism**

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to music



MOST OF THE CHANGES in arts-and-culture coverage at the Denver *Rocky Mountain News* since 1998 stem from changes in Denver's newspaper wars rather than from a switch in editorial philosophy at the *Rocky*. In 2001 the *Rocky* and the *Denver Post* signed a joint operating agreement stipulating that the *Rocky* discontinue Sunday publication.

As a consequence, the *Rocky's* previously voluminous weekly sections have been cut in half. The paper now runs its Spotlight section six days a week. On five days it functions as a daily arts-and-lifestyles section, and on Friday it is formatted as a weekend supplement. In October 1998 this supplement ran Fridays and Sundays. The weekend cuts were not executed equally across the board, however. The weekend newshole for articles was more than halved, while the space for listings survived relatively intact. Amid all these cuts the arts beat fared relatively well compared to non-arts feature sections, which were scaled back drastically.

The *Rocky* thus became one of the few newspapers in our study to increase emphasis on the daily A&L section. Its share of total pages went up, its newshole for A&C articles went up from minuscule to average, and its volume of listings went up slightly too. The increase of

the size of the daily Spotlight elevated that section to parity with the daily Business section. However, as is typical for the tabloid format, Sports was much bigger than either. It has almost doubled its share of the *Rocky's* pages since five years ago.

The A&C cutbacks have been orderly across the spectrum. Movies, books and the performing and visual arts were each scaled back by roughly the same proportion. The exceptions were television and music. It is not surprising that the newshole for articles on TV should be cut back less than for other art forms, since the *Rocky's* daily A&L section's schedule was left unscathed. Expressed as a percentage of its overall effort, TV actually increased marginally. The share of the newshole devoted to music articles also increased—from minuscule to average.

The *Rocky's* cutbacks were no greater than should be expected of a schedule reduction from seven to six days. While the monthly story count diminished, and the average article length fell slightly too, in Denver's competitive environment, arts and culture at the crosstown *Post*—which agreed to discontinue Saturday publication—took the much greater hit.—AT

Walker, who rates the *Rocky*'s pop music coverage as a 3 out of a possible 10 because the paper rarely covers local music.

Spotlight's layout can be a challenge. Though crisp info boxes and punchy, marginal arts briefs invite a quick scan, pages can be a jumble of jumped story fragments and ads. It would be a disservice, however, to miscast the *Rocky* as low-brow because it is a tab. It regularly presents sophisticated culture stories, and for the past three years has compiled a comprehensive annual review of local arts organizations. "It's not dumbed-down," says visual-arts critic Mary Voelz Chandler. "We fight against that blue-collar image."

If the *Rocky* is blue-collar, the *Post* is blue-stocking. "The grinding problem at the *Post* is getting recognition from younger, hipper readers," confesses rock writer Ricardo Baca. "Something could happen in Denver without the *Post* knowing about it," publicist Carrie Lombardi says of the local music scene, but adds forgivingly, "I think they're overwhelmed." Recently, theater critic John Moore inaugurated a popular year-end local music roundup.

Denver Art Museum Executive Director Lewis Sharp, on the other hand, gives the *Post*'s Kyle MacMillan high marks, particularly for a recent article on an iconic American artist. "Every critic who has ever reviewed Frederic Remington has gone back to the same old stereotype review—the romantic image of the West," says Sharp. "That's the safe, easy thing to do. Kyle looked, he responded—it was a very intelligent review."

Like the *Rocky* with Spotlight, the *Post* folds arts into Scene, the Monday-through-Thursday features section, giving arts the lead on Fridays in Weekend Entertainment and Weekend Movies. The *Post*'s Sunday Arts and Entertainment offers "think" pieces, longer features and Books & Authors. Last year the paper inaugurated a comprehensive fall arts preview.

The *Post* has been traumatized by staff changes over the past five years, including the death of its fine-arts critic, the retirement of its dance reviewer and the resignation of its rock writer after he was caught plagiarizing. Though two general-assignment arts staffers have been

added, MacMillan still doubles up on visual arts and classical music, racking up 256 bylines in 2003. "We feel like we're shortchanging people in classical music, dance or visual art," says Arts and Entertainment editor Ed Smith, though he adds that staff turnover "has meant fresh ideas."

Denver arts lovers have alternatives. *Westword*, with a free circulation of 100,000, is the best source for local music as well as sassy visual-arts and film criticism. *Urban Spectrum*, a 17-year-old multicultural monthly with an African-American focus and a print run of 25,000, regularly covers the arts. So does the 56-year-old *Denver Business Journal*, which distributes 18,000 copies weekly. Denverites also hear arts features on KCFR's one-hour weekday show *Colorado Matters*. Colorado Public Radio's other station, KVOD, offers classical music and live local broadcasts on *Colorado Spotlight*. No local TV network, however, has a dedicated arts show.

As Denver blossoms into a cosmopolitan center, small-town values such as civic-mindedness and public service pull the papers in one direction, while big-city standards of sophisticated, intellectual leadership tug in the other. According to longtime arts activist Gully Stanford, readers can still get "a pretty good overview" of the city's arts scene from its newspapers, but some complain that Denver papers don't do a very good job of helping readers discuss the arts. In other cities, says Jennifer Doran, co-owner of the important Robischon Gallery, "even people who are merely curious about visual art have a language in place to talk about it. Here, there isn't a language."

Will Denver dailies step up to the plate? "We still see areas where we have some more growing to do," Jeannette Chavez, the *Post*'s managing editor for operations, says guardedly. "Arts is one of them."

In the meantime, even if staffing levels don't rise soon, Denver readers still have the rare pleasure of being able to choose. "It's a two-paper town," says Britta Erickson, public relations director for the Denver International Film Festival. "They're constantly looking at what the other one's doing. It keeps it fresh, trying to one-up each other. You'd be surprised at how competitive the arts writers are about their beats."

"We still see areas where we have some more growing to do. Arts is one of them."

Jeannette Chavez
managing editor
for operations
The Denver Post

BY PAUL DE BARROS

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES: A BIG CITY DAILY PUTS ITS MUSCLE BEHIND THE ARTS

WHEN NICOLAI OUROUSSOFF'S dispatches from Baghdad began appearing in the *Los Angeles Times*, they seemed to exemplify everything that had gone right with the newspaper's arts coverage. The *L.A. Times*'s chief architecture critic, Ouroussoff had gone to Iraq to examine its ancient and modern buildings, a project no other paper had thought to undertake. It demanded a commitment from the *L.A. Times*'s leadership, space in the culture section for long, thoughtful pieces about what might strike some as an esoteric subject, and resources to support one more journalist in a war zone. The series almost gained Ouroussoff a Pulitzer. He was a finalist last year, when the paper won five prizes.

The elements that combined to breathe life into Ouroussoff's series have made the *L.A. Times*, over the last three years, a premier forum for arts and culture, rivaling *The New York Times* quantitatively and, many would say, qualitatively. The big changes started three years ago, in 2001, a year after a new team took over the paper. The merger of the Times Mirror and Tribune Company brought in John S. Carroll, formerly with the *Baltimore Sun*, who became the *L.A. Times*'s editor-in-chief; and Dean Baquet, of *The New York Times*, who became managing editor. Both had visions of remaking a paper that had suffered much in the '90s, and reached an ultimate low in 1999 with the notorious Staples Center incident, during which *L.A. Times* advertising executives agreed to split profits from a special section about the new sports center with the center itself.

One of Carroll's high priorities was arts and culture. Toward this end he hired John Montorio away from *The New York Times* as deputy managing editor for features. He further created half-a-dozen new positions—including one for a new film critic, Manohla Dargis—and a few more for investigative Hollywood reporters. But, most visibly, the look of the Calendar section was radically redesigned, the Sunday edition turning from a tabloid into a two-section broadsheet, allowing for more space for longer pieces and prominent art.

During the past three years the reporting on Hollywood has gone from being “press-release-driven and faux-event-driven,” as Montorio described it, to being more enterprising and ambitious. The critics, too, have raised more idiosyncratic voices, especially Dargis, who came to the paper from an alternative weekly. But the *L.A. Times* has also striven to cover more than just Hollywood well. In the past year the completion of Frank Gehry's Disney Hall became a big story. The Los Angeles Philharmonic and its conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen consistently make important classical music news. The art scene, too, was recognized for its international significance. With the exception of theater, for which the *L.A. Times* has spent years searching for a critic, the paper has covered these stories well.

As Brett Israel, the Sunday Calendar section editor, puts it, “We have the resources, we have the space in the paper, we have the right-size staff, we have the budgets for travel and for freelancers, and we have the photographers. So this should, by rights, be one of the few papers in the world that covers culture ambitiously and intelligently and comprehensively.”

Though it certainly seems truer now than at any time in the recent past, there are signs that this golden age may not last. For one thing, recent budget cuts imposed by the Tribune Company have forced the paper to ax 60 editorial positions, including two in the arts and culture department. But there are other ominous signs. Recently both Ouroussoff and Dargis were poached by *The New York Times* to become architecture and film critics, respectively. In the 1990s this type of migration, from west to east, was a sign that the paper was ailing. Now it might be more the curse that follows the blessing of the Pulitzers. “I think it speaks to what we've done here,” says Lisa Fung, arts editor. “I don't think in the past people were looking to the *L.A. Times* for these kinds of great stories.”

BY GAL BECKERMAN

HOUSTON, TEXAS



Like the larger-than-life city it belongs to, Houston's arts scene has always made a big statement, touting some of the nation's most reputable arts institutions and nurturing emerging artists. But bad things sometimes happen to good people, and looking back on the last five years, one can't help but recall the biblical story of Job. Like the devil's hapless victim, arts organizations in the nation's fourth-most-populous city have been hit with a series of calamities.

First came the flood. When tropical storm Allison drenched downtown Houston in June 2001, hundreds of millions of gallons of water poured into the underground network of tunnels that connect venues in the city's theater district. The torrent destroyed the Houston Symphony's offices as well as its entire music library. "All we had left were a pencil and a piece of paper," says senior public affairs director Art Kent.

His neighbors did not fare much better. The Houston Grand Opera, considered one of the nation's top five opera companies, lost \$1.5 million worth of costumes, wigs and props. The flood destroyed the Alley Theatre's Neuhaus Stage, production shops and a rehearsal hall. Total damage came to \$6 million. The Houston

Ballet was relatively lucky, sustaining \$300,000 worth of damage when water swamped its dressing rooms.

The deluge did not stop there. Just three months later, September 11 arrived. And soon afterward, in the midst of the nation's economic downturn, Enron unexpectedly collapsed. The scandal left the city financially and emotionally devastated, and Enron's formerly sizable philanthropic contributions disappeared. Subsequent mergers between Houston's other energy companies further diminished the availability of grant money. And as financial uncertainty swept through the city, individual giving dropped and ticket sales plummeted.

The war in Iraq completed the confluence of events some Houstonians like to call "The Perfect Storm." The Symphony, with its long history of financial trouble, had the added misfortune of a prolonged musicians' strike, which interrupted its 2002-03 season. The organization ended 2003 with a \$5 million deficit and was forced to lay off 11 percent of its administrative staff. Its fellows in the arts followed suit. A new mantra prevailed in the theater district: Cut staffing, cancel shows and shave production budgets.

Arts organizations were also forced to return

*"In terms of
state funding
for the arts,
Texas is dead
last."*

Victoria Lightman
Houston commissioner
*Texas Commission
on the Arts*

to safer programming and increase fundraising activities. Since then, cutbacks, cancellations and creative marketing have paid off to a certain degree. "People feel like the city is turning a corner," says Lindsay Heinsen, the *Houston Chronicle's* arts and entertainment editor. "We can see them loosening up, taking risks and scheduling more adventurous events." Across the board, arts groups are starting to bring back previously canceled shows.

The Alley Theatre has actually managed to turn tragedy into opportunity. When Allison hit, theater officials had already been planning to renovate the Neuhaus, so they pushed up their plans, rebuilt the 300-seat house, and reopened it in January 2002. Later that year they also unveiled the impressive \$10 million Alley Center for Theatre Production. That the theater managed to complete both projects amid Houston's economic crisis speaks not only of its clear vision but also to the fact that Houston is a city dedicated to the arts.

That's a good thing, because when it comes to state funding for the arts, Texas is dead last. In 2003 the legislature reduced the Texas Commission on the Arts' budget by 22 percent. As a result, the TCA has suspended its decentralization program, which gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to city arts councils. Without TCA funding, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston and Harris County (CACHH) has had to rely primarily on the city's hotel occupancy tax to fund the 160 groups it sponsors. Yet in 2003 the tax money it received dipped to \$7.9 million due to a decline in tourism.

As the largest art museum in town, the Museum of Fine Arts, receives some city money. But it is its strong private-funding base that allows it to pursue capital projects like the new Beck Building, which opened in 2000 and occupies an entire city block. Fund-raising efforts have also helped battle the 20 percent drop the museum's sizable endowment experienced between 2000 and 2002.

Just up the road, the Menil Collection runs entirely on private money. John and Dominique de Menil built the museum in 1987 to show their expansive collection of surrealist, tribal and ancient art. But after the death of Mrs. de Menil in 1997, the Menil started having financial and staffing problems. Museum officials hope that the appointment of new director Josef Helfenstein will help turn things around.

Also wholly funded by private entities is Houston's newest 800-pound gorilla. The 2002

unveiling of the shimmering Hobby Center for the Performing Arts was the biggest opening of the last few years. The Center added 3,150 seats to a theater district that already boasted 12,000. The Hobby has also helped fill Houston's need for an intimate downtown theater by renting its 500-seat Zilkha Hall to small and midsize groups for \$2,500 a night. Suchu Dance also opened its more affordable 120-seat venue last year.

Houston's alternative pride and joy, Infernal Bridegroom Productions (IBP), meanwhile moved into its own space in 2001 after being



HOUSTON CHRONICLE

homeless for its first eight years. The experimental theater company has become the poster child for small-group success. It may seem remarkable that the group has managed to grow so much during a difficult economy, but IBP's experience is typical of many troupes its size, which rely less on wavering corporate support and more on consistently reliable individuals and foundations.

Da Camera of Houston, which presents chamber music performances, jazz events, multidisciplinary productions and new works, is another midsize gem that has continued to shine. In fact, Da Camera's single-ticket sales were up 15 percent last year, and the group ended 2003 with a slight surplus.

That's not to say that smaller organizations have come through Houston's Perfect Storm unscathed. Groups that did not apply for a grant before the recession may be hard-pressed to find one now. But like their larger counterparts, grassroots organizations have come up with innovative plans to bring in audiences. In 2002, 15 small and midsize entities banded together to form the Fresh Arts Coalition, which markets their work on a common Web site and through e-mail newsletters.

The contemporary arts center DiverseWorks is another vital showcase for performing, visual and literary art. It is also one of several galleries

helping to make Houston one of the nation's most significant visual-arts centers. "At a time when everything is down, the artists seem to be doing okay," says Victoria Lightman, Houston Commissioner for the Texas Commission on the Arts. "A lot of artists come to Houston from all over the world and stay because the cost of living is low and there is a lot of support here."

Houston likewise has a vibrant Latino arts community. Tejano music floods Houston's clubs, while Talento Bilingue de Houston produces bilingual theater programs and provides arts education to Latino youth. Houston's large arts groups also cater to the city's biggest minority population. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston has established a center for Latin American art, and the Society of Performing Arts often brings in Latino music and dance groups.

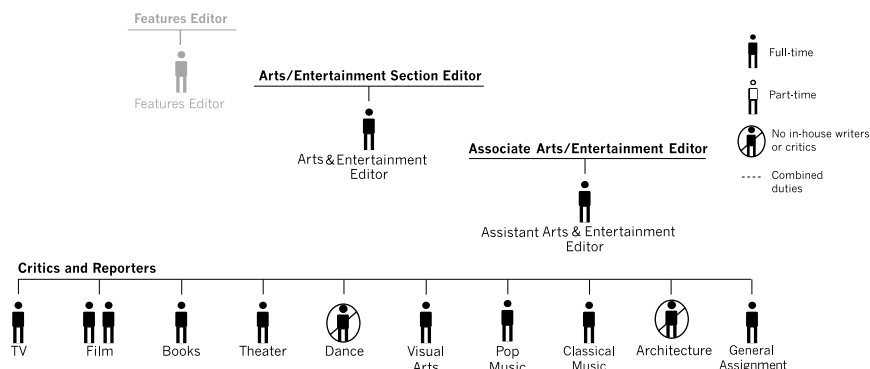
Strong players in almost every creative genre contribute to Houston's cultural life. And the arts scene continues to evolve and grow despite floods, corporate scandal and financial downturns. "My sense is that it was tough, but there is a resilience in this community, and people seem to manage," says CACHH Executive Director Maria Munoz-Blanco. "We have a very healthy artist community, and it's doing better than people think it is."

BY LILY TUNG

*"We have a very
healthy artist
community,
and it's doing
better than
people think
it is."*

Maria Munoz-Blanco
executive director
Cultural Arts Council of
Houston and Harris
County

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



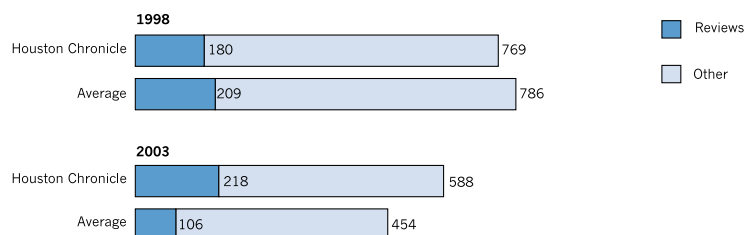
Houston Chronicle

1998-2003



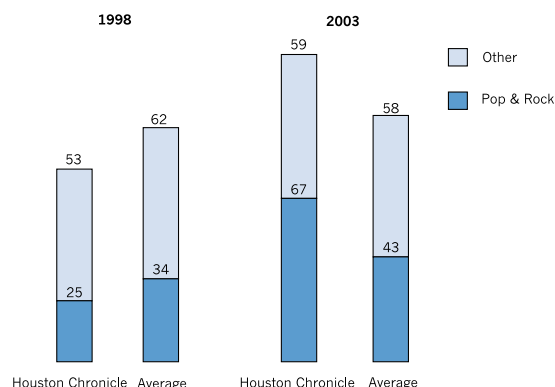
Television Journalism

space (in column inches) devoted to articles on television



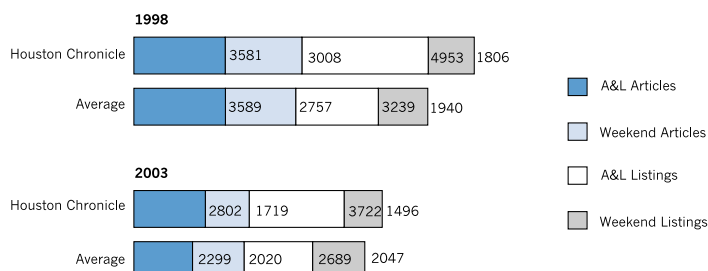
Music Journalism

number of articles on music



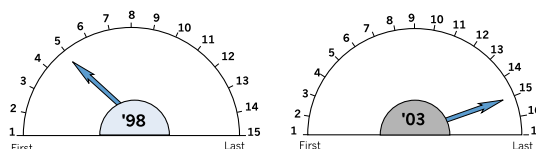
Daily and Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements



Article Length

ranking among all newspapers studied for average length of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)



By DRASTICALLY CUTTING the average length of its arts and culture articles, the *Houston Chronicle* was one of those anomalous newspapers in this study that increased the total number of articles in October 2003 compared with five years earlier, while instituting major cuts to the size of its newshole.

Massive cutbacks were made in the newshole for journalism in the *Chronicle's* weekend arts supplements *Zest* and *Preview*. In its daily arts-and-lifestyles section, entitled *Houston*, listings were cut back dramatically. Back in October 1998, *Houston's* listings were larger than in every other A&L section we studied but one. So five years later they were scaled back from gargantuan to bigger than normal.

Arts and culture coverage at the *Chronicle* was still skewed heavily to television, even though both the volume of TV articles and the grid have shrunk since October 1998. The *Chronicle's* TV grid was the biggest we found in both phases of our study, and television journalism here suffered smaller cutbacks during the five-year period than at any other metropolitan newspaper we tracked save one. The

seriousness with which the *Chronicle* treated TV was demonstrated by the volume of reviews. No other newspaper we monitored considered TV to be a more review-worthy medium than music or the performing arts.

Weekend supplements are usually the prime venue for movie coverage, yet the *Chronicle* was one of only two metropolitan newspapers to assign less than 20 percent of its weekend articles-and-listings newshole to movies. It should be noted that the weekend declines at the *Chronicle* are overstated in our reporting since we were unable to obtain one of those sections. Thus, of the month's nine weekend supplements (four issues of *Zest* and five of *Preview*), this database represents only eight.

Music was unscathed by the overall cutbacks in A&C journalism. As a result, the beat received more space than movies in October 2003, a radical shift from five years earlier. The number of music articles increased, with pop and rock averaging at least two stories a day.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN HOUSTON: A CRITICAL VIEW

WHEN THE MUSEUM of Fine Arts, Houston opened its exhibition “The Quilts of Gee’s Bend” in 2002, it had high hopes for extensive press coverage. Its expectations were understandable; after all, the show comprised a groundbreaking collection of folk art. Created by the women of an African-American community isolated for centuries in rural Alabama, the quilts were appearing together for the first time in a comprehensive exhibition. But to the surprise of museum officials, the *Houston Chronicle* sent its home-design editor to cover the show. A lifestyle feature ran; an art review never did.

Two months later the exhibit moved to the Whitney Museum of American Art, where *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman called it “the most ebullient exhibition of the New York season” and dubbed the quilts “some of the most miraculous works of modern art America has produced.” The omission of such an important critique was typical of the *Chronicle*, where understaffing has often resulted in inconsistent coverage of the arts. The fact that it overlooked a major national exhibition born in its own hometown was strangely reminiscent of the big news story it had missed the previous year—Enron.

Critics contend that it was the *Chronicle*’s slow response to the Enron story that prompted the Hearst Corporation to overhaul the paper’s top editorial team. In June 2002 it installed Jeff Cohen as editor. For the most part, both staff and readers welcomed the management change, hoping it would usher in better times for Houston’s only newspaper and the nation’s seventh-largest daily.

The arts section shares some of the paper’s overall notoriety. Although it has talented writers, many arts professionals say stories are rarely incisive and mainly cover what’s new and high-profile. Some of the section’s problems stem from cutbacks prior to Cohen’s reign. Back then the department lost two writing positions and forfeited an additional staff spot when it consolidated a dual editorship into one post handling both arts and entertainment. With a smaller staff, editors were forced to give perfunctory treatment to some important stories and to use more wire copy and syndicated columns.

Cohen has so far brought about gradual changes, calling for higher journalistic standards and promising a greater commitment of resources. And while the arts page looks much as

it did when *Reporting the Arts* covered it five years ago—with writers following the typical preview/review format—the paper has actually increased the number of arts articles, although it has cut their average length by more than 30 percent. Circulation has remained fairly stable during this period, rising at the daily from 542,414 in late 1998 to 549,300 in late 2003, and on Sunday staying virtually the same at 740,134 in 1998 and 740,002 in 2003. Arts and lifestyle stories currently share a daily features section called Houston. On Thursdays the Preview section devotes itself primarily to popular arts and listings. The Sunday tabloid Zest, which is aimed at a slightly older audience, focuses on the fine arts.

In March 2004 the paper also announced it would once again divide the arts-and-entertainment editorship as well as hire another television writer. Despite the reinstatement, arts editor Lindsay Heinsen still worries about how she is going to fill the growing features page. With the Houston arts scene expanding and her staff remaining stable, Heinsen has responded by putting her efforts into cultivating more freelance writers, especially to cover the city’s thriving visual-arts community.

She will have to continue doing so. With only one full-time correspondent covering each of the art forms—except for film, which has two reporters, and architecture, which doesn’t even have one—it is virtually impossible for critics and reporters to cover their beats in any comprehensive way. Most of the writers are overwhelmed and have little time to search out smaller arts groups and lesser-known artists. Fortunately, notes Heinsen, the financial support is there to find good freelancers: “There is more money across the board.”

Although most of the *Chronicle*’s arts coverage is event-driven, there is also a mandate to increase reporting. “We want to do more breaking news,” says deputy managing editor Kyrie O’Connor. “Features *is* news. It has to have urgency, energy and excitement.” There is likewise a push to appeal to younger readers and Houston’s burgeoning Latino community, which accounts for more than 30 percent of the city’s population. A regular freelancer covers Latino music. The *Chronicle* also publishes zoned inserts in Spanish and a new Spanish-language entertainment tabloid called *La Vibra*.

Employees say they are pleased with the improvements that Cohen has brought to the paper. Yet despite small signs of change, most professionals in the arts remain unsatisfied with

“We want to do more breaking news. Features is news. It has to have urgency, energy and excitement.”

Kyrie O’Connor
deputy managing editor
Houston Chronicle

the paper's coverage. They view the *Chronicle* as a publication fed by a public relations machine, one that possesses little investigative drive. They also point to the fact that in this sports-obsessed town the paper has been known to publish two sports sections in one day while relegating the arts to second-class status. "There is an obscene, inordinate coverage of athletics," says Bud Franks, president and CEO of the Hobby Center. "If the *Houston Chronicle* did a better job stirring up interest in the performing arts, I think you would find more people coming to more events."

Apart from the *Chronicle*, the only other widely read publication in town is the feisty alternative weekly *Houston Press*. The *Press* liquidated its main competition, *Public News*, back in 1998 when its parent company, New Times, bought the paper. Some arts professionals accuse the *Press* of being "salacious" and "muckraking," while others are grateful that it does "more honest journalism compared to the *Houston Chronicle*" and covers "stories the mainstream media can't." *Press* associate editor Cathy Matusow admits the paper does not shy away from the controversial or the edgy; it has been known to run biting reviews, veering away from the politeness often found in the *Chronicle*.

Like most alternative weeklies, the *Press* does a better job than a daily paper in covering the young, alternative scene. Although it pays little attention to classical music, it covers the local club- and popular-music scene quite comprehensively.

In fact, music has a much more dominant presence in the publication than visual arts or theater. Last year, the *Press* expanded its calendar section by three pages, filling them with quick, pithy arts pieces.

Houston has more than 60 radio stations, but few cover the arts in a systematic fashion. University of Houston's public radio station KUHF produces a one-hour daily culture program called *The Front Row*, and also presents regular broadcasts of local classical concerts and opera performances. Pacifica station KPFT offers several specialty music shows covering everything from blues to hip-hop. Its show *24 PM* interviews local artists daily, while *LivingArt* airs once a week. Arts coverage on television is limited and sporadic. Houston's two morning news shows and ABC-13's weekly public-affairs programs offer some, as does a weekly community show on Houston PBS.

As for magazines, *Texas Monthly* includes the arts in its statewide coverage. The smaller niche publication *Arts Houston* takes a fun, light-hearted look at culture, while the more critically oriented nonprofit quarterly *ARTL!ES* chronicles Texas' visual-arts world.

Online, GlassTire.com dedicates itself to Houston's active visual-arts scene through thoughtful reviews, previews and profiles. The *Houston Chronicle* also has a Web site that runs stories, reviews and listings from the newspaper as well as material generated in-house.

BY LILY TUNG

"If The Houston Chronicle did a better job stirring up interest in the performing arts, I think you would find more people coming to more events."

Bud Franks
president and CEO
Hobby Center for the
Performing Arts

MIAMI, FLORIDA



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Miami.

Straddling Biscayne Boulevard, on a construction site alongside I-395, the sleek steel ribs of Cesar Pelli's inspiring Miami Performing Arts Center of greater Miami (PAC) started to take shape in October 2003. It was—and remains—a potent symbol of the disconnect between Miami's dreams for the arts and their scruffy reality.

This is a city of flamboyant, fleshy opulence, where Latin rock stars cruise South Beach, urbane patrons attend the excellent Miami City Ballet, and wealthy collectors drop millions at Art Basel Miami Beach, since 2002 the local outpost of the most prestigious contemporary art fair in the world.

Yet Miami also has the lowest median household income of any major city in the nation, a population 59 percent foreign-born and an urban center that feels like a shabby small town. Miami's immigrants—from countries including Cuba, Brazil, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic—live in a checkerboard of neighborhood enclaves, making it nearly impossible to mount citywide support for anything, never mind the arts. But Miami's fledgling city-arts budget is less than \$1 million, anyway, and the Florida State legislature slashed arts funding last year from \$29 to \$6 million. Tourism, the palm-

lined city's next-biggest industry after development, still has not fully recovered from September 11.

In spite of all this, Miami is forging ahead with PAC. The new Children's Museum went up in 2003, and there are plans for a \$175 million Miami Art Museum. If all this sounds slightly contradictory, it is—until you realize that in Miami, the name of the game is real estate. Arts lovers and city planners fervently hope the center will spawn an arts district that will have a domino effect on nearby Wynwood, the Design District—where the South Beach crowd goes to flee the tourists—and, eventually, downtown itself.

It's a beautiful vision. But it may be slightly premature. Two years after PAC broke ground in 2001, one of its major tenants-to-be, the Florida Philharmonic, went bankrupt. Its anchor tenant, the Concert Association of Florida, has been in the red for two years. Meanwhile, the arts center's budget has ballooned from \$132 million to \$344 million, and its opening has been delayed until 2006. Even that date isn't firm. Nevertheless, declares Concert Association impresario Judy Drucker, "we need it desperately. One of the biggest problems in the past is that we haven't had decent theaters." Two huge con-

*"I go to cities
and art fairs all
over the world,
and the level of
activities here is
extraordinary.
I have never
seen anything
like it."*

Milton Esterow
editor
ARTnews

cert halls—2,480 seats for ballet and opera; 2,200 seats for orchestra concerts—plus the much-needed 200-seat Studio Theater should help.

The big question, though, is, can they fill the seats? Maybe. One future tenant—the New World Symphony, a youth academy led by San Francisco maestro Michael Tilson Thomas—is enormously popular and fabulously endowed, though another, the Florida Grand Opera, is routinely described as “mediocre.”

Demographic shifts have played a decisive role in the decline of Miami’s classical music scene. Only 12 percent of the city’s population is white and non-Hispanic and, says Drucker, the Jewish middle class, which once patronized classical music, has long since moved away. “We have a great Hispanic community here now that has not been brought up with classical music,” she explains. “They have been brought up with ballet, though.”

This may explain why, in the middle of a recession, Miami City Ballet managed to mount a capital campaign for a new headquarters and finish a substantial 2003-04 season with a surplus. Of course, the company—led by former New York City Ballet star Edward Villella—is world-class, and dance of all kinds flourishes in Miami, including Maximum Dance Ballet and festivals of international ballet companies and Afro-Cuban and Brazilian dance.

But Miami’s strongest suit by far is the visual arts. Since 2002, the city has hosted Art Basel Miami Beach, and it is also home to two of the most remarkable private showcases of contemporary art in the world—the Rubell Family Collection and the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse—both in the Design District. North Miami’s Museum of Contemporary Art has a well-deserved reputation for cutting-edge shows. The city and surrounding area are peppered with hip museums such as South Beach’s Wolfsonian, which showcases decorative and propaganda arts, and the nearby Bass Museum, recently expanded by architect Arata Isozaki. The gallery scene is red-hot, too, particularly for Latin artists such as José Bedia and Hernan Bas. “I go to cities and art fairs all over the world,” *ARTnews* editor Milton Esterow told *The Miami Herald*, “and the level of activities here is extraordinary. I have never seen anything like it.”

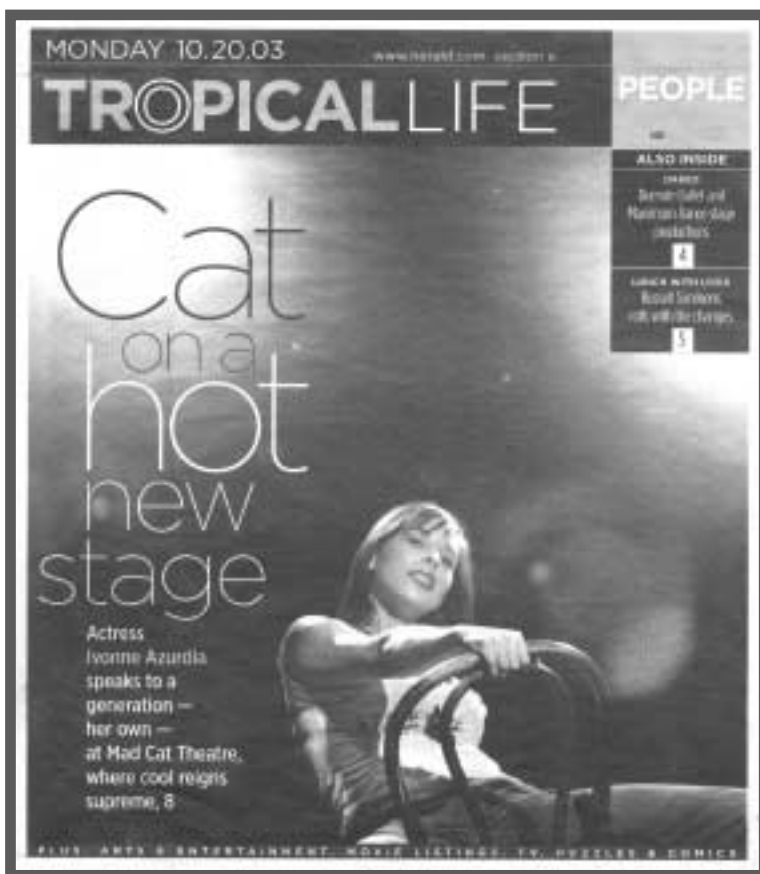
Architecture is also strong, with the continued success of the flamboyant Arquitectonica, which designed the Children’s Museum, and Duany Plater-Zyberk, whose new urbanism influenced the progressive zoning of public and

private spaces in the Design District.

Miami’s theater scene emerged as a player last year as well, after the New Theatre premiered Cuban-American playwright Nilo Cruz’s *Anna in the Tropics*, which won a Pulitzer and went on to Broadway. The graceful old Coconut Grove Playhouse puts up original productions and hosts touring Broadway shows. Actor’s Playhouse, on Coral Gables’s Miracle Mile, offers original musicals and revivals and, come summer, Miami theater lovers enjoy Teatro Avante’s International Hispanic Theatre Festival.

In a city that is 66 percent Hispanic, it’s not surprising that Latin pop rules. Miami’s Latin-dominated entertainment industry generated \$2.5 billion in 1999, and the city hosts all the major Latin music awards shows. It is also the headquarters for the Latin American divisions of nearly all the multinational recording labels, as well as for such networks as Mexico’s Televisa and North America’s Univision and Telemundo.

Oddly, though, the live-music scene is, well, pretty dead. Recent signs of life have been



THE MIAMI HERALD

observed at clubs such as the Design District's I/O and Little Havana's Hoy como Ayer, and local artists like Bacilos, Trick Daddy and Dashboard Confessional have broken out nationally. But Miami is by and large a deejay dance town, where people watch for celebrities like Jennifer Lopez and Colombian rock star Carlos Vives—not the band. An exception would be Miami's festivals and fairs—such as Trinidadian Carnival and Miami Carnival—a popular antidote to the city's cultural fragmentation.

But how do you sell concert tickets at a parade? How does art thrive in a city where quality arts groups are young, scant and scattered and there is not much of a tradition of giving? Michael Spring, director of Miami-Dade County's Department of Cultural Affairs, notes that county arts nonprofits have exploded from 100 to 1100 in the last 20 years, and thinks PAC and the arts district are the right first step. Spring says, "Florida is trying to change its image as simply being a vacation destination into a more sophisticated place, where tourism, high-tech business and international business should come and live."

He has some cause for optimism. His budget

has tripled in seven years, to \$12.5 million. The city finally formed an arts council in late 2002. And whereas groups used to start up optimistically, then fail after a couple of years, cutting-edge performance programs at the Miami Light Project and Miami-Dade County College's Cultural Del Lobo have survived hard times.

Still, one has to wonder if Miami has the cart before the horse. The Miami Art Museum owns a mere 189 paintings. "Isn't [a central museum] a nineteenth-century idea for an industrial city?" says Museum of Contemporary Art Director Bonnie Clearwater. "This is a twenty-first-century city in a postindustrial age." Indeed, when transnational corporations are making cell-phone calls from Miami neighborhoods to such countries as Spain, Argentina and the Antilles, the Miami arts community may be applying a modern paradigm to a postmodern reality.

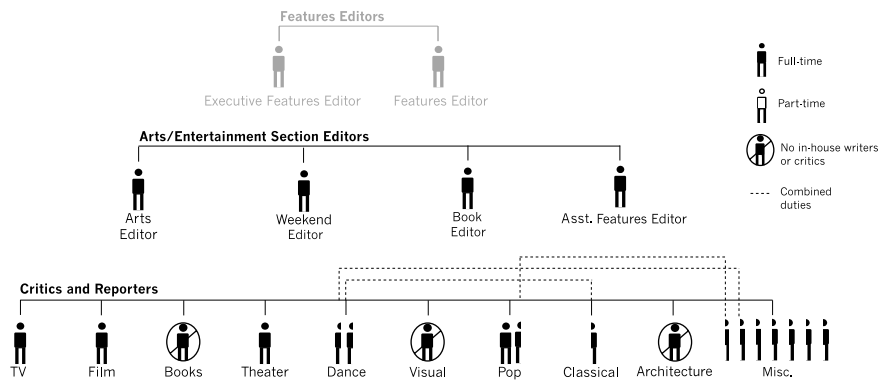
Back in 1998, a mysterious archeological site called the Miami Circle was unearthed by a condo developer at the mouth of the Miami River. After spending \$26.7 million on the excavation of the Native American structure, no one could agree on how to display it, so it was reburied. One hopes the same fate does not await the steel struts of the Miami Performing Arts Center.

BY PAUL DE BARROS

"Florida is trying to change its image as simply being a vacation destination into a more sophisticated place, where tourism, high-tech business and international business should come and live."

Michael Spring
director
Miami-Dade County's
Department of
Cultural Affairs

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



The Miami Herald

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

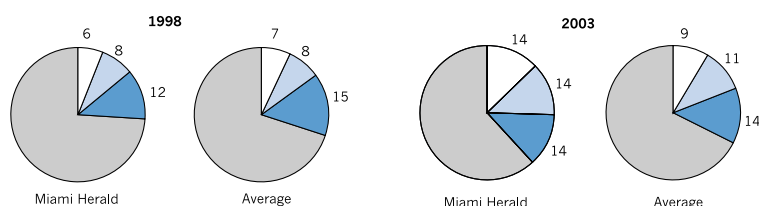
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

In-house arts staff:

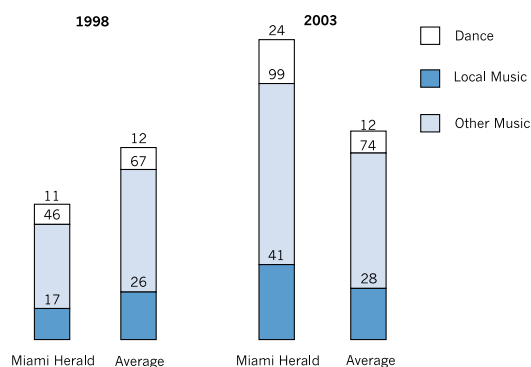
Prominence of Arts and Feature Sections

percentage of overall pagination devoted to daily A&L sections , weekend arts supplements and non-arts feature sections



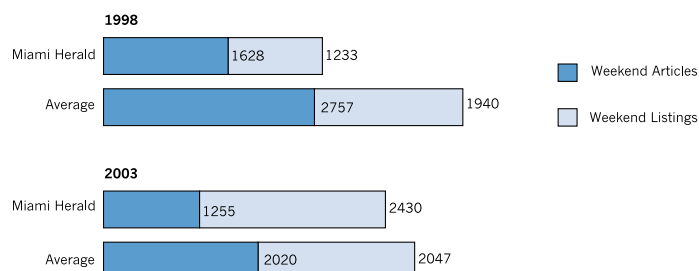
Music & Dance

number of articles on music and dance



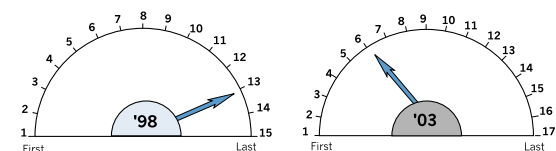
Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in weekend arts supplements



Daily Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) in daily A&L sections devoted to arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)



TROPICAL LIFE HAS ARRIVED on the Miami scene, a daily tabloid arts-and-lifestyles supplement that bucks the trend in our study. While most other newspapers have focused on weekend coverage and cut back on the daily, *The Miami Herald* not only increased the pagination of its daily section as a proportion of the overall newspaper but also increased its daily newshole for articles.

The *Herald* was also one of only three metropolitan newspapers to increase its arts-and-culture story count. The *Herald's* increase was by far the greatest. Since 1998 almost every newspaper we studied has shrunk the average length of its arts-and-culture articles. At the *Herald*, Tropical Life's tabloid format led to a larger than average reduction. So the *Herald's* arts-and-culture journalism newshole shrank slightly, and its newshole for listings remained stable. The Weekend A&E supplement switched from articles to listings: The former's newshole was cut back; the latter's volume doubled.

Much of the makeover embodied by Tropical Life was in the

Herald's format rather than content. The paper discontinued its stand-alone advertising sections, folding ad pages into editorial sections. Thus the *Herald* beefed up the pagination of its A&L section, its Weekend A&E supplement and its sports. Tropical Life was the only A&L section among the metropolitan newspapers we monitored to assign more than 10 percent of it pages to full-page ads. This means that Tropical Life did not increase its newshole in proportion to its pagination. Indeed, its listings were actually smaller than in the daily Living & Arts section of 1998, with large shrinkage in the space for the daily TV grid and for its accompanying journalism.

Instead, the *Herald* allocated more resources to music and the performing arts. The number of music articles doubled, though none of the increase was accounted for by reviews, which remained unchanged in 2003. As for the performing arts, the *Herald's* boost represented a change from outstandingly low to merely normal—except for dance, a field in which the *Herald* became a leader.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN MIAMI: A CRITICAL VIEW

LAST SEPTEMBER, *The Miami Herald* rolled out Tropical Life, a splashy new daily tabloid that folds arts coverage into features. The new section is typical of a paper skilled at finding innovative and resourceful solutions for tight budgets and a confusingly fluid community.

True, Tropical Life may give the casual reader the impression that frothy gossip and flesh-baring models—male and female—are more important than probing arts stories. But take a step back. What other U.S. daily has bilingual critics covering Latin popular music, South American soaps and Spanish-language theater; a nationally respected freelancer who appears regularly on the architecture beat; and a movie critic who lives in New York City? And what other daily places arts stories in nearly every section of the paper, linking arts to neighborhoods, real estate, small business, ethnic identity and urban personalities? That goes for page 1, too, which recently featured in-depth stories on Art Basel Miami Beach and cop surveillance of hip-hop groups.

At the *Herald*, the arts don't just cozy up to features, they're tight with the news, too.

Tropical Life, which takes its name from a previous Sunday section, has a core theme each day. Arts gets the cover Friday and Sunday; other days it's people, health, fashion, food and religion. Because of press requirements, the section reverts to a broadsheet Saturday and Sunday. Friday offers mostly film reviews, using star ratings; fizzy, clever columns about celebrities, clubs, dating and deejays; reviews of video games and DVDs; and an extensive listings section. Copy is short and snappy, "smart boxes" and story summaries abound, and the layout is clean, precise and readable. Sunday is more leisurely, with longer features and book and television reviews.

Not surprisingly, Tropical Life is aimed at youth. "Young people have been oriented by TV and Web pages for a quick read," says features editor Kendall Hamersly. "That doesn't necessarily mean sophomoric or simplistic, but stuff you can get quickly."

Some arts advocates and *Herald* critics themselves complain that the new format has cut into arts coverage. In truth, culture stories—with cover teasers—appear almost every day in

Tropical Life. Space is reserved Monday for weekend reviews, while weekday arts coverage has increased at the *Herald* overall since 1998. However, articles do tend to be shorter, and the fact that they are obscured by covers about abs and eczema increases the perception that the arts have disappeared. "People don't open it," says rock critic Evelyn McDonnell, who notes a dramatic decline in e-mail reader response since the redesign. "They see what's on the cover, and five days a week it has nothing to do with arts and culture."

A more frequent complaint is that reviews as such are no longer valued. While the number of reviews has remained constant since 1998, they comprise a smaller percentage of the paper's music coverage. Less than 20 percent of the *Herald's* music-performance stories last October constituted reviews, compared to 34 percent five years ago. This is intentional, however. "We're a news features department," asserts deputy features editor Joan Chrissos. "Most of us came from the news side. We have the mantra of trying to get on the front page."

Understandably, this philosophy does not please arts organizations. "It's a complete disaster," says Judy Drucker, whose Concert Association presents classical music stars. "We just got a wonderful new critic, whom I adore. And they stop him."

Drucker has a point. When the *Herald's* classical music critic died, the paper hired a replacement, then promptly recast him as a "culture critic." Now that its dance writer has moved to Latin popular music full-time, the paper has no dedicated staffer for dance, classical music or visual arts. Arts coverage meanwhile lost a general-assignment position, and the responsibilities of a major features editor, who left last fall, were reassigned to existing staff. These are just a few of the staffing anomalies at a paper where features and news reporters are regularly enlisted to cover the arts. The paper had more than 70 different people writing about the arts last October, yet neither the architecture nor visual arts critic is a staffer.

One result of such chronic understaffing is strikingly low morale. Two reporters characterized the *Herald* as "not a happy place" where writers are "overworked and underpaid." Says Hamersly: "I don't think you could ever be happy with the staff level at a corporate-owned newspaper."

The corporation he's referring to is Knight Ridder, which moved its headquarters from

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Joan Chrissos
deputy features editor
The Miami Herald

Miami to San Jose, Calif., in 1998, a major blow to a Pulitzer Prize-winning paper that was once the company flagship. Since then, in spite of brand-name columnists like Dave Barry, Carl Hiassen and Leonard Pitts Jr., the *Herald's* status has plummeted. Then there's its circulation, down from 342,029 in 1998 to 325,032 in 2003 on the daily and 470,393 to 447,326 Sundays. "I would love to have a bigger arts section," says publisher Alberto Ibargüen, who is passionately involved in the Miami arts scene. "Newspapers are community institutions, and I absolutely believe in the arts as community builders. But in the real world, I think we balance our role in the community and our obligation to shareholders better than most. I make no apology for it. We're still putting out a quality and enthusiastic page."

Not everyone agrees. "Part of the problem with the print media here is that it's episodic," says Miami-Dade County's Department of Cultural Affairs Director Michael Spring. "There isn't a vision guiding the coverage. The *Herald* stumbles on stories but doesn't connect the dots." Hamersly responds, "That's probably a legitimate criticism. The downside of having a capable art critic who is stretched very thin is that the time to do a step-back piece isn't there."

Do readers have alternatives? Not many. Miami is a one-newspaper town, unless you count the *Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*, which, ambitiously, just changed its name to *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and increased daily circulation. This year the *Sentinel* collected two arts nominations at the Sunshine State Awards, whereas the *Herald* got none.

For Spanish speakers, the editorially sepa-

rate *El Nuevo Herald*—popular with the Cuban-exile community and by no means a translation of the English-language *Herald*—offers quality in-depth reviews of Latin arts, as does the original Spanish-language daily, *Diario Las Americas*. The alternative weekly *Miami New Times* has published irreverent, in-depth stories on the flailing Miami Performing Arts Center and the fledgling Miami Art Museum. Its putative competitor, *Street*, the *Herald's* faux-alt weekly, appears to be merely a cynical ploy to grab advertising dollars.

Miami radio is mostly barren when it comes to cultural affairs, except for public radio's WLRN 91.3, which features *South Florida Arts Beat*, a one-hour show offering live performances as well as informative interviews. WRLN-TV offers the comparable half-hour show *Art Street*.

In his 1983 groundbreaking book *Imagined Communities*, political scientist Benedict Anderson theorized that newspapers helped establish the modern nation-state by defining the public sphere, both physically—"I live in this city"—and ethnically—"I am Indonesian." Looked at this way, expecting a newspaper to fulfill that role in a transnational, transcultural city like Miami is perhaps an anachronism. "It all moves very quickly," says features editor Enrique Fernandez. "It never stays put. Try to find Cubans in Little Havana. Where is Little Haiti? Everybody's now living in Broward County."

Wherever Miami is, Fernandez and the *Herald* are hoping that, at the very least, it is unanimously in love with Tropical Life. That may be the best they can wish for.

BY PAUL DE BARROS

"Part of the problem with the print media here is that it's episodic. There isn't a vision guiding the coverage. The Herald stumbles on stories but doesn't connect the dots."

Michael Spring
director
Miami-Dade County's
Department of
Cultural Affairs

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Philadelphia.

When you talk to people in Philadelphia, you keep hearing two conflicting ideas: Philadelphians are intensely proud of their city and Philadelphians suffer from an inferiority complex. “The proximity to New York can overshadow Philadelphia,” says Janice Price, president and CEO of the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and a former Lincoln Center executive.

But Philadelphia has a bustling arts scene of its own, featuring everything from long-established organizations such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Rodin Museum to new galleries run by young artists and thriving festivals of film, literature and music. And what other city boasts a street running right through the center of town called Avenue of the Arts? That boulevard gained a new anchor with the December 2001 opening of the Kimmel Center, a high-profile neighbor to established residents like the Academy of Music, the Wilma Theater, the Merriam Theater and University of the Arts.

The Kimmel Center has transformed the arts landscape in Philadelphia. Its \$265 million building, designed by Rafael Viñoly, is like an urban park, with two freestanding theaters set in

a courtyard, the whole covered by a tremendous glass canopy. It was designed to be “open, public, porous, and accessible,” says Price. “It’s meant to bring new people in.”

And it does. The Kimmel Center created a stunning new home for its resident companies—the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, PHILADANCO, American Theater Arts for Youth, and the Philly Pops. The Opera Company of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Ballet were thus able to book more time in the historic Academy of Music, which had previously also been home to the orchestra. And like New York’s Lincoln Center, Kimmel Center Presents has become a hub in its own right, providing space for visiting musicians who previously had no place to perform. Since the opening, the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics gave their first Philadelphia concerts in more than 30 years, and soprano Cecilia Bartoli and pianist Lang Lang made their Philadelphia recital debuts.

While the complex has won plaudits from both architectural and musical perspectives, its main concert space, Verizon Hall, has received mixed reviews for its acoustics, which are still a work in progress. There is also work to be done

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Janice Price
president and CEO
the Kimmel Center for
the Performing Arts

financially. The center ended its first year with a deficit of \$3.8 million on an operating budget of \$25 million, and estimates that it will have a \$2 million deficit in 2004. However, it hopes to have balanced its budget by next year.

It's also been a time of great change for the Philadelphia Orchestra. In addition to moving into the Kimmel Center, the orchestra got a new musical director, Christoph Eschenbach, in September 2003. Financially, though, it has been going through a difficult period; last year it was almost forced to cancel its one free concert for lack of funding. But lately things have been looking up. In September 2003 the Annenberg Foundation announced a \$50 million gift to the orchestra's endowment on condition that the organization's decade-long deficit be balanced to within 1.5 percent by the 2005-2006 season.

The Annenberg grant has propelled the orchestra towards finding new ways to cut its structural deficit, which used to be smoothed over with income from recordings and donations. To that end, the orchestra fired seven employees and asked staff members making over \$60,000 a year to take a week's unpaid vacation. Vice president and senior adviser Judith Kurnick says that everyone else—including musicians, guest artists, vendors and even Eschenbach—was asked to give back 10 percent of their salaries. The orchestra is currently in negotiation with its musicians, whose contract runs out in September 2004; as this piece was going to press, the two sides remain far apart.

But there are arts organizations all over Philadelphia, not just on the Avenue of the Arts. The Philadelphia Museum of Art celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2001, and as of June 2003 it had raised almost \$200 million as part of an anniversary fund and received a commitment of \$25 million in matching funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a variety of capital projects. The museum has also organized a number of notable exhibitions in the past five years, including *Manet and the Sea*, *Degas and the Dance* and the first retrospective in 30 years of the works of Barnett Newman.

There is great energy in younger, less established arts organizations as well. According to Lori Hill, arts and books editor of *Philadelphia City Paper*, "One thing that's great about Philadelphia is that some of the people who own restaurants and bars are real patrons of the arts." For instance, BRAT Productions, a theater company whose motto is Theater that Rocks, has performed at Fergie's Pub, an Irish bar, as well as in the Kimmel Center.



PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

Hill's competitor, *Philadelphia Weekly's* arts and entertainment editor Doree Shafir, agrees about the vibrancy of the city's non-mainstream arts scene. She points to numerous art schools as one reason for the preponderance of young artists. In addition, there are several galleries started by artists, such as Space 1026—founded in 1997, it features a gallery, studios and an online store—and Union 237, which represents a number of graffiti artists. "There are a lot of young artists who find this a really great place to live—painters, fashion designers, writers, filmmakers," she notes.

Philadelphia has a number of arts festivals, most notably Philly Fringe, which was started in 1997. Based on the Edinburgh Festival, the Fringe began with 60 artists and an audience of 12,000, and by 2003 had grown to include 230 contributors and 47,000 attendees. The Philadelphia Film Society sponsors both the Philadelphia International Film Festival and the Philadelphia International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. The 215 Festival, now in its third year, holds combined readings/concerts featuring such

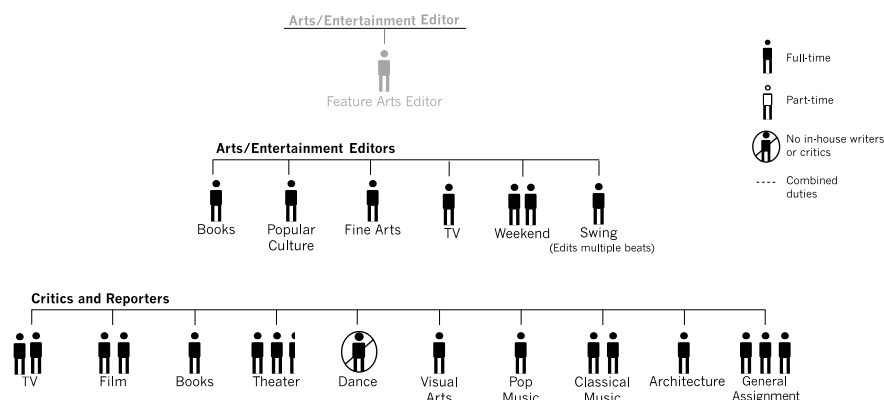
performers as Zadie Smith, Jeffrey Eugenides and They Might Be Giants. “That festival has been really valuable, and has gotten people out to places they haven’t gone before,” says *City Paper*’s Hill.

That could be Philly’s motto: Come to a place you’ve never been before. Philadelphia isn’t just a train station halfway between New York and Washington—there’s a whole world of art going on.

BY LAURIE MUCHNICK

*“There are a lot
of young artists
who find this
a really great
place to live—
painters, fashion
designers,
writers,
filmmakers.”*

Doree Shafrir
arts and entertainment
editor
Philadelphia Weekly

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

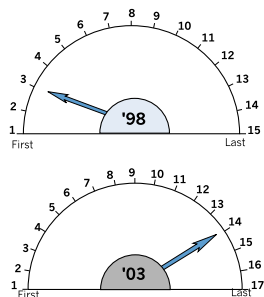
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

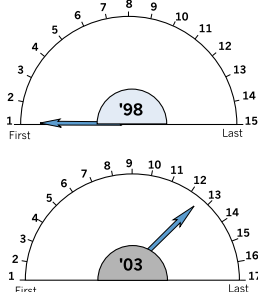
In-house arts staff:

Article Length

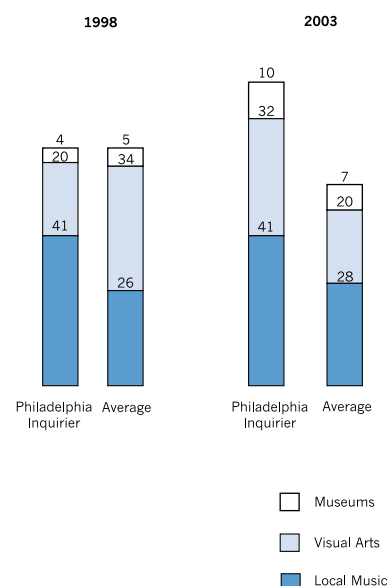
ranking among all newspapers studied for average length of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)

**Decorative Arts**

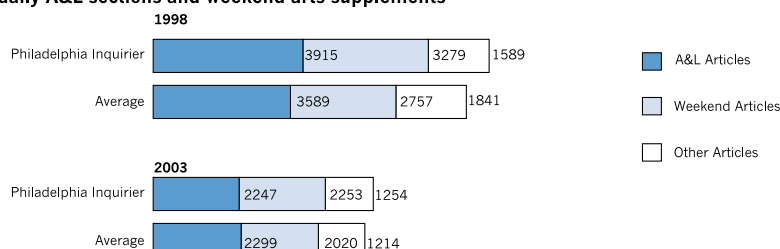
ranking among all newspapers studied for number of articles on interior design, haute couture, arts and crafts and other decorative arts

**Local Music, Visual Arts & Museums**

number of articles on local music, the visual arts and museums

**Newshole for Journalism**

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded) in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements



THE BIG CHANGE IN ARTS AND CULTURE coverage at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* over the last five years has been a radical reduction in the average length of its stories. Back in 1998 *Inquirer* articles averaged nearly 17 column inches. By 2003 they had shrunk to below 12 column inches. While almost all the newspapers we studied ran shorter articles than they used to, the *Inquirer's* 33 percent cutback had few parallels. The newspaper was thus in the odd position of dramatically decreasing its A&C coverage while substantially remaining the same. Its monthly story count was static—with nine fewer articles in 31 days—while its newshole for articles suffered unusually heavy losses.

Most of the newshole cuts were to be found at the *Inquirer's* scaled-back daily arts-and-lifestyles section, entitled *Magazine*. The section, which accounts for a mere 6 percent of the paper's pages, is published only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The TV grid finds a home in Health/Science on Mondays and Home/Garden on Fridays. *Magazine* would take up an even smaller proportion of the newspaper were it not so ad-heavy. At the same time the paper's arts supplements—Weekend on Fridays, Reviews on Saturdays and A&E

on Sundays—accounted for 14 percent of the *Inquirer's* entire pagination. No newspaper in our study gave its weekend supplements greater prominence.

Coverage of the decorative arts—interior design, high fashion, crafts and so on—has taken an exceptionally hard hit since 1998. Back then the *Inquirer* was a leader in this field; by 2003 it was a laggard. The *Inquirer's* coverage of museums and the visual arts did increase in 2003—although that still represented only 6 percent of its entire newshole for A&C articles.

In contrast to the *Philadelphia Daily News* tabloid, the *Inquirer* specialized in reviews, ranking third, behind only the Chicago newspapers. Judging by the content of both its main daily papers, Philadelphia is a musical city. The *Inquirer* was a leader in covering classical music and the local music scene. The two papers, though, approached the music beat differently. More than one-third of the *Inquirer's* journalism consisted of reviews, unlike the review-light *Daily News*. During the past five years the *Inquirer* also boosted music listings, which meanwhile were tiny at the *Daily News*.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN PHILADELPHIA A CRITICAL VIEW

IT HAS BEEN A TUMULTUOUS five years for the staff of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. During that time they've seen three editors, two rounds of buyouts and the demise of their Sunday magazine. Several foreign bureaus were eliminated, the foreign desk was merged with the national desk, and the *Inquirer* now pulls most of its foreign news from company-wide Knight Ridder bureaus. Meanwhile the arts and entertainment department lost its general assignment reporters, creating a larger workload for the staff critics. "There's been a terrible downsizing here," says architecture critic Inga Saffron. "It's a different place than 10 years ago."

The perception is that the *Inquirer's* owner, Knight Ridder, is more interested in the bottom line than in quality journalism, and the upheaval has taken its toll on the paper, which has seen its weekday circulation drop from 399,339 in 1998 to 387,692 in 2003, and on Sundays from 820,104 in '98 to 769,257 in '03.

The arts area that has taken the biggest hit is books coverage. In early 2001 the Sunday book section was changed from a four-page stand-alone to two-and-a-half pages in the A&E section. At the same time, book reviews were added to the daily paper Mondays through Thursdays. The total number of reviews stayed about the same. But in February 2003 the section was cut further, to one or one-and-a-half pages on Sundays, and overnight the yearly editorial budget was slashed from more than \$100,000 to \$30,000. Editor Frank Wilson had to start taking the weekday reviews off the wires and writing a column of his own in the Sunday section. He also cut the fee he paid reviewers from an average of \$200 to about \$150.

Things appeared grim. Yet since Amanda Bennett took over as editor in June 2003, she has increased the prominence of arts stories in the news section as well as on the front page. The arts staff has a newfound sense of optimism. "There used to be a real ghetto attitude about the arts—that the arts belong in the arts section," says classical music critic Peter Dobrin. "Now, as the city has changed and the leadership of the paper has changed, the boundaries are much more permeable than they used to be."

A large proportion of the *Inquirer's* arts-and-entertainment coverage is currently made up of reviews, but the editors would like to

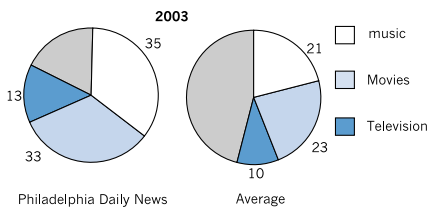


THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

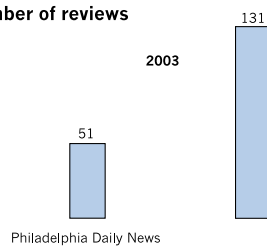
change the balance. "I'm trying to wean the critics from writing the 'duty review,'" says fine arts editor Jeff Weinstein. With the loss of general assignment reporters, critics are being asked to do more feature writing. This has caused some concern in the arts community: "The media is blurring the line between criticism and reporting," says Judith Kurnick, vice president and senior adviser at the Philadelphia Orchestra.

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)**Music, Movies and Television**

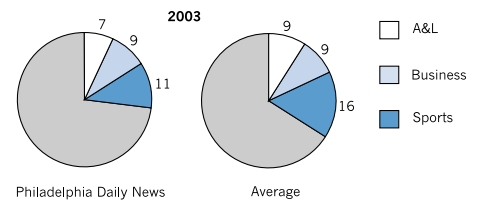
percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to coverage of music, movies and television

**Reviews**

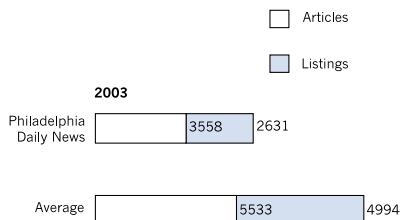
number of reviews

**Prominence of Daily Sections**

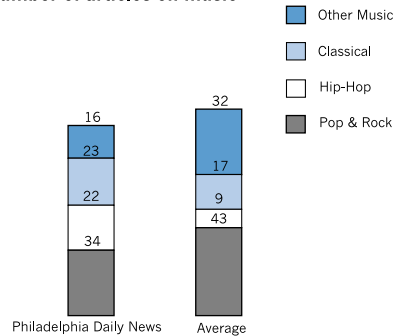
percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L, business and sports section

**Arts-and-Culture Newshole**

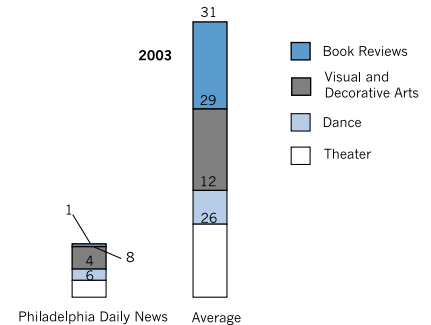
space (in column inches) devoted to articles and listings

**Music**

number of articles on music

**Journalism on Selected Artforms**

number of articles on theater, dance, visual-and-decorative arts and book reviews



THE PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS was one of the two additions to our study that we had not monitored in 1998, so we cannot interpret its 2003 format as part of a trend.

The paper assigned a very small newshole to arts and culture. Only two local newspapers in our study devoted less space to articles, and only one devoted less space to listings. In general, reviews of most mediums were rare in the *Daily News*. Instead the paper relied largely on feature coverage of arts and culture, such as previews and profiles. Almost all of its newshole for articles was devoted to the trio of music, movies and television. Music, in particular, was its specialty. The paper led all newspapers in hip-hop coverage, and wrote heavily about classical music.

The remaining fields of A&C were all but ignored. In October 2003, readers of the *Daily News* did not even see one article each day on the following eight beats combined: theater, dance, opera, painting, photography, book reviews, architecture and interior design/fashion/crafts. At the same time, most metropolitan newspapers in our study averaged more than three stories each day on those same combined beats.

Much of the explanation for the diminutive arts newshole derives from the nature of the newspaper itself. The *Daily News* not only is a tabloid but also publishes just six days a week, so its overall newshole across all beats—arts and non-arts—is constrained. All four of the tabloids in our study were specialists in sports, with the *Daily News* the leader, assigning fully 28 percent of its pagination to its Sports section. Its daily arts-&-lifestyles section, entitled *Yo!*, was well represented, however, with 12 percent of the newspaper's weekly pages. In our study only *Tropical Life* at *The Miami Herald* was more prominent. The *Daily News* made *Yo!* so large by folding all its feature coverage under the A&L section head and dispensing with any non-arts feature sections.

The *Daily News* assigned 9 percent of its overall pages to Big Fat Friday and Saturday's smaller Weekend Calendar. Yet even that low percentage exaggerates how much A&C coverage those sections represent. Fully 21 percent of their pages consisted of full-page ads. No other local newspaper made its weekend arts supplements so ad-heavy.—AT

"Sometimes you can't really tell if something is an opinion or a news story."

One upside of the closing of the *Inquirer's* foreign bureaus has been that there's more travel money available for arts reporters to write about foreign events. For instance, Wilson was sent to Dublin to cover the centennial of Bloomsday, the June day on which James Joyce set the action in *Ulysses*. And Saffron went to Bosnia to report on the rebuilding of the historic bridge in the city of Mostar that was destroyed during the recent civil war.

The *Inquirer's* competitor the *Philadelphia Daily News* is also owned by Knight Ridder. It, too, has endured recent buyouts and turmoil. The paper used to have a full-time entertainment editor, but that job is now covered by the features editor. The paper's circulation has also dropped, from 162,434 in 1998 to 139,983 in 2003 (it doesn't have a Sunday edition).

Like the *Inquirer*, the *Daily News* places arts and entertainment stories on the paper's front page. But the tabloid is more likely to write about a television show than trouble at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In fact, a page one package on the finale of *Sex and the City* sold more papers than any other cover that month, according to television critic Ellen Gray.

The *Daily News* is very pop-culture-oriented, and its staff focuses on movies, popular music and television. The paper does, though, have a regular freelancer who writes about classical music if "there's a hot babe who plays the cello," says features editor Theresa Johnson. Recently the *Daily News* also started a hip-hop section called Yo! Steez, which runs every Thursday. The cover conveniently defines the slang term "steez" for those not in the know.

Philadelphia's two alternative weeklies are hard for the casual reader to tell apart, though editors at both agree that *Philadelphia City Paper* focuses more on the arts, while *Philadelphia Weekly* is stronger on news reporting. The editors say they are not competing with either the *Inquirer* or the *Daily News*, since they offer something those papers don't. "I

think [younger readers] want to read things that are ahead of the curve rather than behind the curve, and it's tough for a daily to do that," says *Philadelphia Weekly* editor-in-chief Tim Whitaker.

The arts coverage in both papers is driven by current cultural happenings. "We consider ourselves an event-based paper," said Lori Hill, *City Paper's* arts and books editor. In practice this means that both papers cover music, movies, theater, dance and visual arts while virtually ignoring television. They include books only when there's a local angle. *City Paper* also runs Book Quarterly, an approximately seven-page section devoted to local features and more general reviews. *City Paper* has a larger arts staff, with a managing editor devoted to arts and entertainment, and three separate editors—for music, arts and books, and movies—though they don't have a dedicated arts writer. *Philadelphia Weekly* has one arts and entertainment editor, Doree Shafir, who was hired in December 2003 to bring more energy and a younger perspective to the paper.

There isn't much arts coverage in Philadelphia's broadcast media. Fresh Air, the influential National Public Radio arts program hosted by Terry Gross, is based at WHYY, but the show does not focus on local issues. The radio station has one arts reporter, Joel Rose, whose stories are broadcast during the local segments of NPR's Morning Edition. KYW, the 24-hour news station, doesn't cover much arts and culture, but when they do, "it reaches everybody," says Philadelphia Orchestra's Kurnick. "There's definitely a symbiosis among editors—KYW can influence TV and other radio stations," she notes.

"The arts are a huge factor in Philadelphia, a unifying force in the community," says *Inquirer* managing editor Anne Gordon. There is so much going on around Philadelphia that it is hard for the media to cover it all. But the newspapers at least are grappling with the problem, trying to find creative ways to use their limited resources to their best advantage.

*"We simply
don't have
the staff to be
the paper of
record, to cover
everything."*

Jeff Weinstein
fine arts editor
*The Philadelphia
Inquirer*

BY LAURIE MUCHNICK

RADICAL MEASURES AT THE SHREVEPORT TIMES

AS NEWSPAPERS ATTEMPT to improve arts and entertainment coverage, *The Shreveport Times* seized upon a novel strategy: They stopped running reviews. And while the paper later rescinded that decision, it caused major concerns within the cultural community.

The upheavals started in February. “The *Times* will no longer do reviews of plays, symphonies, ballets and art shows. The *Times* will expand and improve its arts coverage during the coming year,” Executive Editor Ronnie Ramos announced. “These last two sentences are not mutually exclusive. Not running reviews does not mean the *Times* is cutting back on its arts coverage. We want to improve it.”

Ramos’ decision to eliminate reviews at the Gannett-owned paper in favor of more arts-related feature stories was met with “utter shock and outrage” from the local arts community, said Pam Atchison, executive director of the Shreveport Regional Arts Council. The organization provides technical assistance and grants to about 40 arts groups in this Louisiana community. “It’s not about ticket sales,” she said. “It’s about validation, and your community’s commitment to the arts as well as the individual artists in the community.”

Not surprisingly, Ramos saw it differently. “Reviews take up, at times, a huge portion of arts writer Lane Crockett’s time,” he wrote in his notice. “Crockett, who has covered the arts in Shreveport for 34 years ... has a wealth of knowledge and expertise about our arts community. We want to take advantage of that knowledge.”

But Crockett didn’t stick around long enough for the *Times* to tap his store of knowledge: Since writing reviews was eliminated from his duties, he took an early retirement.

About 30 members of the community attempted to persuade Ramos to reconsider. Following a meeting, they barraged the newspaper with e-mails and letters, at one point even considering an advertising boycott and a subscription-cancellation campaign.

Ramos was unimpressed. He labeled the efforts “threats” and refused to vacate his edict. He then left the *Times* to become sports editor of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. In April the *Times*’ managing editor Alan English took over Ramos’ job, promising to review his predecessor’s policy and saying he hoped to find a solution before the beginning of the fall season. “Reviews help point out the level of the talent and the seriousness of the art in the community,” he said. “The issue I face is now trying to find someone qualified to do it within the paper’s means.”

Atchison said the arts community took a wait-and-see attitude towards English, who quickly added two weekly arts features, interviews with local artists and artist profiles to the *Times*. But the paper’s no-review policy, Atchison said, could not have been instituted at a worse time for Shreveport, a city of 410,000 that boasts a symphony, eight dance companies, eight theater troupes, an opera company and 10 visual-arts organizations. “The arts here are just growing by leaps and bounds,” said Atchison, noting that an arts district is developing around the city’s \$2.5 million renovated Art Space, which opens this fall, and the Louisiana Film Center, which is slated to open in December 2005. “For the *Times* not to review, I’m afraid it will stop that momentum.”

Before too long, though, English moved to fill the staffing void created by his predecessor, and hired a freelance theater critic. Replacing a full-time critic with a freelance writer was less than ideal. Yet as English noted, “I hope the community sees this as an acknowledgement of the need to do a better job of reflecting the quality of life in the Shreveport-Bossier area.”

BY VALERIE TAKAHAMA



Photograph courtesy of Portland Oregon Visitors Association.

Portland, Oregon, is a city full of artistic paradoxes. Proud, feisty, creative and fiercely independent, it manages to flourish despite a floundering economy. Located in a state with the nation's highest unemployment rate, Portland's arts organizations, both large and small, have been forced to adjust to falling ticket sales and diminishing budgets. Yet the city is now attracting a huge influx of young artists who are redefining its landscape.

Consider the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), which was featured in the previous *Reporting the Arts* study. Founded in 1995 as an itinerant arts program, in just a few years it grew into a full-fledged organization, partly by securing its own space to house its performing-arts season, art gallery and educational and residency programs. PICA became the quintessential Portland success story—a grassroots alternative-arts group that has grown into a highly influential institution.

Then, in 2003, it organized the first annual Time-Based Art Festival. The 10-day event gathered local, national and international performing-arts and media groups. Participants included contemporary favorites like Miranda July and Daniel Bernard Roumain. The festival exempli-

fied Portland's strong sense of community, attracting 200 local artists and 500 volunteers.

Yet despite its from-the-ground-up success, PICA's institutionalization also represents the other, more difficult side of doing arts in Portland. Tough times forced it to restructure: In 2003 it closed its gallery, laid off its visual-arts curator and stopped producing its regular performing-arts series. All resources have since been funneled into the TBA Festival, which in its first year failed to break even. Even so, as its funding base grew for the 2004 festival, PICA was optimistic about its survival.

Historically, however, Portland does not have a strong tradition of philanthropy. The town does not house a large number of corporate headquarters, and the recent economic downturn has only made matters worse. Northwest Business for Culture and the Arts reports that corporate support for the arts dropped 22 percent in 2001-02 and another 17 percent in 2002-03. Individual and foundation giving likewise decreased. At the same time, state funding for the arts, which was never voluminous, is now dwindling even further: In 2003 the state halved the budget of the Oregon Arts Commission. In 1998 Oregon gave the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC)

*"It's a really
exciting time to
be in Portland
because of its
fresh voices and
its fresh ideas.
We're at the
cusp of
something new."*

Byron Beck

special-sections editor

Willamette Week

\$45,000, while in 2004 it will probably receive a mere \$10,000 to \$15,000.

Portland arts institutions have also been battling inconsistent ticket sales, leaving them at the mercy of unpredictable audiences. Portland's larger groups have therefore had to tighten their budgets. In 2003, the Portland Opera cut its five productions down to four and reduced the number of performances from four to three. It also raised \$600,000 in emergency funds. The Oregon Symphony levied a 5- to 10-percent pay cut on certain of its administrators and musicians, and laid off others. Throughout the city, arts groups have been forced to cut arts-education programs. Even groups in the black have had to dedicate an inordinate amount of energy just to staying there. As Portland Center Stage CFO Eileen Day says, "We are going to meet our budget goals, but it's not like it's been a cakewalk."

Because of their flexibility, midsize groups have been able to maintain their footing somewhat more easily than large groups, according to former RACC Executive Director David Hudson. The modern dance troupe White Bird, for example, continues to grow, bringing in major international names such as Merce Cunningham and Twyla Tharp. But other midsize groups have had to make sacrifices to stay viable. Third Angle New Music Ensemble, for instance, scaled back its 2004-05 season from five to three shows.

One might think that the gloomy financial environment bodes ill for the arts in Portland. But in fact many arts professionals and journalists have witnessed tremendous growth during the last five years. The paradox that is Portland is based in its burgeoning youth population. According to the 2000 census, the number of young adults in the metropolitan area rose by nearly 45,000, an influx lured by low rents, a high quality of life and an open, collective artistic spirit.

Musicians perform in a highly collaborative scene, one that has attracted bands like Sleater-Kinney and raised local darlings like the late Elliott Smith. Dance groups like Conduit present work in their own small studios. The Tiny

Picture Club, a collective of Super-8 filmmakers, and Peripheral Produce, organizers of the annual PDX Film Fest, are producing experimental film. The hometown of director Gus Van Sant has

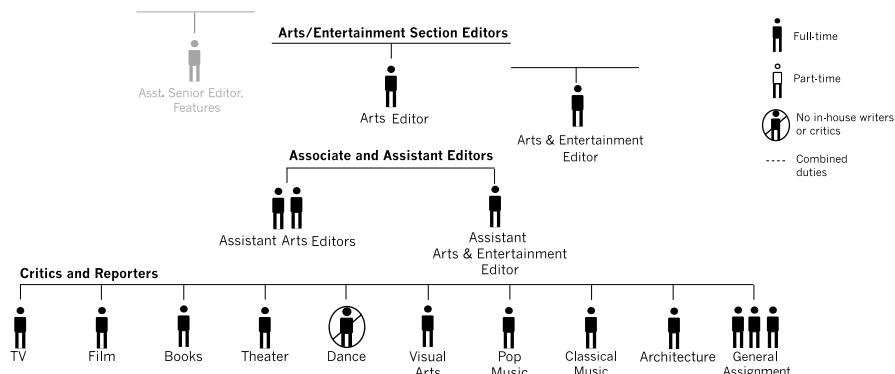


THE OREGONIAN

attracted other well-known filmmakers, like Todd Haynes, who are trying to escape Hollywood.

At the same time, Portland's abundance of independent bookstores, led by Powell's Books, has helped the hugely popular Portland Arts and Lectures speaker series become one of the most

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



The Oregonian

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

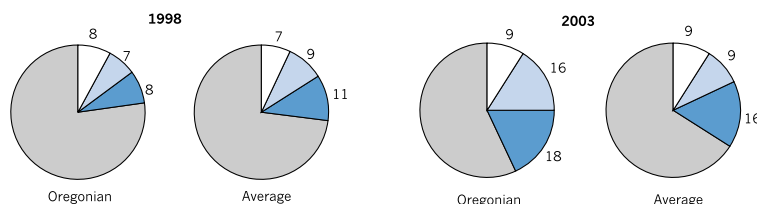
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

In-house arts staff:

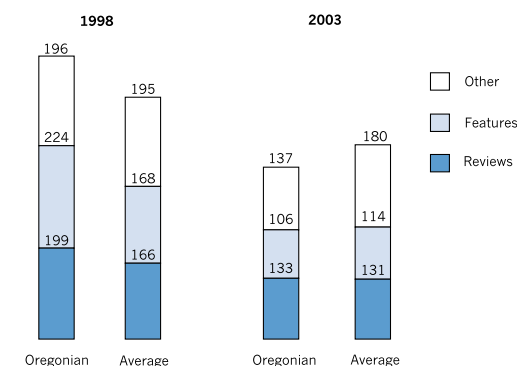
Prominence of Daily Sections

percentage of overall pagination assigned to A&L , business and sports sections



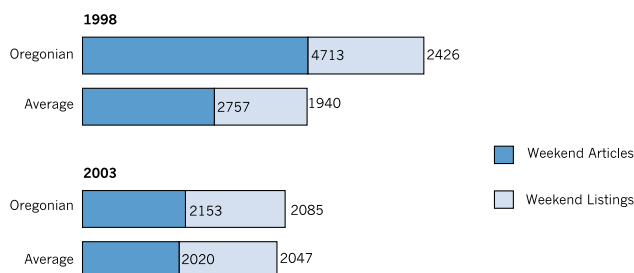
Story Count

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)



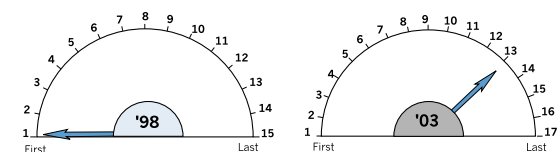
Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in weekend arts supplements



Movie & Music Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for space (in column inches) devoted to articles on movies and music (listings excluded)



THERE HAVE BEEN MASSIVE cuts in arts-and-culture coverage at *The Oregonian* since 1998. Both its story count and its journalism newshole have suffered drastically. Only one other newspaper we tracked, the *San Francisco Examiner*, cut more of its content. In the past five years the resources *The Oregonian* has devoted to the arts beat have shifted from outstanding to below average.

It must be noted that in this study the arts-and-culture content of *The Oregonian* will be somewhat understated since we failed to acquire some sections. We were not sent the daily arts-and-lifestyles section *Living* for three days out of 24. Out of the nine issues of the weekend arts supplements A&E and Arts Week, we did not receive one Arts Week. These missing sections, however, do not account for *The Oregonian's* massive cutbacks in A&C coverage.

The relative standing of the *Living* section has eroded because of a major format change. While *Living* has maintained its share of the newspaper's pages—9 percent now vs. 8 percent five years ago—*The Oregonian* has shifted much of its advertising content away from stand-alone ads-only sections. *Living* was once virtually the

same size as its rival daily Business and Sports sections. In October 2003 it was dwarfed by them, making it by far the smallest of the three. Only 1 percent of its pages consisted of full-page ads.

A pair of distinctive features of *The Oregonian* that we observed five years ago has disappeared. Back then *The Oregonian* was a standout in the effort it put into its weekend arts supplements. Second, with only one-third of its entire newshole devoted to listings, just one newspaper was more articles-heavy. The subtraction of so many articles, especially on the weekend, has moved *The Oregonian's* rank from outstanding to average in both areas.

The severest cutbacks fell on movies and music. In October 1998 these two beats accounted for more than half of *The Oregonian's* newshole for A&C articles. Now that hefty share has reverted to the average. Unscathed, however, was *The Oregonian's* commitment to listings for those two art forms. By staying virtually constant in absolute terms they registered a huge increase in proportionate share.—AT

highly attended series of its kind in the country.

If anything will define Portland's future on a national level, however, it will be the visual arts. In addition to the TBA Festival, The Modern Zoo and Core Sample also presented their own citywide arts festivals in 2003. "It's a really exciting time to be in Portland because of its fresh voices and its fresh ideas," says Byron Beck, *Willamette Week* special-sections editor. "We're at the cusp of something new."

But what's new may not be what lasts. While active, Portland's art scene is also inconsistent, with a host of groups and galleries arriving with a bang but disappearing when they fail to make the giant leap from arts collective to arts institution. Ironically, it's that staunch independence and disdain for all things commercial that keeps Portland from becoming a major national arts center. "That do-it-yourself attitude, while wonderful, can work against Portland because there is an anti-elitist, anti-institutional stance that goes along with it," says arts publicist Cynthia Kirk. Success is fine as long as it doesn't come at the cost of selling out. Many artists do not move beyond their local circles. The ones who do, like Miranda July, often do so through alternative distribution channels. As for others who have established a reputation, many have left Portland altogether.

That rebellious attitude is partly why many in the arts community frown upon Portland's most successful arts institution, the Portland Art Museum. Considered the town's 800-pound

gorilla, the museum raised \$30 million during an economic recession for its new building for contemporary and modern art. The new structure will open in 2005 and occupy an entire city block. Over the last 10 years, PAM has never operated at a loss. Much of its success rides on what many artists in Portland find distastefully promotional: shameless fundraising and blockbuster shows.

As Portland Center Stage launches its own capital campaign, however, it hopes some of the museum's success will rub off. Too small for its rented 860-seat space at the Newmark Theatre, the company is building its own, more intimate venue; with the support of the city, it has undertaken a massive, high-profile \$28 million project to renovate Portland's 113-year-old Armory as two theater spaces.

Despite the disconnect between the alternative and the traditional, the divide between Portland's artists and arts institutions is not as huge as it seems. Just as the influence of the large often trickles down to the small, the youth and vigor of Portland's nascent groups permeate the city's main organizations. The ballet, symphony, opera and Portland Center Stage all have new artistic directors who have instilled in each group a newfound mission and optimism. "These are new directors, and they're hungry to succeed. Like their grassroots counterparts, they're also looking for creative ways to succeed," says Kirk. "It is the witching hour in Portland."

BY LILY TUNG

"That do-it-yourself attitude, while wonderful, can work against Portland because there is an anti-elitist, anti-institutional stance that goes along with it."

Cynthia Kirk
arts publicist

ARTS COVERAGE IN PORTLAND A CRITICAL VIEW

IN 1998 *THE OREGONIAN* was an industry trendsetter in arts coverage. The innovative refashioning of its 75-page weekend guide, A&E, had made it a favorite among readers and advertisers and a model for small papers around the country. Yet, like the arts, media in Portland have experienced their own ebb and flow, and in the last few years *The Oregonian* has been sucked into an economic whirlpool, losing much of what it had gained. Newshole has shrunk, stories have diminished in length and editors say they're having a staffing problem amid the explosion of Portland's arts scene. "We have the same number of people as five years ago, while the sheer volume of stuff out there has grown immensely," says arts editor Barry Johnson. "It's a serious problem."

Besides A&E, *The Oregonian* also covers the arts in its daily features section, Living, and its newly named Sunday ArtsWeek, which was previously called Sunday Arts and Books. The three forums have generally attracted an older audience. But like many dailies around the country, *The Oregonian* is trying to reach out to a new generation of readers in a town whose arts scene is getting younger and hipper.

Since the staff is aging, and there is only one female critic/reporter, assistant senior features editor Karen Brooks says the paper is using freelancers in their 20s and 30s from diverse backgrounds to try to fill in the gaps. That may be its only recourse, as the economic recession prompted the paper to stop hiring in 2001. That's not to say *The Oregonian* lacks good veteran writers; revered journalists like architecture reporter Randy Gragg and Pulitzer Prize finalist David Stabler help establish its reputation. When they're too busy, however, editors fill the pages with a significant amount of wire copy.

Circulation has also dipped, from 347,538 daily and 431,137 Sunday in 1998 to 342,040 and 412,113 in 2003. So to attract new readers, *The Oregonian* is trying to tap into Portland's young zeitgeist with yet another redesign of A&E. Launched in October 2003, the new section sacrifices depth for breadth, featuring more photos, bite-size nuggets and humorous columns. Editors have done away with stock previews, but copy remains more event-driven than idea-based.

Of course, the arts community is far from happy about the shift from journalism and previews to listings and reviews. They are likewise not pleased that much of the space in A&E is dedicated to film, food and pop culture, while the performing arts receive minimal coverage near the back of the book. "Every time they remodel A&E, the arts go further and further back," says Erin Boberg, co-curator of Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's Time-Based Art Festival. "It should be called E&A." Although the staff compensates by focusing on the arts in Sunday's ArtsWeek, that section has also radically shrunk in size. There is growing interest in culture elsewhere in the paper, however. "We've had more stories on AI in the last year than at any time in our history," says Brooks.

In a town with only one daily, *The Oregonian*'s main competition is the scrappy alternative weekly *Willamette Week*, aimed primarily at 18- to 49-year-old readers. *Willamette Week* presents its edgy arts coverage through critics' picks, previews, reviews, capsules, opinionated listings and the occasional cover story. While *The Oregonian* does a good job of writing about books, film and architecture, *Willamette Week* excels in its comprehensive coverage of music as well as its attention to local emerging artists. Since 1998, circulation has increased from 80,000 to 90,000, and the paper has also established an in-house Web site. Its news hole, however, has decreased during the economic downturn due to a drop in advertising.

Although one is a daily, the other a weekly, *The Oregonian* and *Willamette Week* consider each other rivals. Each has scooped the other, but they are decidedly different in tone. As *Willamette Week* arts editor Ellen Fagg says, "They're more likely to do Olivia Newton-John, and we're more likely to do an obscure musician from Russia. They're forced to cover Britney Spears. We're forced to make fun of Britney Spears." *The Oregonian* is not only more traditional in its choices but safer in its criticism, with one of its critics admitting, "We're not going to write something that's going to close a show." On the other hand, *Willamette Week*'s penchant for controversy can seem at times to come from a need to be merely contrarian. "You feel they have an ax to grind," says one arts publicist. "They're often compelled to look at the negative."

With its five arts editors managing a host of freelancers, *Willamette Week* is known for developing talented writers, many of whom move on to dailies like *The Oregonian*. That

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Barry Johnson
arts editor
The Oregonian

nurturing environment constitutes both a strength and a challenge: Because of the paper's high turnover of freelancers, the quality of writing can be inconsistent.

Two other publications have entered the Portland media scene in the last few years. Going head-to-head with *Willamette Week*, the new *Portland Mercury* caters to an even younger readership, with an average age of 30. Owned by *The Chicago Reader* and Index Newspapers—which runs *The Stranger* in Seattle—the alternative weekly adopts an irreverent, satirical stance on Portland, one that some readers find high on attitude and low on objectivity. The paper puts most of its efforts into its local-music coverage, paying special attention to underground bands. It gives cursory acknowledgement to film, books and the visual and performing arts through picks, previews, reviews and listings.

Launched in 2001, the *Portland Tribune* publishes twice weekly. Bob Pamplin, chairman and CEO of Mount Vernon Mills and one of the richest men in Oregon, started the general-interest publication after poaching part of *The Oregonian*'s staff. The *Tribune*'s thin Friday arts tabloid, *Cue*, was recently dropped in favor of a broadsheet Friday features section called *Weekend Life*. The paper specializes in photo-driven front-page profiles and event previews, which make it popular with the arts community. It also runs film reviews and a smattering of listings. However, its coverage is not nearly as

comprehensive as that of *The Oregonian* or *Willamette Week*. The *Tribune* has also undergone financial challenges that have led to the layoffs of about one-fourth of its staff.

Besides Portland's newspapers and weeklies, two city magazines—*Portland Magazine* and the brand-new *Portland Monthly*—cover arts and culture through feature stories, profiles and listings. *The Organ Review of Arts*, a boutique paper, brings an alternative voice to the mix. Launched in 2002, it enjoys a niche readership among a small circle of arts professionals and aficionados.

Arts coverage on television and radio, however, is quite limited. KBOO, the grassroots liberal radio station, runs alternative news and local music shows. Oregon Public Broadcasting airs some national radio programs, like *Fresh Air* and *Performance Today*. In 1999 its television branch launched *Oregon Art Beat*, a half-hour weekly arts show that covers local artists and presents a Portland arts calendar online.

Despite their differences, the media and the artists are in agreement about one thing: Arts coverage in Portland is lagging behind the flourishing scene. Both sides hope that an economic turnaround will allow the news outlets to find the resources they need to catch up with their beats. "The arts are becoming more important in Portland," says arts publicist Cynthia Kirk. "I think the papers are going to have to figure out a way to cover the arts in a way they deserve."

BY LILY TUNG

*"Every time
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Erin Boberg
co-curator

*Portland Institute for
Contemporary Art's
Time-Based Art Festival*

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



Photograph courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Providence.

Providence is a canvas on a grand scale, a former industrial hub attempting to re-create itself as a 21st-century center of art, culture and tourism. The Rhode Island School of Design has plans for a new campus center designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning Spanish architect Rafael Moneo, and developers are converting old downtown buildings into pricey loft-style condos.

But one of the most symbolically charged—and least likely—arts-related building projects in Providence is a nondescript shopping plaza called Eagle Square. In fact, Eagle Square is less notable for what it contains than for what it supplanted: a vibrant alternative-arts space known as Fort Thunder, which was cobbled together from a complex of old textile mills in the mid-1990s and included a performance-art collective known as Forcefield. “I was absolutely knocked out, not just by Forcefield but by the whole Fort Thunder scene,” Lawrence Rinder, chief curator of the 2002 Whitney Biennial, told *The Providence Journal*. “There was so much going on, so much creativity in the air.”

Forcefield was invited to participate in the prestigious Whitney exhibition, and its installation was a hit. But even that success wasn’t enough to save the collective’s home, which was

demolished and paved over for the Eagle Square parking lot. The rise and razing of Fort Thunder says a lot about the cultural life of Providence. There’s plenty of creative spark and abundant artistic activity, but the city has not always made the most of its strengths.

Providence was quick to identify the arts as a catalyst for rejuvenating a moribund municipal economy, due in part to the efforts of former mayor Vincent A. “Buddy” Cianci. During his two decades in office, the colorful mayor used his clout on behalf of a range of cultural institutions, including Providence Performing Arts Center, Trinity Repertory and AS220, a lively arts-center-cum-café that offers youth and community programs as well as live-work spaces for artists.

Still, critics say that even more than most politicians, Cianci—who was sent to jail in 2002 for racketeering—promised more than he could deliver, doled out support inconsistently and often failed to see projects through to fruition. One frequently cited example is his plan to turn downtown Providence into a SoHo-style neighborhood with artists’ lofts, galleries, chic restaurants, trendy bars and live-theater venues.

To great fanfare in the mid-’90s, Cianci pushed for tax breaks to help artists move into an area known as the Downcity Arts District. Yet

“We want to lead the charge to keep our city vital, because in some ways it’s the key to our own success.”

Roger Mandle
president

*Rhode Island School
of Design*

the rehabbed live-work spaces proved too expensive for any but the most established and successful. Theaters and restaurants pulled visitors into Downcity, but not in large enough numbers to support a thriving gallery district. Several galleries that had located downtown were forced to close their doors.

The post-September 11 economic slump and the trend toward consolidation within the banking industry also hindered growth. Fleet bank, which recently merged with Bank of America, was among the companies moving their headquarters outside the state, making it increasingly difficult for arts groups—particularly smaller ones—to gain access to corporate support. Meanwhile, the neighboring city of Pawtucket took a page from Cianci's book and launched its own artist-friendly campaign, successfully wooing the Providence-based Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre, which relocated into an old armory-turned-arts-complex in Pawtucket.

Artists and arts officials, though, hope Providence has turned a corner with the 2002 election of its new pro-arts mayor, David N. Cicilline. Since taking office he has founded an arts-and-tourism office, which operates on a \$400,000 annual budget and manages a \$100,000 revolving fund for arts groups in need of quick bailouts. "Basically, what the mayor is saying with this department is that arts and culture are an integral motif that is weaved through every reasonable part of the city government," says Cliff Wood, who heads the department. "When we make policy, we want to consider art."

City government isn't the only institution making changes. Traditionally, the Rhode Island School of Design's primary presence in the community was its highly regarded art museum. But in recent years the design school has begun to move "off the hill": Downtown is now home to the school's new technology center, art gallery and store, as well as a renovated bank building containing live-work spaces for graduate students. In addition, the \$38 million Moneo-designed campus center is on track for groundbreaking in 2005.

Last year RISD took another step forward. Along with three other tax-exempt Providence colleges, it reached a precedent-setting, 20-year agreement with the city to contribute nearly \$50 million to municipal services. The voluntary payments headed off what might have become a costly and divisive court battle had the city pressed to collect property taxes from the schools. "We want to lead the charge to keep our city vital, because in some ways it's the key to our



PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

own success," says RISD president Roger Mandle, who spearheaded the agreement.

Some people already see signs of a renewed vitality. GTECH Holdings Corp., a firm that is a leader in lottery technology, plans to move its headquarters to downtown Providence, while Providence Place, a regional mall that opened in 1999, has proven itself a sales-tax boon to the state. Meanwhile, Providence Performing Arts Center president J.L. "Lynn" Singleton has good news to report. "Attendance-wise, we had the

best year ever last year at PPAC,” he says of the 2002-03 season. “It’s all about product. A roadhouse like this, you got good shows, you’re a genius; you got bad shows, you’re stupid.”

While overall funding from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts was down by about 10 percent in 2003, many smaller players on the arts scene are managing to survive and flourish. Perishable Theatre, an experimental theater company that faced rocky times due to a \$100,000 budget shortfall in 2003, found a home in the AS220 complex and embarked on a joint capital campaign. Providence Black Repertory Company settled into a permanent home downtown and raised \$2 million toward outfitting a new 150-seat mainstage theater.

Individual artists continue their creative work too. “Over these five years, what’s changed is people are being recognized,” says Jim Drain, 28, a RISD-trained member of the now-disbanded Forcefield. “It’s hard to step into commercial venues. It’s that crossover, accepting success or not, and trying to find what integrity really is.”

In a way, Providence itself is at a similar crossroads. Some people see the city’s proximity to Boston as important to its growth. Trend

watchers note that young, upwardly mobile workers in the computer and design industries and white-collar professionals from Boston are buying places in Providence and commuting to work across the state line. These newcomers are reportedly not only attracted by lower housing costs and quiet suburban neighborhoods, but also by the city’s hip, artsy vibe.

“We used to make the claim that Providence had the highest density of artists per capita of any city,” says Umberto Crenca, AS220’s founder and artistic director. “I think there’s a kind of sense of humor and attitude about Providence that appeals to artists. The place has a feel and a scale that’s very appealing.”

Still, he says, it’s becoming increasingly difficult for fledgling arts troupes to gain a foothold. “Providence has become a hot real estate market,” he notes. “There were a lot of space opportunities, but that window is rapidly closing. It’s getting much more difficult for artists.”

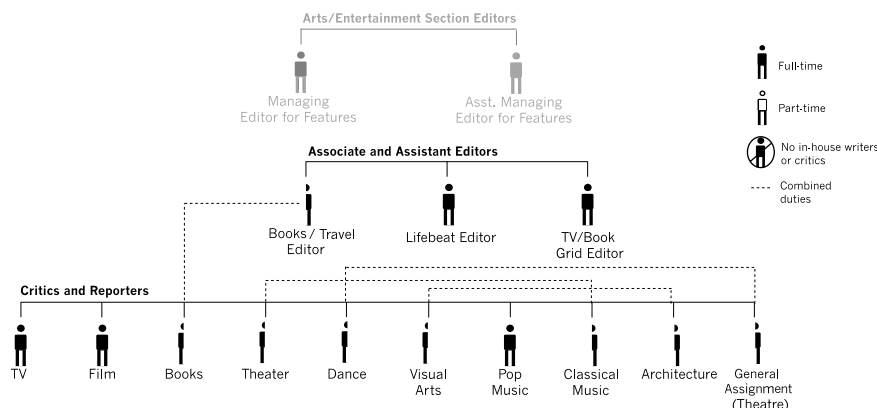
Maintaining Providence’s appeal to artists—even as it continues to attract those interested in the arts such as tourists, new residents in their 20s and 30s and older suburbanites—may be the city’s next big challenge.

BY VALERIE TAKAHAMA

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Umberto Crenca
founder and artistic
director
AS220

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



The Providence Journal

1998-2003

Daily circulation:



Arts-and-culture newshole:



Number of arts-and-culture articles:



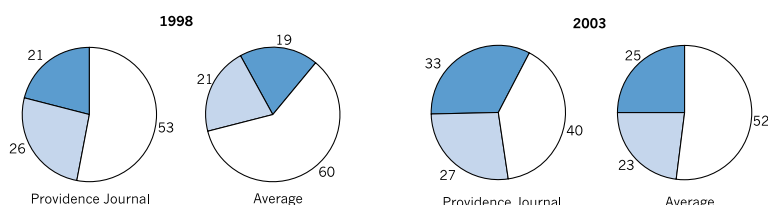
*In-house arts staff:



*The Providence Journal publishes 7 regional zoned editions that sometimes draw an additional newsroom staff.

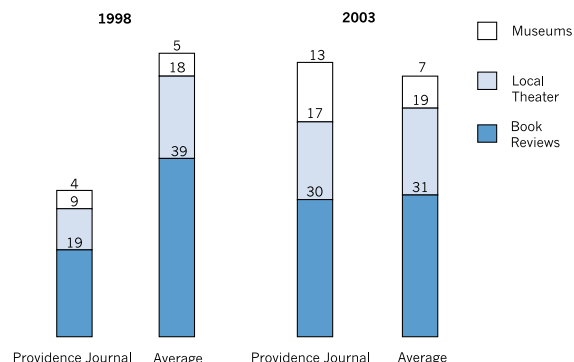
Distribution of Arts-and-Culture

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole assigned to articles ☐, the television listings grid ☐ and to other listings ☐



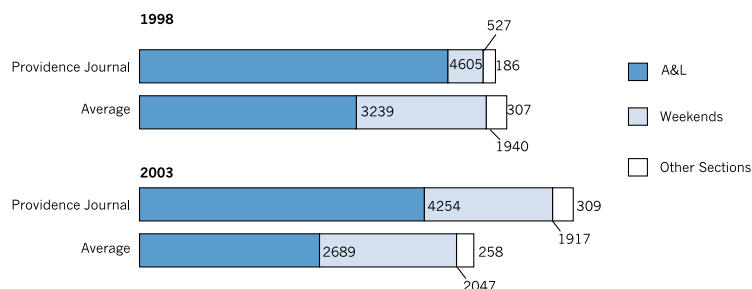
Book Reviews, Local Theater & Museums

number of book reviews and articles on local theater and museums



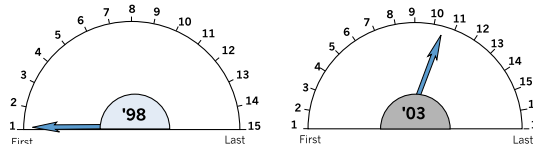
Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



Television Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to television



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL WAS a newspaper that was already committed to listings when *Reporting the Arts* first took a look back in October 1998. That focus grew even stronger five years later. The size of the *Journal's* overall arts and culture newshole has remained virtually unchanged. However, the volume of listings has mushroomed from 47 percent of that space to 60 percent. This increased commitment was evident almost across the board—for movies, the performing arts and music. The A&C listings in the *Journal's* weekend arts supplements—Sunday's Arts and Thursday's LIVE—more than tripled during this time. The number of listings in the daily arts-and-lifestyle section, entitled Lifebeat, remained enormous.

LIVE was launched after we did our first study, and its addition doubled the presence of weekend supplements in the *Journal's* pagination, causing it to rise from minuscule to around the industry average for the papers analyzed. Yet the size of the weekend A&C newshole for articles remained low despite the increase in the number

of pages. Some of their added size was accounted for by a high proportion of full-page advertising—18 percent compared with a 12 percent average.

The *Journal* was one of six metropolitan newspapers out of the 15 we tracked that both shrank its A&C journalism yet failed to shrink it simultaneously. Its declining average article length meant that the *Journal* ran substantially the same number of A&C articles in October 2003 as it did in October 1998, yet those pieces occupied much less space.

The cutbacks in television journalism—a former staple of the daily Lifebeat section—were severe. In October 1998 TV occupied a disproportionate 22 percent of the *Journal's* entire A&C newshole for articles. Five years later that percentage was halved to an industry average. By contrast, its story count on local theater and book reviews increased, growing from unusually low to average. The *Journal* also filed more articles on museums than any other newspaper we studied.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN PROVIDENCE A CRITICAL VIEW

WHILE ONE OF the functions of newspapers is to report change, journalists themselves are notoriously averse to it. Case in point: *The Providence Journal*. In 2001 the Belo-owned paper initiated a series of staffing moves—buyouts, retirements, appointments and reassignments—that was greeted with widespread uneasiness among critics, writers and other members of the paper's arts, entertainment and features staff. "There was a lot of anxiety for a lot of reasons," says Phil Kukielski, the then-newly appointed managing editor for features. "Here I was, a guy with no features background, coming over into the department, and we had all these vacancies. The feeling was, 'What the hell's going to happen?'"

In the end, here's what happened: Five members of the arts and entertainment and features staff retired, including Kukielski's predecessor, a full-time critic and another staffer who wrote criticism. Instead of replacing the departing arts writers outright, the paper reorganized the staff so that the classical-music critic also assumed the theater beat and a features writer took on theater and dance criticism. In addition, an editor who had formerly split his time between editing and writing about books stopped the latter in order to assume editing duties in the travel section.

When the dust settled, two positions were lost—a reduction Kukielski contends has actually had a positive effect. He believes not only that the paper's performing-arts criticism has remained largely undiminished in both quality and quantity but that its books coverage has actually improved. Although space allotted to book reviews and features in the Sunday arts section was reduced from two pages to one, a new books feature added to the Live Weekend tab has, according to Kukielski, made the paper's coverage "more timely" and "off-the-news" than before.

But some members of the arts community view the staff reductions in a less rosy light. "*The Providence Journal* lost two of its most tenured arts people, and they have not made up the difference," grumbles Randall Rosenbaum, executive director of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. As Bob Jaffe, president of Rhode Island Citizens for the Arts, notes, "We would like to see people reviewing who know something about the history of the subjects they're

writing about."

On a larger scale, much in the Providence media landscape remains the same as it was five years ago. The city is still well-served by broadcast and print media—from network-affiliate and cable news shows to community newspapers such as the *Cranston Herald* and the New England edition of *The New York Times*. One standout is the alternative weekly *The Providence Phoenix*. With 60,000 readers in Rhode Island and southeast Massachusetts, it gets high marks for its lively coverage of the theater, visual arts and club scenes, and for reporting on how gentrification and other development trends impact the city's ambiance.

Still, the *Journal's* dominance on its home turf remains largely unchallenged. Despite a slight dip in circulation—from 166,888 in 1998 to 166,460 in 2003 for the daily, with a corresponding decline in Sunday readership from 237,629 to 234,147—the *Journal* continues to be the largest newspaper in the region and the only daily serving the entire state. "The good news with the media here is it's not hard to figure out," notes J.L. "Lynn" Singleton, president of the Providence Performing Arts Center. "You've got one state paper, so you don't splinter your efforts. You know where to go."

The *Journal* continues to run a relatively large number of arts-related stories throughout its metro, state and business sections—and, notably, its editorial pages. In fact, some of the most thoughtful and compelling writing on cultural issues during October 2003 appeared in the commentary section, which ran editorials and op-ed pieces on such subjects as poet-laureate appointee Louise Glück, the death of writer George Plimpton and the "green" architecture of the Woods Hole Research Center on Cape Cod. "One of the things that every arts organization tries to be clever at is not directing arts information toward only one avenue at the paper," says Rhode Island School of Design president Roger Mandle, who notes that the paper has run stories about the art school in nearly every section. "The *Journal* has been willing to see us as a matter of broad community interest. We're not just pigeon-holed in arts and entertainment."

The majority of the paper's arts coverage runs in its daily 12-page Lifebeat features section, its 50-page Live weekend tab, which appears on Thursdays, and the eight-page Sunday Arts section. The latter two contain voluminous listings and calendar items, and the paper's overall amount of listings mushroomed from 47 percent of the entire newshole in 1998 to 60 percent in

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Citizens for the Arts

2003. Most of the other writing in those sections falls into the review-preview category. According to Cliff Wood, head of the city's new Department of Art, Culture and Tourism, the *Journal* is better at covering events and making announcements than at bringing depth and analysis to important issues. "We have this new department, which is being recognized as being at the vanguard," he says. "We had good coverage when we announced it. Now, you'd think there'd be a story asking questions—not a fluff thing—but asking questions about how you plan to integrate economic aspects as an arts and cultural advocate." But, he notes, the *Journal* hasn't asked them.

Despite the impact of arts and culture on tourism and the economic development of Providence's downtown, the paper still lacks a

well-defined strategy to cover the so-called "Providence Renaissance." But maybe it doesn't need one. And it looks like, for now at least, it won't be offering one to its readers. "I think everybody recognizes that it's an important story," Kukielski explains. "Do we have a Downcity czar that we've appointed who would direct arts writers and city government people? No. We're not organized that way. I think overall, the Providence Renaissance or the development of Providence as an arts community is getting an appropriate level of coverage. Could we do better? Absolutely. One valid criticism of the paper is that we've covered the Providence Renaissance incrementally, day by day, exhaustively for the past 30 years, but we didn't stop often enough to do the big assessment."

BY VALERIE TAKAHAMA

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THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CALIFORNIA



Photograph by Phil Coblenz, courtesy of the Convention and Visitors Bureau of San Francisco.

When we left off with the San Francisco Bay Area in 1998, it was a region struggling to come to terms with its success. Like no other zone in the United States, the Bay Area personified the rise and fall of the dot-com economy, and the region and its arts scene emerged from the 1990s more than a little punch-drunk. The razzle-dazzle of the new economy seduced many; this was especially true at the large arts institutions that filled their coffers with dot-com donations and cash from plentiful ticket sales. Ambitious expansion plans were announced, while inflated rents exiled city artists.

Many groups were thus shocked by the harsh realities of the post-bubble years. Some organizations were able to hold on to the momentum of the nineties and complete big-time projects. The Asian Art Museum plumbed a combination of city and private support to fashion a gorgeous new home that opened its doors in 2003; Gae Aulenti's conversion of the Civic Center's main library for the Asian Art Museum made an arduous eight-year, \$160.5 million journey. A city bond and a \$15 million gift from Silicon Valley businessman Chong-Moon Lee allowed the project to break through the finish line. And the M.H. de Young museum is on track to open a newly upgraded building in 2005.

Other institutions were not as successful, however. Our 1999 report noted that the Jewish Museum and the Mexican Museum both planned to move to flashy new buildings in downtown's growing Yerba Buena Center arts district in the near future. Those projects are now languishing. Meanwhile both the San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Symphony finished 2003 with a deficit. And in 2002, San Jose lost its 123-year-old namesake symphony to money problems.

The local economy was hard hit. From 2000 to 2003, the Bay Area lost 378,000 jobs—a decline of 10 percent in its labor force—while between 2001 and 2002, San Francisco shed population faster than any other large city in the country. Even so, the city's residents are firm in their advocacy of the arts. In the shadow of California Gov. Gray Davis' "total recall" and Arnold Schwarzenegger's rise, San Francisco ushered in a new era by electing Gavin Newsom mayor to replace Willie Brown. An arts-themed mayoral debate in October 2003 attracted a standing-room-only crowd. As Pam Rorke Levy, producer of *Spark*, a new Bay Area public-television arts show on KQED, notes, "One thing that surprised all the candidates is the kind of people who advocate for the arts. They are vocal, they vote, they have jobs in the city and they pay taxes

"The strategies these artists use remind me of the strategies everyone's using to survive in this economy."

Susan Gerhard
arts editor
San Francisco
Bay Guardian

in the city. Gavin Newsom is on notice in a way that past mayors haven't been."

Newsom seems to be responding. While campaigning, the mayor-to-be released a policy paper titled "Art for the City, City for the Arts," pushing the belief that a strong art scene attracts a robust business climate. He called for city enterprise zones, started a cultural-affairs office to market San Francisco's arts offerings and beefed up the film office to attract business.

One of the more important items on Newsom's arts to-do list is to fight for more funding from the California Arts Council (CAC). The state dropped its contributions from \$32 million in 2000-01 to a scant \$1 million in 2003-04. Smaller arts organizations such as Los Cenzontles Mexican Arts Center were the most affected. The center reports that it lost 25 percent of its budget when the CAC went on a crash diet. On the city level, San Francisco's Grants for the Arts is having to contend with the decreased tourist trade that fills that fund's coffers. "There's more reliance on city support here, so when the economy tanks and the funding goes down, it's really felt," says Richard Newirth, director of cultural affairs for the San Francisco Arts Commission. To lessen the impact of reduced funds, in May 2004 Newsom announced a controversial proposal to cut 25 percent of the Grants for the Arts' funding for the city's large institutions like the symphony, ballet and opera in order to create some padding for smaller arts organizations.

The Berkeley Repertory Theatre might be said to personify the challenges and triumphs of the Bay Area scene over the past five years. With its two theaters—a 400-seat thrust stage and the 600-seat Roda Theatre—the Rep is the centerpiece of Berkeley's urban renewal. Its site, on Addison Street, is framed by a freshly poured walk engraved with 123 city-themed poems. Flanking the Roda are an affiliated theater school and other culture organizations, all of which have turned the street into an arts district. Things were going great for the Rep in the spring of 2001, when it cut the ribbon on the Roda. With the decline in the economy, though, the Rep was shouldering a \$300,000 deficit by 2003.

But Rep Artistic Director Tony Taccone still sees the bright side for arts organizations in this environment. "It's made us all clever," he says, noting how in 2003 the Rep paired with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival to produce David Edgar's sprawling political play *Continental Divide*. By joining forces, both companies were able to save money by splitting rehearsal time, set-design costs and commission fees.



SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Likewise, Intersection for the Arts, an alternative-arts organization and space that is home to theater, literary readings, visual-arts exhibitions and jazz performances, has actually grown since 1999 by cultivating collaborations. It is therefore not surprising that Taccone calls those in the trenches of the Bay Area's arts scene "stalwart warriors," and he's on to something. True San Franciscans—not these Web-site-come-lately types—are hardy. This is a city that survived the original gold rush, the earthquakes, the Summer of Love and the onset of the AIDS epidemic. Many, such as San Francisco-based novelist Sylvia Brownrigg, point to the Bay Area's yeasty literary scene as a sign of the city's resurgence. Dave Eggers' encampment with his liter-



SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

ary magazine, *The Believer*, and the Francis Ford Coppola-funded publication *Zoetrope*, among others, are contributing what Brownrigg calls “a great boon” to the scene.

collaboratively based movement as a true reflection of the state of the city. “The strategies these artists use,” she says, “remind me of the strategies everyone’s using to survive in this economy.”

BY CARYN BROOKS

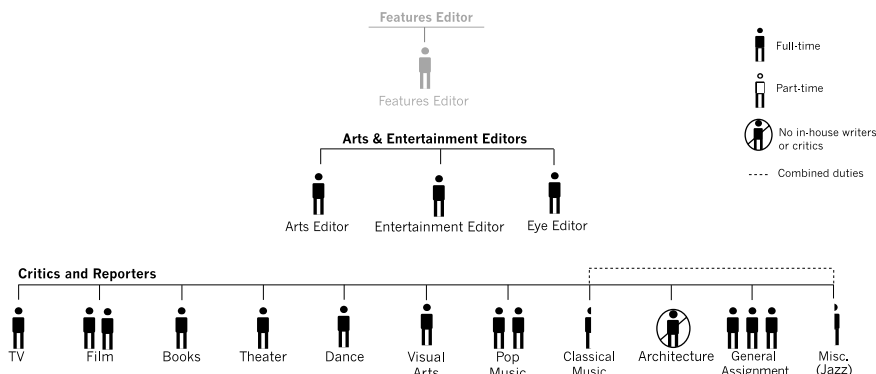
Though hard to quantify, ethnic arts in the Bay Area are flourishing. So is the ethnic population, especially in outlying areas. “One proof is the Ethnic Dance Festival, which auditions more than 100 Bay Area groups—sometimes a lot more—every year for 25 spots,” reports *San Jose Mercury News* dance critic Anita Amirrezvani. “The festival runs for three weekends. That’s a lot of ethnic dance for one area.”

Oakland meanwhile is an incubator for a nascent underground music scene, with unadvertised warehouse shows that provide a stage for genre-fusing music. “I’ve heard people compare Oakland to Williamsburg, Brooklyn,” says *SF Weekly* music editor Garrett Kamps of the once-unlikely hive of arts activity outside Manhattan. Also undeterred is the visual-arts scene, according to Susan Gerhard, an arts editor at the alt-weekly *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. In 2002 the *Guardian* ran a cover story entitled “The Mission School,” which outlined the verve of the city’s scrappy Dumpster-diving street artists, who have synthesized their passion for the underground languages of rock, hip-hop, skateboarding, graffiti, comic books and political activism into work that’s been getting international notice. Gerhard sees this community-minded and

“One thing that surprised all the candidates is the kinds of people who advocate for the arts. They are vocal, they vote, they have jobs in the city and they pay taxes in the city. Gavin Newsom is on notice in a way that past mayors haven’t been.”

Pam Rorke Levy
producer
Spark

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



San Jose Mercury News

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

In-house arts staff:

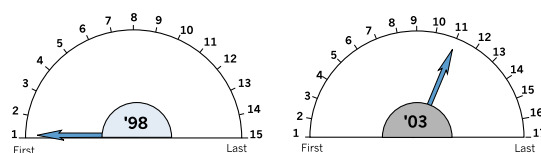
Distribution of Arts-and-Culture Coverage

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole assigned to articles and listings



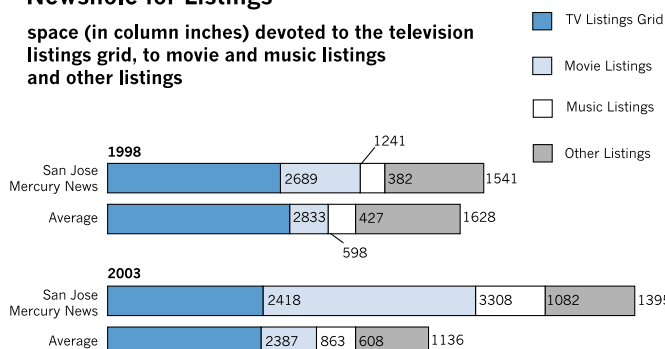
Article Length

ranking among all newspapers studied for average length of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)



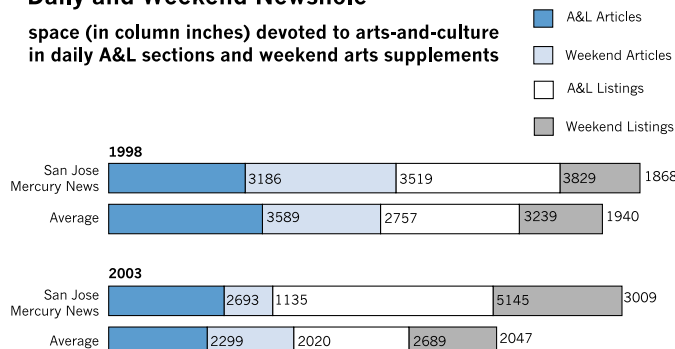
Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to the television listings grid, to movie and music listings and other listings



Daily and Weekend Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in daily A&L sections and weekend arts supplements



A MAJOR TREND DISCOVERED by *Reporting the Arts II* was the reallocation of arts and culture coverage away from articles toward listings. In all, six of the 15 metropolitan newspapers we tracked simultaneously shrank their newsholes for articles while increasing their newsholes for listings. None of those other five performed as extreme a transformation as what was observed at the *San Jose Mercury News*. The paper's volume of movie listings almost tripled over the last five years. Rated high five years ago, they increased to an astronomical level. A similar trend, but less extreme, occurred in music coverage.

Listings mania was most dramatic in the *Mercury News's* weekend arts supplement. The Eye section switched from a predominance of articles five years ago to mostly listings in October 2003. Its listings were more voluminous than at any of the weekend supplements we

monitored except for the *Contra Costa Times*. The *Mercury News* also increased by one third its volume of listings in its daily arts and lifestyles section entitled A&E. Its A&E's listings were unsurpassed by any other newspaper's A&L section and almost twice the average volume. Besides the *Mercury News's* editorial listings, 10 percent of the A&E section consisted of full-page advertising, a much higher proportion than at most metropolitan newspapers.

The accompanying reduced emphasis on journalism was brought about by an extreme reduction in the length of the average story. The number of articles the *Mercury News* published declined moderately, while their average length was slashed from almost 18 column inches to less than 13. Only three others of the metropolitan newspapers we tracked made such draconian cuts.—AT

ARTS COVERAGE IN THE BAY AREA A CRITICAL VIEW

AS MUCH AS THE BAY Area is known for its world-class arts offerings, perhaps the most-watched drama coming out of the region in the last five years has been the ever-changing, fantastical media scene that has left even seasoned journalism junkies agape.

Our last report went to press just as the Hearst Corporation—at that timeowner of *The Examiner*—bought its longtime competitor, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and put *The Examiner* on the market. There were questions as to whether *The Examiner* would continue operating; Hearst executives suggested that unless they could find a buyer, the paper would fold.

Then, in 2000, Hearst sold *The Examiner* to the Fang family, publishers of a community newspaper called *The Independent*. To avoid possible Department of Justice issues, Hearst subsidized the Fangs with \$66 million, paid out over three years, to create the appearance of a competitive playing field. And since the *Chronicle's* management had promised no layoffs for anyone onboard at the time of the merger, the staff of *The Examiner* was simply folded into the *Chronicle's* ranks in November 2000, and the odd transformation of former competitors into workmates began.

The proceedings started down the rabbit hole when former San Francisco mayoral candidate and local businessman Clint Reilly filed a federal lawsuit to block the sale of the *Chronicle* to the Hearst Corporation, claiming it would harm him

as a reader to be without two truly competing papers. This antitrust suit dragged the sale into tabloid territory when *Examiner* publisher Timothy White testified that, during the period his company was trying to close the *Chronicle* deal, he had met with Mayor Willie Brown and offered to “horse-trade” favorable coverage of the Brown administration if the mayor would support Hearst’s acquisition of the *Chronicle*. Brown, a Fang ally, had initially called into question the *Chronicle* sale and pushed for *The*

“We’re still paying attention to arts and entertainment, but also broadening our concept of how people spend their leisure time.”

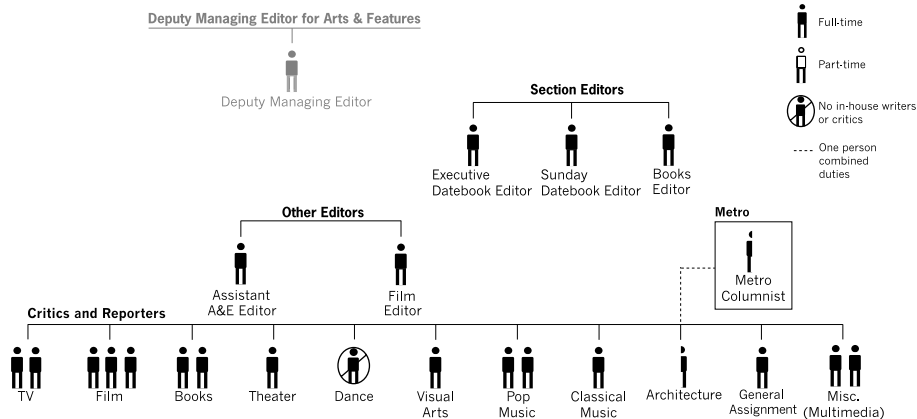
Katherine Fong
assistant managing
editor for arts and
entertainment
*San Jose
Mercury News*



THE EXAMINER

Examiner to keep publishing—a move that some felt smacked of grandstanding—in order to steer the paper toward the Fangs. And while Judge Vaughn Walker ultimately ruled in favor of the *Chronicle* sale, his written decision called into question the cronyism at the heart of the Fangs’ sweetheart deal.

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



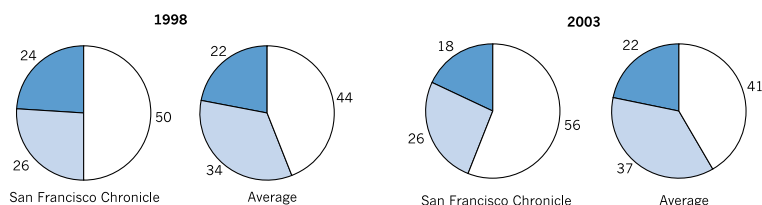
San Francisco Chronicle

1998-2003



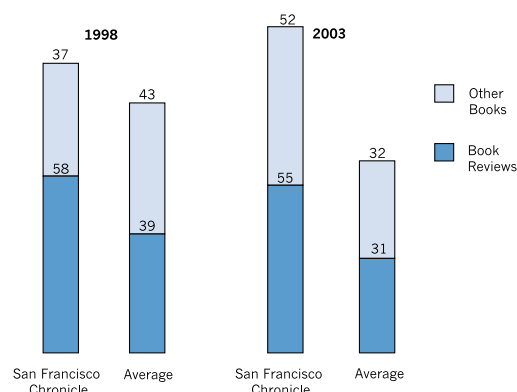
Distribution of Arts-and-Culture Journalism

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to daily A&L sections , weekend arts supplements and other sections



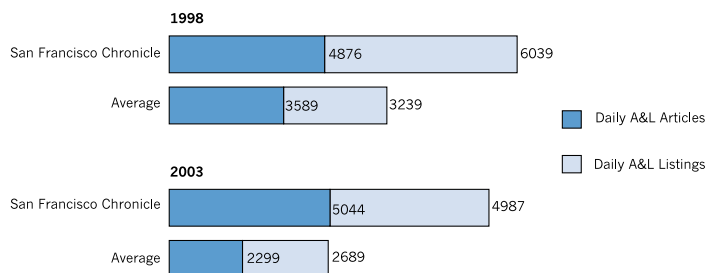
Books

number of book reviews and articles on books



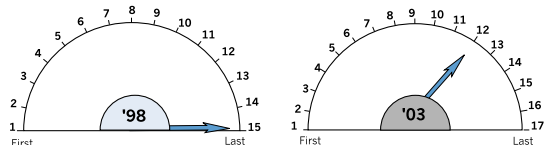
Daily A&L Supplements

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture in daily A&L sections



Television Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to television



THE VOLUME OF DAILY arts coverage at the *San Francisco Chronicle* was enormous. Its Datebook section contained a bigger newshole for articles than any other arts and lifestyles section in our study. Its daily volume of listings was just as large, surpassed by only one other newspaper. This does not mean that its weekend supplements—a weekend Datebook and its book and movie sections—were negligible. Their volume of articles ranked behind only four other newspapers we monitored, yet the weekend listings service was relatively skimpy.

Overall the *Chronicle* jockeyed with the *Chicago Tribune* for our study's leadership role. Its newshole for articles-plus-listings was slightly larger than the *Tribune's*, while its space for articles alone was smaller. These were the only two newspapers of those we monitored to increase their average arts and culture article length. Since 1998 the *Chronicle* has increased its commitment to books. That section surpassed movies as its largest single beat, tying with the *Tribune* for the largest number of book reviews published.

The *Chronicle* has also profited by the collapse of its former rival, the *San Francisco Examiner*, whose volume of coverage rivaled that of

the *Chronicle* five years ago. The *Chronicle's* overall effort on the A&C beat, though, has not increased to pick up the slack. In fact Datebook has shrunk in prominence in the newspaper's overall pagination, while non-arts feature sections have increased instead. An exception was television. The *Chronicle* was the only newspaper in our study to have beefed up its newshole for TV journalism. Admittedly the *Chronicle's* TV journalism represented the smallest share of any newspaper in our study in 1998. It has now increased to just above average.

The *Chronicle* was a standout in several areas five years ago but has since scaled back. In 1998 it led coverage of the visual and decorative arts. By 2003 pieces on the local visual arts scene remained consistent, but the out-of-town beat was cut back. Interior design, high fashion, and arts and crafts all received considerably less attention. Music, too, has been reduced, even though five years ago it was barely more than average. By October 2003 the *Chronicle* had decreased its music story count and shifted some of its effort away from articles toward listings. The net result was that the paper's music coverage represented the smallest slice of A&C journalism of any newspaper we monitored.—AT

During the summer of 2000, amid all the *Chronicle/Examiner* instability, Knight Ridder's *San Jose Mercury News* made a play for the San Francisco market by introducing a zoned edition that dropped San Jose from its name and simply went by *Mercury News*. The first issue of the Fangs' *Examiner* appeared in November 2000. In October 2001 Florence Fang fired her son Ted, who was acting as publisher and executive editor. Four months later she got rid of *Examiner* editor David Burgin. A year after that *The Examiner* laid off most of its staff and became a free tabloid produced with a skeletal editorial crew of about 15. By early 2004 Denver billionaire Phil Anschutz bought the gasping paper and promised a renewed *Examiner*.

Corporate sales also rocked the broadcast world of the Bay Area. Around the time Hearst got rid of *The Examiner*, it also sold its sister media outlet, KRON television, to New York-based Young Broadcasting. KRON had been an NBC affiliate, but its new owners claimed NBC's financial demands were unacceptable and dropped the network to go independent. NBC ended up buying San Jose station KNTV to edge into KRON's territory, and this ignited a local broadcast war that is now being looked at by the FCC.

The crash of the dot-com economy swiftly took its toll on the entire Bay Area media scene. In March 2001 *Mercury News* publisher Jay T. Harris dramatically quit his position in protest over what he termed Knight Ridder's attention to profit over quality journalism. Soon after, *Mercury News* cut its San Francisco edition and slashed 120 jobs through buyouts. The Knight Ridder paper *Contra Costa Times* eliminated 8 percent of its workforce with a voluntary buyout program as well. After September 11, the *Chronicle* engaged in some serious surgery to control costs by cutting 220 jobs while at the same time keeping its promise to protect the jobs of employees on board during the merger. Public-broadcasting stalwart KQED reduced its staff by 11 percent, and ANG Newspapers, publisher of the *Oakland Tribune*, laid off 49 employees, constituting 7 percent of its workforce.

DAILY ARTS COVERAGE IN THE BAY AREA

It seems to be unanimous: People connected to the arts scene universally mourn the death of a competitor for the *Chronicle*. Notes Pam Rorke Levy of *Spark*, KQED's televised arts show, "*The Examiner* barely exists in the minds of readers; there's little arts coverage and a small reader-

ship." For Glenn McCoy, executive director of the San Francisco Ballet, this absence is palpable. "It was certainly better for us when there were two papers reviewing work. Often reviews were the opposite of each other, and that helps readers see that it's a subjective art and that even experts disagree," he says. Calls and e-mails asking for comment from *The Examiner* went unreturned. Though the region hosts other daily newspapers, including *Mercury News* and the *Contra Costa Times*, the *Chronicle's* hefty readership of 501,135 in late 2003, up from 456,742 in late 1998, holds sway over the market and the life of arts organizations. At the same time, the Sunday edition dipped to 553,983 in 2003 down from 578,541 in 1998. As Berkeley Rep's Tony Taccone puts it, "It's the *Chronicle* and nothing else."

"The past five years have been some of the most turbulent in the paper's 139-year history. Absorbing two arts staffs into one was not easy," says David Wiegand, executive editor of Datebook, the daily section that covers the arts. Wiegand has been at the *Chronicle* since 1992. "Both papers went through a lot of advance preparation, but nothing can really prepare you for it," he says. "These are people we all knew. We used to be competing with each other."

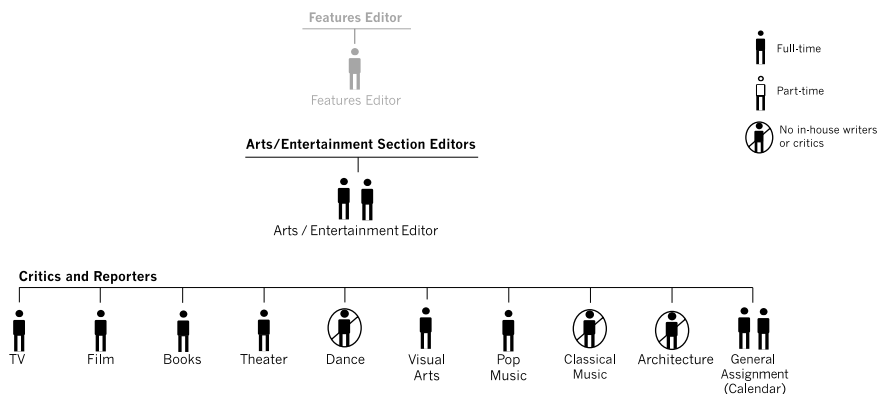
Since the merger, the *Chronicle's* Datebook has gone through several regime changes, which have influenced its focus. The Sunday Datebook tabloid, once famously pink, was bleached white in 2001, and the pages devoted to film absorbed into another section. Under the stewardship of Carolyn White, the deputy managing editor for features, the pink was brought back with a dramatic Classic Coke-like unveiling in 2003, and the film section was folded back in. Karen Hershenson, arts and entertainment editor at the *Contra Costa Times*, says things seemed shaky over at the *Chronicle* for a while but that Datebook appears to be standing on firmer ground these days. "I think we benefited from their instability for a long time," she says. "We're sort of bummed because we think their instability is diminishing."

White, who was brought in by new managing editor Robert Rosenthal, has put her magazine background to work. Her recent fixes include more feature stories, sentence-length headlines with random words highlighted in red, and a consumer focus. "The biggest change, and the one that we're working with now, is expanding the daily Datebook from an arts section to an arts and features section," says Wiegand. This strategy is one that seems to be in the works at

"It was certainly better for us when there were two papers reviewing work. Often reviews were the opposite of each other, and that helps readers see that it's a subjective art and that even experts disagree"

Glenn McCoy
executive director
San Francisco Ballet

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



CONTRA COSTA TIMES

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

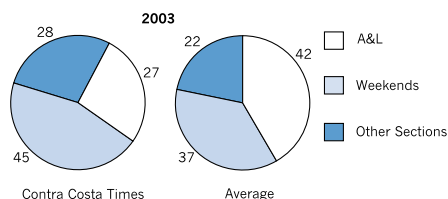
Arts-and-culture newshole: **na**

Number of arts-and-culture articles: **na**

In-house arts staff: **na**

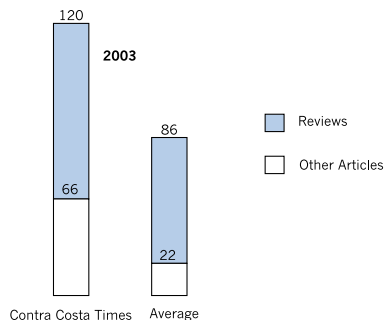
Distribution of Arts-and-Culture

percentage of arts-and-culture newshole for articles (listings excluded) assigned to daily A&L



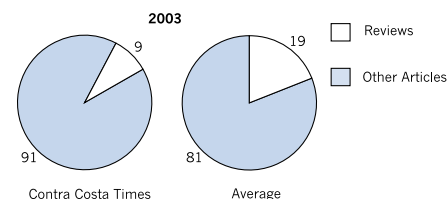
Syndicated Columns and Newswires

number of reviews and articles taken from syndicators and wire services



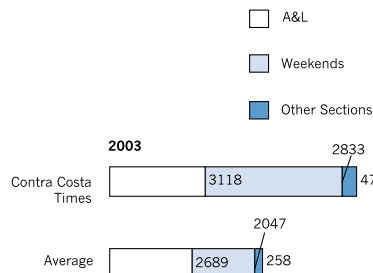
Television Journalism

percentage of newshole for television articles (listings grid excluded) assigned to reviews



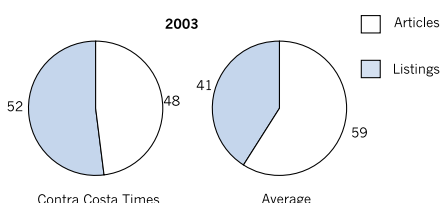
Newshole for Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to arts-and-culture listings



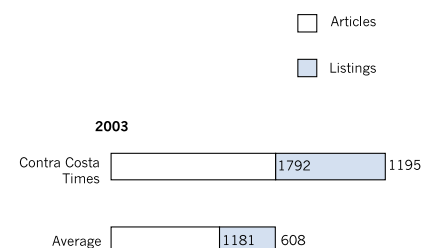
Distribution of Movie Coverage

percentage of newshole for movies assigned to articles and listings



Music Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to music articles and listings



THE CONTRA COSTA TIMES was not included in the original *Reporting the Arts* study, so we cannot measure its changes since October 1998. Yet in 2003 it was distinctive for its voluminous listings and its sparse daily arts-and-lifestyles section TimeOut, which represented just 6 percent of the newspaper's pagination. Only one of the other 17 metropolitan newspapers tracked in *Reporting the Arts II* devoted a smaller proportion of pages to its daily A&L section. The TimeOut newshole for arts-and-culture articles represented just 27 percent of the paper's total effort in arts journalism. Here, too, we found only one other metropolitan newspaper giving a smaller percentage of space to daily coverage.

By contrast, the *Times's* daily and weekend listings were both enormous. It was one of only four metropolitan newspapers whose newsholes for listings were actually greater than their space for articles. In its weekend supplements—a tabloid format of TimeOut and Sunday A&E—fully 59 percent of its space was assigned to listings. Its daily TimeOut section was even more listings-heavy, at 63 per-

cent. Its volume of weekend listings was larger than that of any other newspaper we studied, even *The New York Times*. Of all artistic disciplines, television with its daily grid routinely has more space devoted to listings than to journalism. *The Contra Costa Times's* listings were unusual in that the majority of the performing arts and visual arts newsholes were also dominated by listings.

The *Times's* story selection for articles focused heavily on music. It was one of only two newspapers to assign more than one quarter of its space for articles to that discipline. The paper also made heavy use of syndicated and newswire material, assigning only one third of its articles to staffers. On the weekends its proportion of staffer-bylined articles was lower than that of any other newspaper we monitored. It was also the only newspaper to publish more reviews by syndicated columnists than by its own staffers. TV reviewing, in particular, was almost totally absent from the paper. The *Times* was one of only two newspapers to devote less than 10 percent of its television coverage to reviews.—AT

all the area papers. When contacted for this report, *Mercury News* was likewise planning an overhaul. According to Katherine Fong, the assistant managing editor for arts and entertainment, about five years ago *Mercury News* made a decision to go from a daily features page to a daily arts-and-entertainment page. “The pendulum is now swinging back a bit; we’re still paying attention to arts and entertainment, but also broadening our concept of how people spend their leisure time,” she says. Reports Hershenson of the *Contra Costa Times*: “We’re going to make some changes in the Sunday section, make it a lot more dynamic—take the listings out and add a critic’s-pick type of feature, a ‘best of what’s out there now.’”

The ceding of traditional arts-criticism space to feature stories and “thumbs-up-or-down” service pieces doesn’t sit well with many arts-scene activists, who call the *Chronicle’s* new approach into question. “Obviously the newspaper is doing just what customers want, and my response is to create an intelligent customer base rather than to write to the lowest common denominator,” says Berkeley Rep’s Taccone. “It’s disappointing, to say the least. The focus is on personality rather than ideas, on fashion rather than cultural analysis.” Intersection for the Arts’ Deborah Cullinan notes, “It would be great if we could have more dialogue in our paper about what is really going on, rather than just rating events.” Wiegand admits that the changes have resulted in negative feedback from some arts groups. “The frustrating thing is that nothing has been lost; we haven’t cut a single story in order to accommodate feature stories,” he says. “We don’t sell tickets here—that’s not our job. My job is to get readers, and the way I get readers is to have interesting stories in the paper.” According to our research, Wiegand’s assertion about the *Chronicle’s* coverage is correct; the volume of arts and culture reporting has remained stable over the last five years.

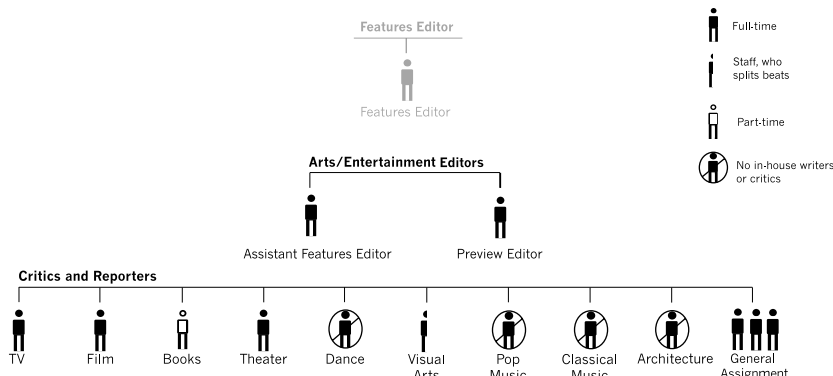
Almost every media outlet in the Bay Area has gone through significant cutbacks in staff and budgets in the same period. The *Chronicle’s* arts staff hasn’t replaced the full-time dance critic who left over a year ago, which has caused some consternation in that community. Though Wiegand says that management believes the paper as a whole to be overstaffed, the employee count in the arts section hasn’t dramatically changed since *Reporting the Arts* last looked at it in 1998. However, this stasis must be examined in light of the trend toward workforce reduction at other papers. Even though *Contra Costa*



CONTRA COSTA TIMES

Times's daily circulation has been on an upward trend—98,337 in 1998 to 186,335 in 2003—Hershenson reports that “we’ve been told to cut back our freelance budget, and we’re in a hiring freeze. It’s pretty lean times around here.” According to our research, *Contra Costa* stood out as a heavy user of syndicated and newswire copy, while *Mercury News*, which has seen its daily circulation drop from 285,848 in 1998 to 279,539 in 2003, has seen its article space shrink. Specifically, we found an extreme reduction of

In-house Arts Staff (does not include features staff, copy desk and freelancers)



The Oakland Tribune

1998-2003

Daily circulation:

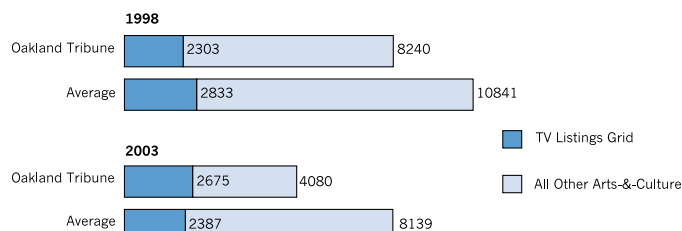
Arts-and-culture newshole:

Number of arts-and-culture articles:

In-house arts staff:

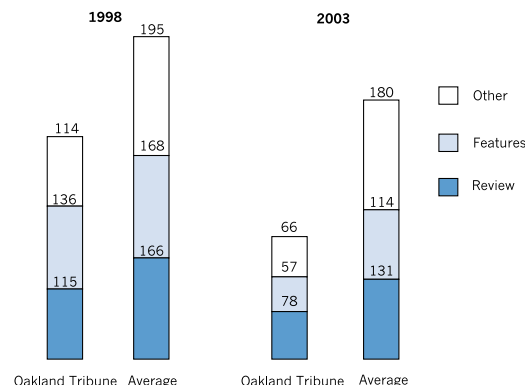
Television Listings

space (in column inches) devoted to television listings grid compared with the remainder of the overall arts-and-culture newshole



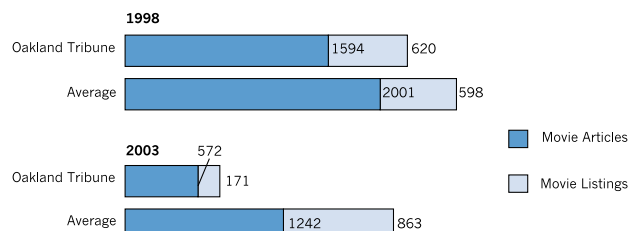
Story Count

number of arts-and-culture articles (listings excluded)



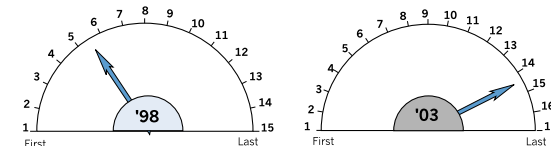
Movies Newshole

space (in column inches) devoted to movies articles and listings



Movie Journalism

ranking among all newspapers studied for percentage of arts-and-culture journalism newshole (listings excluded) devoted to movies



THE OAKLAND TRIBUNE HAS undergone massive changes since *Reporting the Arts* first took a look at the paper in 1998. At the *Tribune* the entire newspaper suffered cutbacks, though its arts and culture beat was not singled out. Its daily arts-and-lifestyles section *Living* and its weekend *Preview* combined took up 13 percent of the newspaper's pagination in October 2003, an amount barely changed from the 14 percent five years earlier when its well-paginated A&L section was called *Cue*.

Nevertheless the newshole for arts and culture articles was just half its former size. The monthly total of articles was reduced to just 201, fewer than at any newspaper we studied except for the decimated *San Francisco Examiner*. The *Tribune* was ranked low in its story count for every type of article. It was third-to-last for reviews, second-to-last for arts news, second to last for features and dead last for the number of gossip items. These statistics are somewhat exaggerated because of our failure to obtain two issues of *Preview* and one of *Living* for our study. The trend, however, is not distorted. The volume of listings has not been cut as drastically because the television grid survived intact. Taken together the paper's overall arts-and-culture newshole—

which includes both articles and listings—made it the third-lowest-ranked newspaper in our study.

Hardest hit in all these cutbacks were the movies—both in absolute terms (64 percent fewer column inches) and in relative importance. As a result, at the paper it shifted from the single most prominent arts beat to second place behind the performing arts. The *Tribune* also assigned the smallest newshole to movie journalism of all the papers we looked at. Its theater coverage, on the other hand, suffered only minor cutbacks, maintaining a story count that was barely below average.

The *Tribune* averaged only one article a day on music and registered enormous cutbacks in its coverage of the visual and decorative arts. Television articles, too, were dealt absolute cuts, but as we have noted, the daily TV grid survived unscathed amid the surrounding decline. So, stated in percentage terms, television articles and listings combined grew to represent an astonishing 45 percent of the entire arts and culture newshole. This was a larger share than at any metropolitan newspaper we studied.—AT

story length, from 17.7 column inches in 1998 to a recent 12.4 average, with a plumping up of arts and culture listings. The *Oakland Tribune*, which has the distinction of decreasing its arts coverage more than any other paper studied except *The Examiner*, has been hurt by cuts in space and manpower. "In May 2003 the paper faced layoffs, the features section lost two full-time writers, and one position was unfilled after the person left," says features editor Kari Hulac. "Space—overall it's tighter, and anecdotally the papers have been smaller." Hulac is correct. Our findings show that the *Tribune's* arts and culture newshole amounts to half of what we measured in 1998.

OTHER MEDIA IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: A CRITICAL VIEW

The Bay Area's alternative weeklies continue to stay on course as far as arts coverage is concerned, though changes in business structures mirror that of the dailies. In 2001 the Phoenix-based chain New Times bought Berkeley's *East Bay Express* to add to a portfolio that already included *SF Weekly*. In early 2004, alt-weekly stalwart *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* cut positions from an already lean staff. "The *Bay Guardian* is run like a tight ship now," says arts editor Susan Gerhard. "Our freelance budget got significantly smaller, and we do more in-house writing." Metro Newspapers, which publishes a Silicon Valley alt weekly, shed its community-newspaper division in 2002 when the parent company amicably split in two, leaving Metro with the alt-weekly arm. *Pacific Sun*, the second-oldest alt weekly in the country behind *The Village Voice*, is still busy covering the North Bay area.



THE OAKLAND TRIBUNE

Many people connected to the arts scene see the weeklies as a healthy addition to coverage in the dailies, but not a determining factor in its health. "Of the alt weeklies, the *Bay Guardian* is the strongest one for us; they've been really supportive," says Intersection for the Arts' Cullinan. "*SF Weekly* does cover us, mostly in the calendar—we often get picks." Danny Plotnick of Film Arts says he prefers *SF Weekly*. "A lot of people are blinded by the fact that *SF Weekly* is corporate-owned, but I think it's a good paper," he says. "With the *Bay Guardian*, I know what they're going to say before I even read it."

As far as broadcast goes, one bright spot is the emergence of *Spark*, a weekly arts-focused

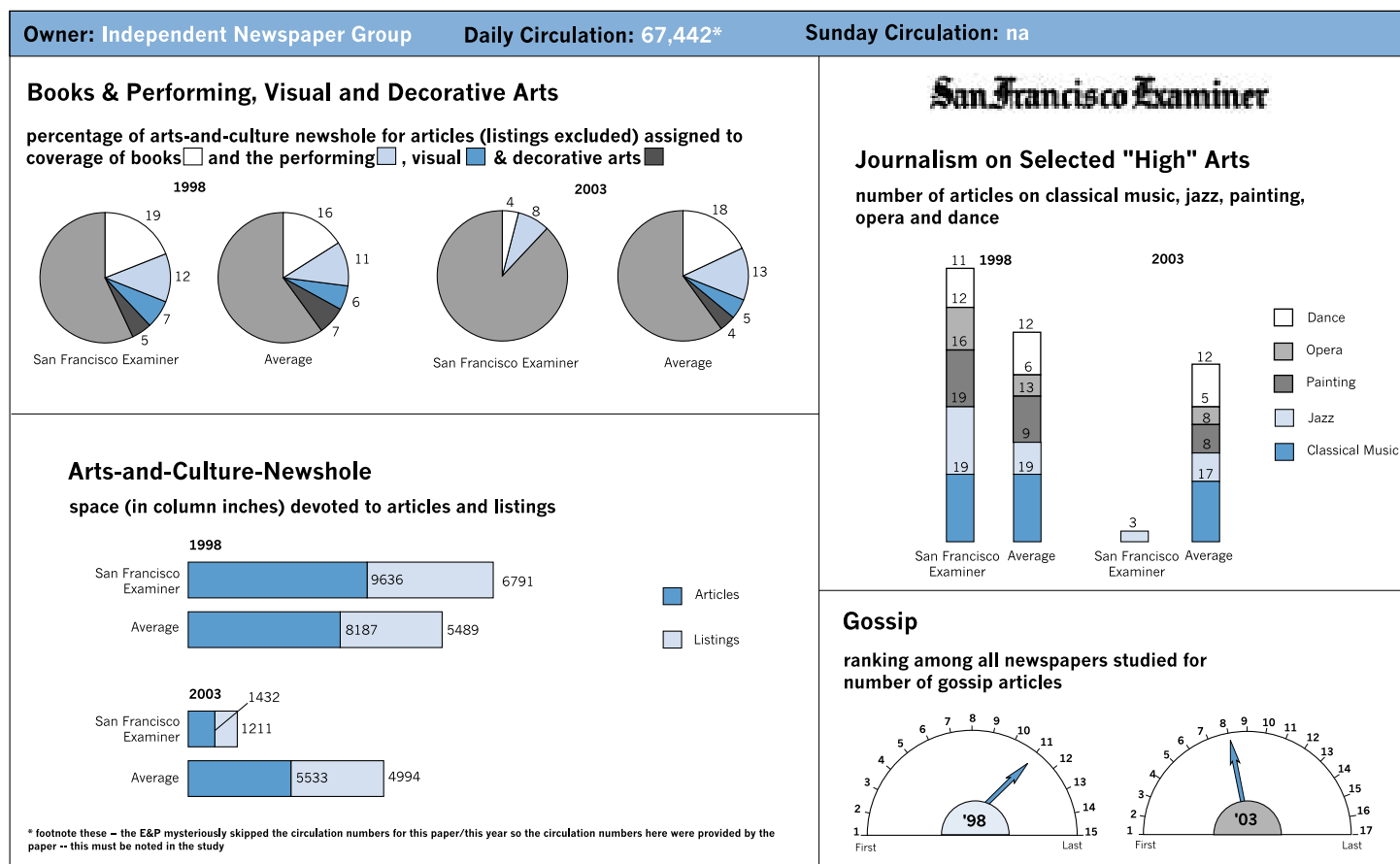
"We don't sell tickets here—that's not our job. My job is to get readers, and the way I get readers is to have interesting stories in the paper."

David Wiegand
Datebook section editor
San Francisco Chronicle

show on public television. In-depth segments on area artists have caught the attention of scene watchers. *Spark* producer Levy notes that her team is lucky in some ways. “We don’t

have the same pressures of the commercial world. We have a mission to raise interest in the arts—it’s part of our mandate,” she says. “We look at ratings, but we’re not driven by it.”

BY CARYN BROOKS



The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the objectives of the study. It then moves on to a literature review, which provides a background on the topic and identifies the gaps in the existing research. The methodology section describes the research design, data collection, and analysis. The results section presents the findings of the study, and the conclusion summarizes the main points and offers suggestions for future research.

The research was conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner, following the principles of good research practice. The data were collected from a representative sample of the population, and the analysis was carried out using appropriate statistical methods. The results of the study are presented in a clear and concise manner, and the conclusions are based on the evidence gathered.

The study has several strengths, including a well-defined research design, a large and diverse sample, and the use of advanced statistical techniques. However, there are also some limitations, such as the cross-sectional nature of the data and the potential for self-report bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the topic and contributes to the existing knowledge.

The findings of the study have important implications for practice and policy. They suggest that there is a need for further research in this area, and that the results can be used to inform decision-making and the development of interventions. The study also highlights the importance of considering individual differences and the role of context in the research.

In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the topic, and its findings are of significant value. The research was conducted in a thorough and professional manner, and the results are presented in a clear and accessible way. The study is a valuable contribution to the field and provides a solid foundation for future research.

PART III: NATIONAL MEDIA

DEFINING THEIR TURF

THE NATIONALS FINE TUNE THEIR STRATEGIES

BY NICHOLAS STEIN

At *USA Today* they call them “pop culture moments”—instances in which an artistic event moves beyond the stage and into the realm of public discourse. When pop singer Janet Jackson unexpectedly bared her breast during the Super Bowl halftime show, for example, the efficacy of her performance immediately was overshadowed by its political and cultural implications. “We were planning to cover the performance as Jackson’s attempt to revive her somewhat stagnant career,” says Dennis Moore, a deputy managing editor at *USA Today*. “But once she exposed herself, our coverage took a different turn.”

Even to casual observers of the arts scene it is clear that the focus of the arts media has shifted from serious criticism to entertainment. The media deluge that preceded the release of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* and Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, for example, devoted much attention to the religious and political points of view of the filmmakers, while largely failing to comment on the relative artistic merits of their movies.

This phenomenon can be traced, in part, to the rise of the national media. In their quest for a broad and geographically diverse audience and

advertiser base, national media outlets—many of which, from *Entertainment Weekly* to the E! channel to the Arts & Entertainment network, announce their intentions in their titles—have largely ignored the live concerts, theatrical events and exhibitions that make up the core of America’s local arts scene. For most of these outlets the arts themselves have ceased to be the story. They have become merely the backdrop—the setting in which the movements of pop-culture icons can be chronicled and in which political and economic forces collide.

The three American newspapers that can legitimately claim a national readership—*The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*—find themselves in a curious position within this cultural landscape. They belong to a medium whose participants are typically rooted in their respective communities, leaving them well-situated to cover the local arts scene. But the three newspapers also strive to reach national readers and advertisers whose interests are seldom defined in geographic terms.

In keeping with their distinct histories, missions and audiences, each of the papers has taken a different approach to bridging this cultural divide. Five years ago *Reporting the Arts* exam-

“Our cultural coverage is core to our financial health and viability.... It represents both good business and good journalism.”

Scott Heekin-Canedy
president and
general manager
The New York Times

ined the manner in which the three cover the arts. For the month of October 1998, the report catalogued how much space was devoted to arts coverage, where in the papers arts stories were likely to run, and how much emphasis was placed on the different artistic disciplines. Five years later we revisited each newspaper to examine what had changed; whether these changes were motivated by financial, rather than artistic, considerations; and how each publication had responded to the media's prevailing emphasis on entertainment news.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

ALTHOUGH THE TIMES has had a national profile for more than a century, the paper didn't launch its national edition until 1980. Even then the edition was not readily available to readers outside the New York region, and its arts section, entitled *Living Arts*, was a heavily truncated version of the local one. In the last five years the *Times* has made a major push to expand its national circulation and its appeal with national advertisers. The newspaper reconfigured its distribution channels and struck a partnership with Starbucks to make the daily available in more than 2,000 locations. It also bulked up the national edition—especially its arts section—which is now indistinguishable from the one readers get in New York. As a result the *Times's* circulation outside the greater metropolitan area has more than doubled. And nearly 90% of the paper's advertisements now run in the national edition, compared with just 34% in 1996.

The depth, breadth and sheer quantity of the *Times's* arts coverage was unparalleled five years ago and remains so today. It continues to emphasize the visual and performing arts rather than popular music, movies and TV. Of the 20 newspapers in our study, the *Times* was the clear leader in coverage of painting, photography, architecture and other visual and decorative arts. It was also the only newspaper to devote more space to the performing arts than to movies, and to file more articles on classical than contemporary music. The *Times's* overall story count remained constant compared with five years ago, with an increase in the number of articles devoted to theater and painting as well as compensating declines in dance and opera.

The paper also maintained a commitment to cultural criticism, running 400 reviews in October 2003—almost as many as five years



THE NEW YORK TIMES

earlier. Many of them used the particular performance or exhibition as a jumping-off point to investigate a significant artistic question. For example, a review of the "Drawing Now" exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art became an exploration of whether drawing skills still matter in contemporary art.

Despite its national reach and reputation, when it comes to covering the arts, the *Times* seldom strays beyond New York. "New York is the country's preeminent city in many of the arts, so a lot of what we cover locally has national importance," says Jonathan Landman, the paper's culture editor. "There may be theater companies in other cities, for example, but the heart of the American theater is Broadway."

But the *Times* has also been prone to looking through the same entertainment-centric prism

that much of the rest of the media use to view the arts. According to Landman, the paper is planning to devote more money, personnel and space to arts news. “The strongest element at the paper for generations has been its criticism,” he says. “But what is less strong is the news reporting. . . . The paper has worked hard to keep its news coverage as energetic as possible. Now it’s time to make sure the arts coverage meets the same standard.”

On the business side the *Times’s* arts coverage continues to generate significant profits for the newspaper. Though President and General Manager Scott Heekin-Canedy declines to break out the numbers of the paper’s individual sections, he notes that the *Times’s* arts coverage remains crucial to its success. “Our cultural coverage is core to our financial health and viability,” he says. “In addition to being jam-packed with advertising, it is an integral part of our reader franchise. It represents both good business and good journalism.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

THE JOURNAL HAS EVOLVED substantially from its origins as the weekday bible for the business reader into a publication that devotes serious attention to other subjects, including the arts. A significant part of this evolution has occurred since 1998 with the introduction of two new sections devoted entirely to arts, lifestyle and features: the Friday arts and culture section, Weekend Journal and the three-times-weekly Personal Journal. A comparison of the paper’s arts coverage in 1998 and 2003, however, found that in spite of these changes, the volume of arts and culture coverage actually declined.

When it chooses to cover the arts, the *Journal* tends to focus on a few areas of interest to its affluent, educated readership: books, architecture and the decorative arts. Within these areas the paper’s coverage is deep, and its articles run an average of 18 column inches, longer than anyone else, including the *Times*. Issues from October 2003 included reviews of off-Broadway plays, new recordings from Elvis Costello, Joan Baez and Nathalie Merchant; a survey of major art exhibits at galleries across the country; and an architecture review of Frank Gehry’s new Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, which compared the long and arduous approval and construction process to the contentious, 20-year effort to construct Jörn Utzon’s famed opera house in Sydney, Australia.

Most of the *Journal’s* arts-related advertising falls within the same subject areas, especially book publishing and the decorative arts. “The major auction houses, Sotheby’s and Christie’s, run the most advertising with us, and we target them heavily,” says Rochelle Cohen, an advertising sales rep for Weekend Journal. “Book publishing is also very much on the upswing. One of the areas in which we have really seen growth is that of consumer books, which is very much tied to the success of Weekend Journal and Personal Journal. Cohen says the growth in arts-related advertising has helped to offset declines in the *Journal’s* two biggest categories, financial services and technology.

Although it publishes a significant number of



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

reviews, the *Journal's* arts coverage is weighted most heavily toward news. "Our coverage is driven to some degree by events," says News Editor Alexandra Peers, who oversees much of the paper's arts reporting. "Now, with e-mail, we get the same amount of hype and publicity behind a must-see event and an absolutely missable piece of nonsense. Our reporters are charged with telling us things we haven't heard anything about. Every 85-year-old art critic thinks he knows what's going on in SoHo. But SoHo may not be the place where things are going on."

As a business publication the *Journal* also devotes attention to the financial aspect of the arts, a side Peers feels is often missed by other media. "You can't cover museums without dollar signs," she says. "How could the media cover the Guggenheim for 15 years without asking where they got the money to pay for everything? All arts coverage could use a bit more knowledge of the bottom line."

USA TODAY

FROM ITS INCEPTION IN 1982, *USA Today* was conceived as a newspaper for a national audience. By targeting the emerging business traveler through a novel distribution system in hotels and airports, *USA Today* has become the most widely distributed paper in the country, with a weekday circulation of 2.3 million. By comparison *The New York Times's* daily circulation is 1.1 million and 1.7 million on Sunday, and *The Wall Street Journal's* is 1.8 million. As a result, *USA Today's* arts coverage is geared to a national audience. "There has to be a national interest to a local story," says Moore, citing an article from Christmas 2003 about how communities across the country adapted productions of *The Nutcracker* ballet.

Like other national media, *USA Today's* arts coverage focuses chiefly on popular culture, in particular television and movies. For the month of October 2003, 48 percent of *USA Today's* arts and culture articles and listings was assigned to TV and 35 percent to movies. It published just two articles on classical music, two on jazz and three on the visual arts. "We concentrate on mainstream popular culture, primarily movies, TV and music, with a healthy dose of celebrity," says Moore. "The expertise and strength of our reporters and critics lie in the pop realm."

USA Today tends to treat the arts as news stories. The paper was one of only four in our



USA TODAY

study to run more news articles than reviews. In October 2003, for example, *USA Today* ran a feature about how midsize cities such as Cincinnati and Pittsburgh were mounting art and music festivals to attract young professionals; and a profile of Australian actress Cate Blanchett that explores why she hasn't achieved the fame of fellow countrywomen Nicole Kidman and Naomi Watts.

The paper's national focus has resulted in a dearth of arts-related advertising, which tends to be geared toward regional and local audiences. "We don't do very much with the arts," says vice

president of advertising sales Johanna deBonte. "We haven't spent much time trying to develop the arts category because we don't have the editorial [content]," says deBonte. "Most of the advertising dollars go to newspapers that offer geographic, not demographic, coverage."

MOVING FORWARD

SO WHAT CAN WE expect in 2008? From *USA Today*, probably more of the same. In the last five years the paper has changed little about the volume or pop-culture focus of its arts coverage and is unlikely to do so in the future. At *The Wall Street Journal* the subtle attempts to broaden the paper's subject matter and its audience that began with the introduction of Weekend Journal and Personal Journal are likely to intensify. "Our art market coverage used to be geared toward the guy who could write a \$100 million check for a

Picasso," says Peers. "Now we are writing for the frequent flyer who feels that if his IPO goes his way, he may someday be able to buy a Picasso." While it is likely that *The New York Times* will continue to devote more space and resources to serious criticism of the arts than any other newspaper, the paper is clearly moving toward an emphasis on entertainment news long in evidence at *USA Today*. "In recent years we have had a strong cluster of media reporters occupying the gray world between culture and business," says Landman. "We will ask some of these people to readjust their coverage a little bit, and in addition plan to add more people." The editor of the *Times's* Sunday Arts & Leisure section, Jodi Kantor, says the future mandate for the *Times's* arts coverage is simple: "It will be more exciting, more journalistic and more reader-friendly." It remains to be seen whether this strategy will help the paper's quest to attract readers outside New York.

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All arts
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the bottom line."*

Alexandra Peers
news editor

The Wall Street Journal

ALTERNATIVE WEEKLIES ENTER THE MAINSTREAM

BY CARYN BROOKS

THE WORD “ALTERNATIVE,” as in “alternative weekly,” seems empty these days. Even someone like Richard Karpel—who, as executive director of the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies (AAN), has the term stamped on his business card—says it’s just a tag of convenience. “At the time that we took that name on, there weren’t a lot of alternatives—we were the alternative. The problem is that now we’re just one of many alternatives,” he says.

Media overpopulation is perhaps the most feared stalker of alt weeklies—especially when it comes to arts coverage, the lifeblood of an alt-weekly franchise. And this isn’t just paranoia. They are coming for you, alt-weekly owners. For real. They are coming for your advertising dollars, your young readers, your look and your *je ne sais quoi*. The plunderers consist of a loose cabal of daily-newspaper companies that tinker in basement labs, concocting a range of products designed to sponge up alt-weekly ad revenues, which grew from \$174 million to \$501 million in 10 years. They are Web site commandos and blog buccaneers, who are taking advantage of new technology as a cheap way of speedballing information and attitude, while alt-weeklies dodder from tree to pulp to printer. They are the increas-

ing number of cable channels and video-on-demand features that drain precious leisure-time attention. And these are just a few of the bogeymen haunting the alt-weekly world at present. The question is, will the alts survive? “This is a great time to be begging the question,” says David Carr, who covers the magazine beat for *The New York Times* and was a longtime alt-weekly editor. “Critical information about film and music that have a national footprint is widely available. Having a lippy, fun music-and-movie critic won’t get you there like it used to.”

While doomsday prophesizing about alt-weeklies seems to be at an all-time high, there have always been questions as to the publications’ stability. In the 1980s, daily newspapers realized that the tabloid format—with arts previews and listings in one dynamic, easy-to-flip-through section—appealed to readers and advertisers alike, and started producing weekend pullout tabs that nicked the alt-weekly formula. While this kind of colonization may have had some benefits for daily papers, the pullouts never succeeded in stealing the true alt-weekly audience. “The daily entertainment tabs are butt-ugly. Carry that under your arm and you’re saying, ‘I’m a dork,’” notes Carr. “Most of these tabs are dreadful. It’s meant to cre-

ate clutter and it doesn't go toward the core competency of daily newspapers."

Since the weekend tabs haven't really done their job in sopping up alt-weekly dollars or readers, some daily newspapers have decided to be more blunt about their intentions. In recent years, three new formats that attempt to edge in on alt-weekly turf have hit the market: the commuter dailies, the "faux alts" and the youth dailies. A commuter daily, such as *The Washington Post's* weekday *Express*, offers cocktail-weenie-sized versions of stories appearing in the parent paper and is offered free at mass-transit stops and college campuses. Faux alts are papers placed in smaller markets by a parent company such as Gannett with the sole purpose of mimicking the look and feel of alt weeklies. In Louisville, Ky., Gannett publishes *The Courier-Journal* and in 2003 launched a faux-alt weekly called *Velocity*. AAN's Karpel says this type of paper shouldn't take a bite out of alt-weekly business. "If they're reaching young people, they're reaching dumb young people that we don't want anyway," he says. As Cary Stemle, editor of the *Louisville Eccentric Observer*, describes his competition, "*Velocity* has an editorial staff of 10 or 11, compared to our 5. And they focus only on lifestyle things—music, drunken parties, etc.—where we are doing news, commentary, politics, larger feature stories and A&E." Youth dailies—such as Chicago's *Red Eye*, put out by the *Chicago Tribune*, and *Red Streak*, offered by rival *Chicago Sun-Times*—cost a quarter. Says Karpel of this approach: "They're trying to reach people who don't read and, well, people who don't read, don't read."

It seems the official position is that these clones are annoyances more than long-term threats, but it's hard to tell if that's just bluster. While the alt-weekly market has grown, one has to wonder about the predatory instincts of corporate giants like Gannett and the Tribune Company, which have set their sights on the scattered segment of the market that generates a mere \$500 million. Is it money they're after? Market dominance? Or the media version of betting on futures?

If you ask Karpel to name the major challenges in the alt-weekly world right now, daily-newspaper encroachment doesn't even hit the top four. Karpel is a big-picture guy. He'll tell you that the Web is a real danger zone for the alt-weekly infrastructure, noting, "Many of our papers tend to extend the print metaphor onto the Web, and it doesn't always work." He'll tell you that extending readership to a younger audience is an issue: "If

the average age of the readers keeps getting older, well, eventually those people die." He'll tell you that creating niche media with new technology is problematic. As he explains, "If you want to reach black lesbians between the ages of 30 and 40, there's probably a Web site just for that; from a marketing standpoint, it's hard." About the increasing consolidation of alt-weekly ownership, he'll tell you, "it's not necessarily a bad thing—sometimes it means employees will get health insurance—but it certainly poses challenges when it comes to the idiosyncratic sensibility of papers and the multiplicity of voices."

The consolidation issue is one that media watchers have kept close tabs on. Some feel that large newspaper portfolios being built by a few companies is anathema to the independent alt-weekly spirit. This seemed to be proved in 2002, when two of the industry's biggest players—Village Voice Media and New Times Media—made backroom agreements to shutter competing papers in Los Angeles and Cleveland. The Department of Justice got wind of the plan, forced a deal that fined the two companies, and made them sell the defunct papers to new owners.

What's interesting is that while Karpel brings up larger themes—as does Carr—many journalists in the trenches don't touch on them much at all. The issues that working editors focus on are the eternal ones: small staffs and budgets, constricting page counts, green freelancers, the looming dailies and other alt weeklies encroaching on their markets (see sidebar).

Editors are smart enough to know that alt weeklies' real appeal has always been, and most likely always will be, owning the local scene, especially when it comes to arts coverage. Thus what goes on in the region that's simply referred to as "the back of the book"—a cozy nook housing previews, reviews, columns, listings, think pieces and more than its share of 1-900 ads—is susceptible to many circular debates.

Because the back of the book serves a variety of purposes, arts coverage often loses focus. While the front-of-the-book mandate is frequently chiseled in granite—to deliver well-reported, hard-hitting, independent journalism that covers the institutions and people that power the city—a back-of-the-book assignment often seems written on blackboards. Is the main job of these arts-and-culture sections to provide readers with a quick guide on what to do this weekend? Is its fundamental role to set the cultural agenda for the city? Is its responsibility solely to the reader or to the upkeep of the arts as an institution? Often, arts

sections are home to dueling ambitions and, as such, internal debates more often than not get tangled up in the mundane: how to get accurate movie times from theaters, how to set up music listings so they're the most user-friendly, how to select events for a picks page.

At the same time, within the paper as a whole are the turf battles between the front and the back of the book. While the arts-and-culture ads are the cash cow, alternative newsweeklies generally place muckraking first. As page-counts drop, there can be an uncomfortable tug-of-war between competing departments.

And what about the arts-news exposé? Alternative newsweeklies generally operate close to the bone. Staffing is tight. The guy they've hired as a freelancer to write about theater may be a great reviewer, but his interest and experience in hard news is limited at best. The star staff investigative reporter, who can deconstruct a financial report with the finesse of chef Mario

Batali throwing pizza dough, thinks writing about arts institutions is a demotion from city hall and ignores it. Plus, the arts scenes that alt-weeklies cover are often insular and the writers young and active. It's not unusual for a music editor to play in a band, date someone else in another band and share an apartment with the town's rock-club owner. This kind of coziness often inspires passionate writing but at the same time prevents the kind of watchdog qualities we hope for in the fourth estate.

With insiders blogging away on the often-amusing but equally often mundane, it seems that the best strategy for alt-weeklies would be to stake their claim on the arts territory they helped build, the one that isn't easily transferable—informed, impassioned, independent arts coverage that seeks not only to comment on the local scene but to affect it as well. Basically it all comes down to old-fashioned reporting. The end may be near, but then again, isn't it always?

VOICES FROM THE ALTERNATIVE FIELD

CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES

"It's difficult to find talented writers interested in, say, the local theater scene who aren't somehow in bed with the local theater scene, much less who can and will stick with it long enough to get sourced in and develop really good stories."

Lee Gardner, *Baltimore City Paper*

"Because our competition brings Gannett's muscle to the table, they can focus on whatever they choose and have a staffer cover it."

Cary Stemle, *Louisville Eccentric Observer*

"As editor of a weekly, I deal with the eternal pull of what to do for weekend events that might deserve reviews (dance, classical), but are impossible to review in a timely way. Lord knows, I've tried a variety of approaches, but it always felt like I was setting up a special "gifted and talented" section."

Patricia Calhoun, *Westword*

"Perhaps too many of our free-lancers are enamored with white boys with guitars, and not as comfortable touching jazz, hip hop etc."

Cary Stemle, *Louisville Eccentric Observer*

DAILIES VS. ALT-WEEKLIES

"We try to—and often do—beat the daily at finding emerging artists."

Ken Edelstein, *Atlanta Creative Loafing*

"The arts supplement put out by the daily consists almost solely of positive previews, soft-ball interviews and non-opinion-derived listings."

Julia Goldberg, *Santa Fe Reporter*

OWNERSHIP ISSUES

"Being part of a chain has given us access to some shared arts copy—movies, music—freeing up cash and writers to do more coverage of other local arts, including local music."

Patricia Calhoun, *Westword*

"I can say with some assurance that the politics, views, interests, and tastes of *City Paper* don't jive with the politics, views, interests, and tastes of the owners, but they are smart enough to know that's not the point. As long as the paper makes money and runs smoothly, they know better than to interfere."

Lee Gardner, *Baltimore City Paper*

NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

CHANGES TO A TRUSTED FRIEND ON THE DIAL

BY GAL BECKERMAN

To many of its 22 million listeners, National Public Radio is the very definition of “comfort zone”—the familiar voice calmly conveying the morning news, the music review on the drive home from work, the Sunday-morning feature playing in the background as bagels are schmeared. For devotees, the idea that NPR might be changing is stomach-turning proof that one more beloved institution is bound for ruination. But changing it is, and nowhere was the tension between NPR and its listeners more evident than in the recent ouster of Bob Edwards, the longtime host of its flagship show, *Morning Edition*. More than 35,000 e-mails flooded in protesting the decision. But NPR stood firm. This was a “natural evolution,” declared the press releases, a response to “changing needs.” Listeners beware, it seemed to say; this is only the beginning.

Change at NPR is coming for two reasons. First, the listener base has doubled over the past five years, and programming has to transform to fit this larger, more diverse audience. But the more immediate reason is the \$235 million endowment bestowed on NPR last year by the late Joan B. Kroc, widow of Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald’s. According to the *Los*

Angeles Times, it is the largest gift ever made to a journalistic or cultural institution. Perpetually plagued with financial burdens, NPR suddenly has the chance to “be aspirational,” says Jay Kernis, NPR’s vice president for programming and a National Arts Journalism Program board member.

What will this mean for arts coverage? Since NPR is one of the few sources of intelligent reporting on books, films and music, many listeners are happy with the NPR they know and love. To them, “aspirational” may therefore sound like a move towards the dumbed-down and the bland. But the nature of the change is, in fact, much more nuanced and hard to qualify quite yet as positive or negative.

In order to look at NPR’s arts coverage, it’s first crucial to understand what NPR is. The name is often used as an umbrella term to describe the 679 stations or signals that call themselves members. But the stations are totally autonomous, deciding on their own what programs they will run. NPR simply produces shows and these stations decide whether to air them. The flagship shows—*Morning Edition*, *Weekend Edition* and *All Things Considered*—are played on most stations, but members are not obliged to

*“Suddenly
someone says,
‘I’m going to
give you a
little cushion
so maybe you
can stop for
a second
and think.’”*

Jay Kernis
vice president
for programming
NPR

carry even a minimum amount of NPR programming. What you end up hearing when you turn on your local public radio station is a cocktail of NPR offerings, locally produced shows and programs put together by a number of other companies, such as Public Radio International, the creator of *This American Life*.

Arts coverage on NPR comes from two places. Some segments are created by show hosts, often middle-aged and white, with their own idiosyncratic tastes. “Think Eric Clapton and Diane Keaton,” says one NPR producer. The more diverse and ambitious coverage tends to come from the arts desk. NPR’s was reconstituted a year and a half ago when assistant managing editor and seasoned journalist Bill Wyman was put in charge with the idea of making the reporting harder, sharper and more enterprising.

NPR staffers were weary of a certain type of arts story that was overwhelming all others, one they dubbed the “there’s a guy who . . .” story. In a recent memo Wyman sent to staffers and freelancers, he went some way towards characterizing this pervasive genre: “There’s a guy who made a movie. There’s a woman who wrote a play. There are these guys who formed a dance company,” Wyman wrote. “This being NPR, the variations on this theme were crushingly predictable. There’s an African-American guy who wrote a book of poetry. There’s a disabled Native-American who wrote a play.”

Wyman says these “time-honored clichéd stories” were dominating the air. He thought they were predictable, lazy and stale; he and Kernis described them as having no real story to them, no compelling characters or eye-opening discoveries. They also lacked what Kernis calls “not enough driveway moments”—a story so intriguing you can’t leave your car.

Besides Wyman, NPR also hired two new reporters last year: Kim Masters, covering the film industry from Los Angeles, and Neda Ulaby, who focuses on investigative pieces. Wyman and Kernis both say they are determined to do “hard” arts stories; in a sense, the arts desk would be an extension of the news division.

By Kernis’ account, they are halfway there. A look at a typical month’s worth of stories generated by the arts desk in February 2004 shows that there is certainly a new direction. “Halfway there,” though, might be a bit too generous. Forty-five stories were produced that month, airing on either Morning Edition, Weekend Edition, Day to Day or All Things Considered. Twenty dealt with film; thirteen were on music; four had to do with books; and theater, televi-

sion, visual arts and architecture got only one or two stories each. Apart from these genre-specific categories, three stories looked at general media issues: One was a profile of the media company Comcast, another examined patent law and a third considered the FCC and the drive towards media consolidation.

Of the film pieces, five were reviews. Six of the film-related stories were tied to movie releases such as the NC-17 rating for *The Dreamers*, a racy new film by Bernardo Bertolucci; *Osama*, the first film to be made in post-Taliban Afghanistan; and the marketing of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*. Between the reviews, the features, and the four pieces on the Oscars, there was still a tendency to follow the lead of the PR gods. But there were also a few stories that broke this mold. Ulaby created a segment on the decline of the blockbuster, while Masters contributed two pieces on Michael Eisner and the troubles inside Disney.

The other big category, music, had a similar ratio. A little more than half the stories were light profiles—one about guitarist Sam Miltich, another on Jenny Toomey, a rocker turned activist. And then there were a few enterprising pieces, like the skeptical analysis of the business of the Grammys and a look at rock-concert safety a year after the deadly Station club fire in West Warwick, R.I. The rest of the sections were all pretty much made up of “there’s a guy who . . .” stories such as an architecture piece on the man reconstructing Montpelier, President James Madison’s home, and a profile of playwright August Wilson.

Wyman and Kernis acknowledge that there is a long way to go if they want to change the nature of NPR arts stories. The kind of enterprising pieces they desire take more time to report and are more expensive to fund. Although the Kroc money might help solve these problems, it isn’t clear that any of it has been earmarked specifically for arts coverage.

The bulk of the money, \$200 million, will be used for long-term growth. The remaining \$35 million will pay immediate operating expenses and fund an ambitious three-year plan to expand the newsroom by 45 reporters and other staffers. The good news for those advocating “harder” arts coverage is that NPR has recently hired William Marimow, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter from the *Baltimore Sun* and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, to help run the news operations. Marimow is intensely focused on bringing an investigative edge to all coverage, including culture. The bad news is that aside from a new

“It’s not just covering the arts from a news standpoint that you need. It’s also celebrating the arts.”

Tony Dec
adjunct professor
Columbia University’s
Graduate School of
Journalism

media beat—part of nine new beats including workplace, police and prisons, international economics and West Africa—Wyman and Kernis say there are no plans to use the money to hire new reporters or critics for the arts desk.

As could be expected, the changes haven't pleased everyone. Not just the decision to leave the arts desk out of the Kroc bonanza, but also the idea of sacrificing cultural coverage to the imperative for hard, breaking news. Critics seem content with the status quo and just want more of it. "Here's the junk-food queen leaving her money to the news junkies at NPR," says Tony Dec, onetime cultural programming director at Long Island Public Radio Network and currently an adjunct professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. "It's not just covering the arts from a news standpoint that you need. It's also celebrating the arts, letting listeners know, 'This is what's going on, listen to this.'"

The other main source of unhappiness is the almost complete lack of full-throated, diverse criticism, of regular voices cutting through the

immense cultural output of American society. There are a handful of guest critics who appear on the shows, but only one full-time reviewer, Bob Mondello on film. Wyman sees this need as well: "One thing we have not done yet but we are looking at now is how to do criticism with an eye towards developing really strong voices who are fun to listen to just to hear what they say."

An institution like NPR enjoys the love and devotion of its audience. But this can be both a blessing and a curse. For NPR, change might mean losing the very qualities that make it so adored. Should it cover the arts more aggressively or run tried-and-true profiles? Harsher critiques of film and music or reviews that simply point out what's good? More or less architecture or theater? For now, NPR is just happy, for the first time in its history, to have the money to develop a long-term, comprehensive vision rather than simply reacting to financial constraints. As Kernis puts it, "Suddenly someone says, 'I'm going to give you a little cushion so maybe you can stop for a second and think.'"

REVIEWS AT A CLICK OF A MOUSE

ONLINE COVERAGE COMES OF AGE

BY BILL GOLDSTEIN

In October 1998, the future of Web coverage of the arts seemed limitless. The city of the Internet age, as laid out by such sites as Microsoft's Sidewalk.com and CitySearch.com, was a cultural candy store of what to do and see, where to go, shop or eat. Among the first Web sites to break through to mainstream consciousness was Amazon.com—a bookstore, of all things. People on the Web were readers, likely theatergoers, and maybe they'd even buy art. Remember Art.com?

Looking back from 2004, it is almost surreal to view the time of the Internet boom. But for newspapers it was a whole new era. Traditionally, alternative weeklies like *Chicago Reader* and *The Village Voice* held the listings franchise, culling the necessary information on movies, theater, musical events and other happenings. With the creation of the Web, the press realized they could build sites with no limitations on space. Publications like *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News* and others thus eagerly set out to expand their arts coverage to include more comprehensive listings than they could offer in print.

The Web could take the Friday or weekend sections, expand them indefinitely, and create

one-click entry points to a universe of comprehensive content devoted to books, theater, dance, classical music, jazz and museums. "It seemed essential, if you aspired to be a regional Web site, to have complete listings," says Jeanne Carstensen, a member of the NAJP advisory board and senior arts and culture editor of SFGate.com, the Web site of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "It made so much sense to serve up listings on the Internet—and there might be profits down the road."

Businesses like Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com also paid millions of dollars in fees to sites belonging to AOL, CNN, the *Times* and Time Warner in order to become their exclusive cyber booksellers. The driving force behind these lucrative contracts—which for a time turned the arts sections of many sites into reliable sources of revenue—was the idea that the Web audience would buy books, and by extension, movie tickets and other products after reading reviews and other coverage. And why not? Early Web audiences seemed both highly educated and rich. What better way than the arts to fulfill the lifestyle choices of a readership hungry for everything?

Yet the lesson of the last five years is that,

"We wasted years, years. Listings is still a work in progress—they seem incredibly important but ironically, in the age of the database, most newspapers are not doing them well."

Jeanne Carstensen
senior arts and culture
editor
SFGate.com

overall, the Web audience is no more culturally savvy than the public at large. It is also just as interested—or not—in the arts. “We wasted years, years,” says Carstensen. “Listings is still a work in progress—they seem incredibly important but ironically, in the age of the database, most newspapers are not doing them well.”

Editorial budgets at the Web editions of newspapers are, perhaps necessarily, more focused on the national and international desks. “Breaking” arts news continues to be an elusive commodity in print or on the Web. Many publishers also find that most advertisers want news and sports over culture. Because of these hard-learned realities, spending for online arts coverage is today more closely tied to the advertising revenue it generates. Arts have therefore returned to their traditional place—the icing on the cake, not the editorial engine.

The breadth of arts content available in the late 1990s is now gone from many sites. Even so, some areas do work. Movie advertising is a particular strength at the *Times* online, the number one newspaper site. It redesigned this section in 2003 to accommodate larger advertising spots as well as added critics’ picks and archived movie and user reviews, and drew 1,088,000 unique users in the U.S. in June 2004, according to Nielsen/NetRatings, which measures domestic U.S. traffic. Its competitors are not other newspaper sites, per se, but portals like Yahoo, where ads are less expensive and the audience is larger. In June 2004, the movie section of Yahoo drew 8,647,000 unique domestic users, nearly as many as the 9,027,000 who came to the *Times* site itself. The difference in page views is even more vast—127,163,000 for Yahoo movies; 4,052,000 for the movie area of *Nytimes.com*.

Arts journalism is further hamstrung by a structural flaw in the relationship between many sites and their newspaper parents. Sites were set up quickly in the mid-1990s with separate staffs, often hired more for tech saviness than journalism experience. Though today the papers and their online editions clearly sink or swim together from a financial point of view, the editorial separation and inequality in staff experience leaves most sites in the position of stepchild: Part of the family, yet not quite fully integrated. They are, as it were, at the back of the bus in the back of the book.

This is not to say that the sites do not do important work in bringing information to readers. At the *Tribune*, the *Times* and other sites, some reviews are first published there or posted only on the Web when space is tight. In that

THE MOST WIDELY FREQUENTED WEB SITES

BRAND OR CHANNEL	UNIQUE AUDIENCE thousands
All Current Events & Global News	72474
CNN	22405
Yahoo! News	20966
MSNBC	20601
AOL News & Weather	11733
Gannett Newspapers and Newspaper Division	10423
NYTimes.com	9337
Internet Broadcasting Systems Inc.	9330
Knight Ridder Digital~	8638
Tribune Newspapers	7845
USATODAY.com	7374
Google News	6325
Hearst Newspapers Digital	5882
washingtonpost.com	5796
ABCNEWS Digital	5753
Associated Press	5730

sense, the online editions are only minimally different from print, and reflect rather than extend the journalistic mission of the papers that gave rise to them.

Although in these ways the Internet has not lived up to the expectations of its pioneers, it has thrown into relief a paramount challenge for newspapers, which historically have used critics’ and reporters’ expertise as a filter to guide and educate readers. As message boards, listservs and blogs have demonstrated, people don’t need supposedly authoritative voices for either listings or reviews. The simple availability of user critiques may account for some of their popularity, and as *Reporting the Arts II* documents, the print space allotted to reviews continues to shrink. But the shift in editorial attention at many newspapers may reflect the growing number of review choices, even as it creates new difficulties as well as opportunities for the journalism profession. The number of people going to Yahoo instead of newspapers for news and information—as suggested by the size of the audience for Yahoo movies—is a stark and frightening problem for newspapers on the Web and in print.

Arts organizations face new challenges as well—including, as this report notes, the difficulty of getting print and/or online coverage. Fortunately the Web offers new ways to get the message out, including the ability to bypass

newspapers. It gives those that can afford a significant online presence the tools to e-mail customers, fund-raise, sell tickets or even stream performances to a wider audience.

New York's Metropolitan Opera, which first launched a site in 1996, is a case in point. At press time, the Met was planning on opening a new site by late summer or early fall 2004. Its aim is to improve its online-ticketing capabilities, do Web broadcasts, and possibly, at a future date, distribute archival performances "both as a revenue stream and as a way of getting the Met's name out there," says Stuart Pearce, assistant manager in charge of planning and marketing. The new site will function as a source of "audi-

ence development, even if it does not mean attending a performance here." As Suzanne Gooch, the Met's director of presentations, notes, the site "is our way of getting to a new audience. That's our long-term concern. I grew up in New Jersey when there was an emphasis on musical education in public schools. A lot of performing-arts organizations are striving to replace that."

Many small groups may not see themselves in the same boat as the Met. But in spite of differences in size and reputation, the challenges are similar. What public schools—and arts journalism—fail to offer today, the Met and other organizations must provide tomorrow. The Web may be the medium in which to try.

*As message
boards,
listservs and
blogs have
demonstrated,
people don't
need supposedly
authoritative
voices for either
listings or
reviews.*

CULTURE ON TELEVISION

CELEBRITY MUSCLES IN

BY ANDREW TYNDALL

Popular fascination with celebrity grows from strength to strength. And since many celebrities climb to fame through show business, it is appropriate, and inevitable, that reporting about arts and culture should ride on the coattails of celebrity culture. Television journalism about the arts—specifically mass entertainment—has joined in this groundswell over the last five years. However, TV’s increase in arts coverage was not evenly distributed throughout the broadcast day. Nor did it provide airtime to all kinds of cultural activity.

Since 1998 the morning shows—NBC’s *Today*, ABC’s *Good Morning America*, and CBS’s addition *The Early Show*—have doubled the volume of their A&C segments. At the same time, coverage in prime-time magazine programs has gone from negligible to noticeable. However, on the hard-news-oriented evening newscasts—ABC’s *World News Tonight*, the CBS *Evening News* and NBC’s *Nightly News*—A&C continued to be a minor beat.

For *Reporting the Arts II* we have expanded our analysis of TV coverage to include the syndicated tabloid news shows that immediately follow the nightly news programs. If *Entertainment Tonight*, *Extra* or *Access Hollywood* are consid-

ered, as it were, the second half of an hourlong evening news block that starts with serious national and international news, then there can be no doubt that TV viewers receive ample entertainment coverage in the early evening as well as at breakfast time. However the “entertainment” and the “Hollywood” in their names were somewhat misleading: More than 40 percent of their content concerned celebrity news, gossip and scandal unrelated to any specific show-business production.

We have further broadened this study by adding CBS’s idiosyncratic 90-minute *Sunday Morning* magazine show. It devoted almost half its editorial content to arts-related topics. With its unflagging commitment to so-called high arts, *Sunday Morning* was unlike any other TV news show, and something of a lone television champion of the arts outside the realm of show business. Unlike the weekly morning programs, in October 2003 it paid only passing attention to movies, television and popular music. Instead we saw features on such topics as art photography coffee-table books, artisanal master woodworkers and the novel that inspired Clint Eastwood’s newly released *Mystic River*, not the movie itself.

For this study we did not include TV journal-

ism on cable or on public broadcasting, so PBS, CNN, FOX (broadcast or cable) and MSNBC are not represented.

CELEBRITY CULTURE

The evening news programs contained minimal arts coverage. In October 1998 the three news-oriented evening shows devoted a mere 11 minutes out of a combined newshole of some 20 hours to covering arts-related stories. Five years later the coverage was a similarly paltry 18 total minutes—that's six minutes, on average, per month for each evening news show. Only two events merited serious attention: the much anticipated opening of Frank Gehry's Disney Hall in Los Angeles (which was also featured on CBS's *Sunday Morning*) and the maiming of *Siegfried & Roy*'s Roy Horn by his own tiger in Las Vegas.

Elsewhere celebrity was the rule in attracting coverage. But celebrities are not quite identical with mass entertainers and celebrity culture is not precisely the same thing as show business. In October 2003 we found numerous examples of coverage of show-business stars who were newsworthy for their non-showbiz activities—the most notable was Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was elected governor of California. We also came across non-showbiz personalities suspected of scandalous behavior that qualified them for the sort of treatment usually reserved for their entertainment-industry brethren. The early evening entertainment tabloids reported heavily on the pretrial wrangling in the rape prosecution of Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant. They also searched for a celebrity angle in non-show-business stories. When wildfires raged in Southern California, segments were devoted to which movie sets or star residences might be threatened.

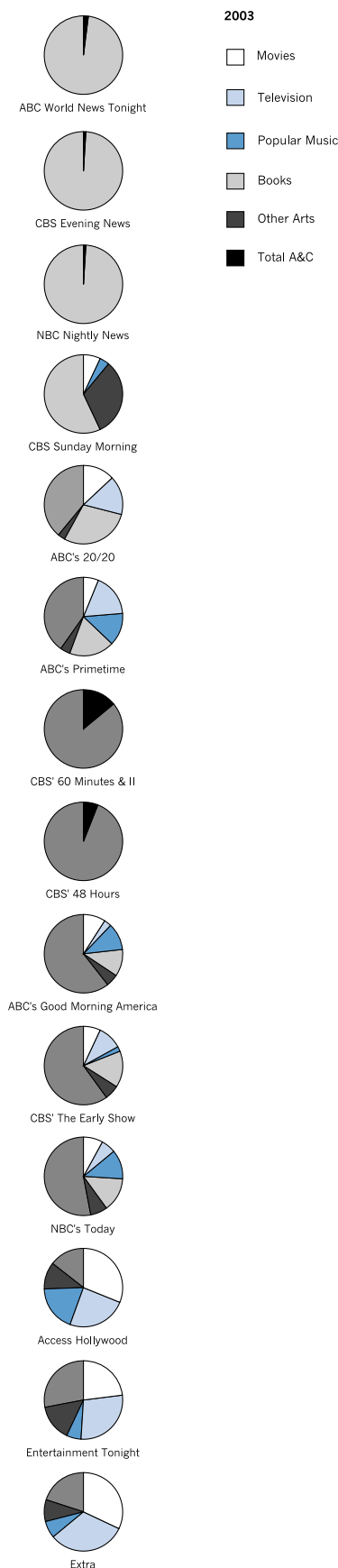
FOR THE TABLOIDS, IT'S ALL IN THE PACKAGING

Not that the tabloids strayed too far from their roots as buzz machines. Fully one-third of their content did consist of showcasing new movie releases, TV shows and the latest pop-music videos. There were some variances in emphasis. *Extra* spent more time on promotion. *Access Hollywood* focused more on gossip. *Entertainment Tonight* contained more coverage on nonarts media, including magazine journalism and advertising.

The journalistic style of the programs underscored their origins in the mass entertainment industry. Unlike the evening newscasts, which are a correspondent's medium consisting of

Arts-and-Culture Newshole

percentage of time assigned to arts-and-culture coverage



reporters' taped packages, the tabloids are a video editor's medium. They aired a dizzying montage of clips and soundbites. In October 2003 the three programs combined ran 629 separate clips from movies, 914 from TV and 109 from music videos—an average of 24 clips per program. *Extra* led the way, averaging more than 2.5 clips per minute in its promotional pieces.

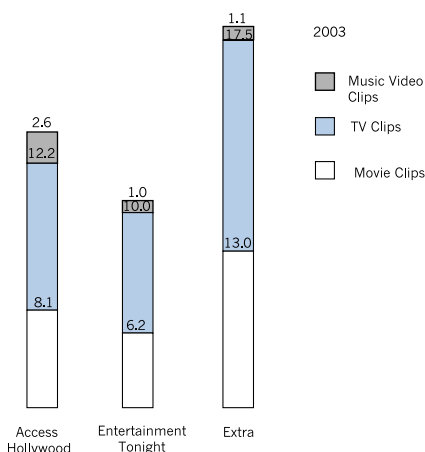
As for soundbites, the tabloid programs were predictably populated by celebrities. On average, every minute of coverage, excluding commercials, internal promotions, titles and teasers, contained a couple of soundbites in addition to the clips. A remarkable 76 percent of all the soundbites came from the mouths of celebrities and performers. Show-business professionals responsible for the creation of much of the entertainment fare featured in these programs—producers, writers, executives and so on—received hardly any attention, accounting for less than 3 percent of all soundbites.

THE ARTS GAIN IN THE MORNING

Arts and cultural coverage has become more prominent on the morning shows. In our last study we noted that as the two-hour programs progressed from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., the hard-news content waned while show business and celebrity coverage increased, with a mix of personal lifestyle, consumer concerns and household tips. We noted that the publishing industry was particularly well-represented. Books were publicized for their own sake, and authors were interviewed as well in their capacity as experts to comment on current news developments, to provide self-help advice, or even to share recipes from their cookbooks.

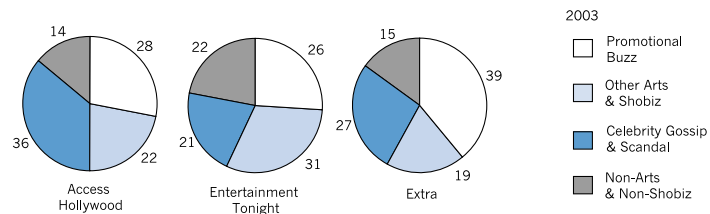
Tabloids Entertainment Clips

average number of entertainment clips aired in each day's editorial content from movies, television and music videos



Tabloids Buzz, Scandal, Gossip

percentage of time assigned to promotion of current releases (movies, television and popular music), other arts and showbiz news and features, celebrity gossip & scandal, and non-arts coverage



In October 1998 we found that 20 percent of the feature and interview segments on *Today* and *Good Morning America* covered A&C. Five years later we measured three networks' segments (CBS's *The Early Show* launched in 1999)—and found that that proportion had doubled. The amount of book-related segments had increased proportionately. Self-promotion for each of the networks' programming rose even faster.

Some news segments on the morning shows contained significant reports on the arts. For example, *Good Morning America* went on the road to the Vatican to cover Pope John Paul II's 25th anniversary as pontiff. While we classified this as religious coverage, it also contained significant reportage on architecture and art history.

Like the tabloids, the morning shows gave priority to the show-business-celebrity-news crossover, devoting headline attention to Bryant, Horn and Schwarzenegger. Another noteworthy morning trend was the rise in music programming. All the networks assigned large blocks of morning air time to live concerts. *Good Morning America* showcased Brit pop veterans Tom Jones and Rod Stewart; and, along with CBS's *Early Show*, it welcomed Clay Aitken, who was elevated to stardom by rival FOX on *American Idol*. *Today's Superstar* was the title of an *American Idol*-style contest staged by NBC for pop star wannabes from its audience in its 8:30 a.m. half hour (*Today* also features a third hour that we didn't monitor for consistency's sake). By no stretch can such concert segments be labeled "music journalism." Nevertheless, these segments show how eager news executives are to violate traditional boundaries where the arts are concerned. In this instance, their so-called news programs became actual producers of entertainment rather than the source of journalism about it.

PUBLISHING IN TELEVISION, A HAPPY ALLIANCE

As noted, success in show business is one path to celebrity status, which is why A&C coverage and celebrity coverage frequently overlap. When it comes to trying to attract the attention of TV

journalists, the publishing industry benefits from a different relationship to celebrity. A tell-all book, unlike a movie or TV show or hit single, is not the origin of a celebrity's fame. The memoir deal and subsequent promotional tour is instead an imprimatur that those 15 minutes of fame have been achieved. If the author or the subject of a book is famous enough, the exclusive material contained in its pages make it irresistible for TV coverage.

October 2003 offered two such examples: Elizabeth Smart and Princess Diana—two non-show-business celebrities—were both showcased as central characters in newly released books. The “exclusives” these books offered made them newsworthy fodder for both the morning programs and the networks’ prime-time shows. Diana’s butler, Paul Burrell, received prominent airtime from ABC’s Barbara Walters on *20/20* and on the same network’s *Good Morning America* for his tell-all book *A Royal Duty*. NBC’s Katie Couric landed exclusive access to Smart’s parents for *Dateline* and *Today*, where they recounted their successful nine-month search for their teenage daughter in *Bringing Elizabeth Home*.

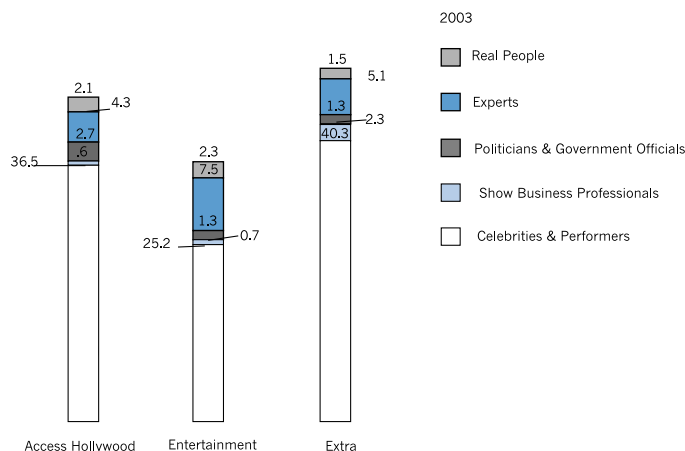
The month we studied did not include such similar mega-events as the book tour for Jessica Lynch’s Iraq war memoir or Bill Clinton’s sprawling autobiography, but as these examples show, October 2003 was no aberration.

IN THE FUTURE: 15 SECONDS OF FAME

In October 2003 we saw the fault lines between mass entertainment A&C and celebrity culture exposed in two contrasting directions. The head-

Tabloids Soundbites

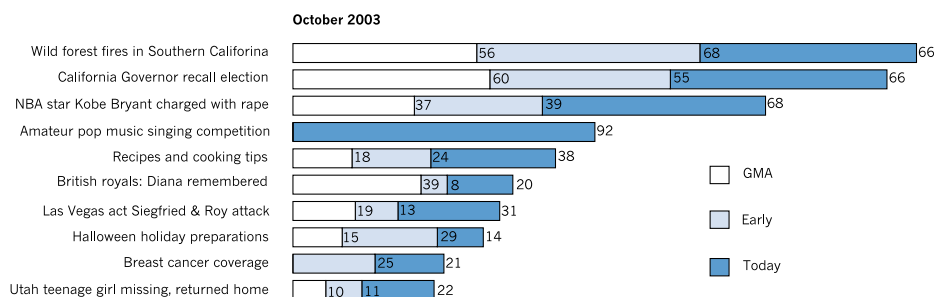
average number of soundbites quoted in each day's editorial content by celebrities and others



lines granted to Arnold Schwarzenegger showed how a celebrity can exploit his origins in entertainment stardom and then shuck them off to enter unrelated fields (a development not without precedent in California’s gubernatorial politics). The ability of the publishing industry to turn non-show-business figures into media-accessible celebrities proved yet again that the two fields will inevitably find common cause. As much as television journalism, at least in the mornings and in tabloid syndication, tries to pry celebrity culture away from A&C coverage, the media world of publicity, promotion and buzz proves them to be inseparable.

Morning Programs

top ten most heavily covered stories (ranked in order of time on all three morning programs combined) in interview and feature segments



SPANISH-LANGUAGE ARTS COVERAGE

BY ANTONIO MEJÍAS-RENTAS

ACCORDING TO THE U.S. Census, America's Hispanic population reached 39.9 million in 2003, accounting for nearly half of the nation's population growth since 2000 and making it the nation's fastest-growing minority group.

Those numbers help explain a recent boom in Spanish-language daily press, long served by three major dailies, New York's *El Diario/La Prensa*, Miami's *El Herald* and Los Angeles's *La Opinión*. Now it boasts four times as many publications and has spawned assorted newspaper battles. Last September, after *The Dallas Morning News* publisher Belo Corporation launched the six-day-a-week *Al Día*, competitor Knight Ridder, publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, responded by transforming its twice-weekly *La Estrella* into the five-day *Diario La Estrella*. And, as this article was going to press, a U.S. subsidiary of Spain's Recoletos publishing group was expected soon to enter the American market with four newspapers in Houston, San Antonio, Austin and the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

These Spanish-language dailies face further competition from an assortment of smaller weeklies, dailies and alternative publications.

"The industry is definitely hot now," notes Kirk Whisler, president of Latino Print Network, the research and marketing arm of the National Association of Hispanic Publications.

Competition became especially heated early this year in southern California, when the Tribune Company sold its 50 percent stake in *La Opinión* back to the heirs of founder José Ignacio Lozano. Tribune—which owns the *Chicago Tribune* and has long run a *Hoy* newspaper franchise in Chicago and New York—then unveiled a Los Angeles edition of *Hoy*, making the 78-year-old *La Opinión* compete against another daily for the first time in decades. In response, *La Opinión* joined forces with *El Diario* publisher CPK Media to form Impremedia, which created and acquired other regional Spanish-language newspapers. "It's significant that Tribune and other companies are trying to find a broader base in the Latino community," says Felix Gutiérrez, professor of journalism at USC's Annenberg School for Communication. "It makes *La Opinión* a better newspaper, and the competition will make it more lively."

But while it may eventually help *La Opinión*, the increased competition has been hard on the

nation's largest Spanish-language paper. Soon after the merger, management restructured the paper's various departments and realigned workers' duties. As a result, nearly 50 noneditorial employees lost their jobs.

Life has since calmed down at *La Opinión*, a 126,000 daily-circulation paper—103,000 on Saturdays and 71,000 on Sundays—that constitutes the main source of Spanish-language coverage for a limited, albeit economically strong portion of southern California's Latino community. *La Opinión's* readers consist almost exclusively of recent immigrants from Mexico, Central and South America, blue-collar workers who speak little or no English.

They are served by *La Opinión's* 82 editorial employees, eight of whom work full-time in the entertainment section. Staff assigned to covering the local scene is complemented by a regular team of half a dozen freelancers, mostly charged with reviewing music and the performing arts.

Arts coverage consists of the six- to eight-page *Espectáculos* section Friday to Wednesday. It is replaced on Thursdays by the tabloid *La Vibra*, which is aimed at 18- to 34-year-olds, and contains stories on the alternative music scene, Spanish-language rock and profiles of up-and-coming artists. On Friday as many as two pages are taken up by listings or short previews of weekend activities. A major personality profile or arts story normally dominates the Sunday cover, with roughly half of the remaining newshole devoted to museum and gallery listings.

Accessibility is the overriding factor in determining coverage in *Espectáculos*, which balances an editorial goal of covering the major cultural events in Los Angeles with an obligation to provide information on the art forms its readers are interested in. And since 81 percent of readers are drawn to Spanish-language music, radio and television as well as films and videos, *Espectáculos* devotes a major portion of its coverage to pop culture.

Overall, 62 out of 141 articles published in October 2003 were about music. The biggest such story was on Mexican pop superstar Luis Miguel, who released “33,” his first album in several years, and launched an international tour beginning in Los Angeles. Miguel received three *Espectáculos* front-page features, including a staff review of his L.A. concert. Most of the other music-related pieces also dealt with Spanish-language performers. The three exceptions were a profile of bilingual rapper Fat Joe, a review of a concert by Luciano Pavarotti in the Mexican bor-

der town of Mexicali and a feature on the Los Angeles Philharmonic's much-touted Walt Disney Concert Hall, which also received two front-page stories in the news section.

The next most frequently covered subject was film, accounting for a total of 31 stories in October, 18 of which had non-Latino subjects. Of those 31 articles, more than half were box-office reports and four were reviews, all from wire services. Other major subjects covered in *Espectáculos* were books and literature: 13 stories, though not a single book review; eight TV pieces; seven dance articles and four theater write-ups.

Despite *La Opinión's* ongoing commitment to coverage, its limited staff is unable to fully portray the richness of the artistic endeavor in the community it covers. This is unfortunate. For while *La Opinión* is not alone in delivering cultural news, it has an almost exclusive hold on the region's daily arts coverage. Readers therefore don't have much else to turn to. The Tribune Company's newly launched Los Angeles *Hoy* has a promising weekend pullout section, but most of its arts-and-entertainment coverage comes out of New York. “While we have many quality journalists in hard news,” observes Whisler of the growing Spanish-language press, “we still have relatively few trained journalists in the arts and other specialized fields, such as sciences and the environment.”

Several southern California papers have also made forays into the market, producing some sort of weekly or monthly Spanish-language publication such as the *Orange County Register's* weekly, *Excelsior*, with its strong *Pura Vida* entertainment section. Other newcomers include the Los Angeles Newspaper Group's *Impacto USA* and the *San Diego Union-Tribune's* *Enlace*. *Teleguía* and *El Aviso Clasificado* are among a handful of free weekly shoppers papers that provide some entertainment advertorials and wire stories in addition to their classified ads.

Not surprisingly, coverage of Latino arts is not limited to the Spanish-language media in southern California. Both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Register* have shown interest in the subject. In order to attract some of the Hispanic market, the *Times* launched a Latino Initiative in 1998. Its intent was to increase coverage of Latino subjects throughout the paper, and it has met with noticeable success. “To the extent that the *Times* is the ultimate moderator of what is important to the people who live in Los Angeles, the fact that the Latino initiative included

“It's significant that Tribune and other companies are trying to find a broader base in the Latino community.”

Felix Gutiérrez
professor of journalism
USC's Annenberg
School of Communication

improved arts coverage was a step in the right direction,” says Professor Gutiérrez, who notes that coverage of Latino arts may also help newspapers in metropolitan areas boost their dwindling circulations.

Both papers need improvement. While the *Times* and the *Register* report on Spanish-language electronic media, neither gives equal time to Spanish-language literature or theater. And at present, the most prominent Latino arts coverage at the *Times* comes from a single writer, Agustín Gurza, who mostly covers Spanish-language music for the paper’s Calendar section. In recent years he has explored such subjects as the explosion of a homegrown Mexican-musical style known as “Urban Regional” and the waning popularity of salsa among younger audiences.

At the *Register*—which was the area’s only other daily to review the Luis Miguel show—Justino Aguila covers a broader local and national Latino-culture beat that includes music, film and television. “The reality is that I am writing for an English-language newspaper,” says Aguila, who is very much aware of the need to make stories accessible to his non-Hispanic audience. “Although we have many Latino readers, my audience is mostly English-speaking. Non-

Latinos are being exposed for the first time to people like Luis Miguel, Gabriela Beltrán and Juan Gabriel.”

For the most part, arts coverage is absent from Los Angeles’s hugely successful Spanish-language FM radio stations, which long ago traded their news departments for all-music formats. There are nine such stations in town, and aside from celebrity-driven gossip by morning DJs, about the only on-air time given to arts discussion is the occasional publicity-driven visit by a recording artist plugging a new CD.

Almost all of the daily TV newscasts from the area’s six Spanish-language stations include some sort of entertainment report. They are largely dominated by self-serving interviews with actors appearing on shows aired by those same stations or musicians who record for labels owned by the parent company of the outlet.

“I think there’s a lot of room for really authoritative criticism of music, theater and the visual arts,” says Professor Gutiérrez, who notes that there is still a need for improvement in Spanish-language coverage. “If newspapers want to grow, particularly as they look at bottom-line issues, the arts is clearly the area where they can attract younger readers.”

ASIAN-AMERICAN ARTS AND THE MEDIA

BY LILY TUNG

While mainstream media outlets throughout the country work to attract Latino readers, few are making concerted efforts to reach out to Asian readers. What may seem like an oversight, however, is due more to the nature of America's Asian population. Most non-English-speaking Latino readers, regardless of ethnicity, are tied together by the Spanish language. Non-English-speaking Asian-Americans, though, do not share a common tongue. In addition, artistic tastes and cultural trends vary widely within Asian-American communities.

That makes this minority group, nearly 12 million strong, difficult to pin down as a newspaper-reading audience. This is true even in cities where they compose a large segment of the population. As a result, mainstream media coverage of Asian-American artists is often inconsistent and simplistic.

Tony Award-winner David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*, *Flower Drum Song*) notes that since he began writing plays, times have improved for Asian-Americans in art and entertainment, but they still face a continuing lack of media attention. "It depends on your visibility. It's not hard for Jackie Chan to get press coverage," says

Hwang. "But if you're not doing work acknowledged by the mainstream, then it's more difficult. It's hard to find Asian-American actors who are 'bankable' outside the action genre."

Indeed, Asian-American artists say journalists tend to offer more coverage when their projects appear ostensibly "ethnic." Mia Katigbak, artistic director of the National Asian-American Theatre Company, has found that shows featuring Asian actors in traditionally Western roles garner considerably less press than those with Asian themes. "We put up American and European classics. And then people say, 'Why aren't you doing kabuki? Why aren't you portraying something Asian?' It gets complicated because, on one hand, I want to choose more newsworthy material, but then I don't want to do that because it goes against my vision."

"It's easier for studios to think that if they're using an Asian actor, that person should be doing something Asian," notes Hwang. "Otherwise they think, 'Why don't we just use someone else.' The media likes to type people because the nuances about the way people exist between different categories is harder for people to grasp and reporters to capture."

Consequently, Asian-Americans also find

"We put up American and European classics. And then people say, 'Why aren't you doing kabuki? Why aren't you portraying something Asian?'"

Mia Katigbak
artistic director
National Asian-American
Theatre Company

themselves competing with what Bay Area visual artist Indigo Som calls “imported” people of color. “There’s a whole layer of the art world who are international people who have grown up in other places of the world,” says Som. “It seems less threatening to a white audience if it can go into tourist mode and hip international mode than go into its own very unglamorous working class. It’s as if people are more comfortable with some exotic African prince than some American in Oakland.”

Some artists believe the importation of Asian talent actually allows producers to say they’re achieving greater ethnic diversity even if only a few minority Americans are getting work. Such a move, though, feeds into longstanding stereotypes of Asians. “Chow Yun Fat is a great actor, but it’s very difficult to push that,” says filmmaker Justin Lin, whose controversial film *Better Luck Tomorrow* was arguably the biggest Asian-American arts story of 2003. “He’s there for one reason—to be an action and kung fu star. Until we can see three-dimensional characters, then any progress we’re making is just sideways.”

Adds Hwang: “It’s also difficult when the media decides to designate one official ethnic person. It’s been me, it’s been Amy Tan. If you’re not the official ethnic person, then it’s difficult to get coverage. Journalists do want to represent minority groups, but it’s easier for them to just focus on one person.”

Another major obstacle Asian-Americans face is the lack of their own voice in the press. Besides book reviewer Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* has no other Asian critics. According to a recent report by The Knight Foundation, the situation is not much better in the rest of the country; at least 374 American newspapers admit they have no minority staff members. In that report, The American Society of Newspaper Editors stated that only 13 percent of the 1,413 newspapers surveyed reached the goal of parity between U.S. newsrooms and nonwhite communities.

When dealing with such abstract and complex issues, many Asian-American artists are at a loss to determine what they can do to get better coverage. But there are growing outlets. Lin says the Internet has been a good alternative method to disseminate information, partly because it is highly populated by Asian users. Niche publications such as *Hyphen Magazine*, *Giant Robot* and *AsianWeek* also cater to an Asian-American readership.

Som says developing creative story angles, like those with human-interest themes, can help

attract mainstream media attention. She accidentally discovered this while pursuing her latest art project, which looks at the relationship between Chinese restaurants and American identity. She received a great deal of press after collecting hundreds of menus from restaurants around the country and opening a photography show of some of her work. But it seemed journalists were more interested in what the project said about Americana than what it said about art per se.

Lin, who reiterates that the issues of race in the media are often more complicated than can easily be grasped, says playing a specifically Asian-American angle can be a double-edged sword. “When publicizing a film like *Better Luck Tomorrow*, for example, you could use the angle that this is the first Asian-American film to get picked up by a major studio,” he says. “But when Caucasian viewers read that, many might think they don’t want to see the film because it sounds preachy, instructional or outside their experience.”

Whatever the angle, however, successful Asian-American artists warn their peers against resorting to a victim mentality. “I’ve noticed that the marginal status can become an excuse for lower levels of professionalism and quality,” says Som.

When the quality is there, artists can then start thinking about gathering support. “One simple thing Asian-Americans can do is support the artists whom we want covered more,” says Hwang. “If people go to see a show, the media will follow.”

That, however, may be more difficult than it sounds. “Many Asian-Americans aren’t interested in their own artistic work,” notes Lin. “At the Sundance Film Festival I went into a studio marketing meeting. They had pie charts, and I saw slices labeled African-American, Caucasian and Latino. When I asked, ‘Where are the Asian-Americans?’ one executive said, ‘Look, Asian-Americans put a lot of money into the community, but their spending patterns are white, so we consider them Caucasian.’ We’ll go see a white actor in a film; we’ll go see an Adam Sandler movie. Studio executives don’t think about racial politics, they think about making money. African-Americans will support their own films, so studios make specifically African-American films because they know they can make at least \$7-8 million in one weekend. That’s where I see a glimmer of hope. If 10 percent of the Asian-American population came to an Asian-American movie, film executives would see a market there and start paying attention.”

“One simple thing Asian-Americans can do is support the artists whom we want covered more. If people go to see a show, the media will follow.”

David Henry Hwang
playwright

COVERAGE OF ARTS ABROAD

BY SANDRA HEERMA VAN VOSS & JOWI SCHMITZ

DOES AMERICA HAVE it all? Artwise, it certainly appears that way. At first glance the nation's cities seem to have not only an abundance of homegrown arts, but foreign movies, exhibitions and performances as well. American newspapers carry foreign news and business articles right alongside foreign arts stories. And the numbers in this year's *Reporting the Arts II* study reveal a seemingly equal level of interest in both American and foreign arts. In October 2003 each of the local and national papers studied by the National Arts Journalism Program ran an average of 33 such pieces (see chart).

A closer look, however, reveals that they're generally short and news-oriented, and only 39 percent were written by staffers. Of the rest, 16 percent were composed by freelancers or syndicated columnists, and the rest were taken from the wires or other sources. When it comes to pieces of any breadth, 22 percent of them focused on film and actors. Staff-written pieces on foreign arts are rare. The average paper had less than one every two days. *The Charlotte Observer* and *The Oregonian* each published only one staff-written foreign arts article; the *Oakland Tribune* and *The Providence Journal*

had none. The one big exception was *The New York Times*, whose writers turned out a stunning 120 pieces.

As Dutch arts journalists staying in New York City, we were puzzled by the enormous difference between local and international arts coverage. We thus decided to look into this disparity, and in interviews with local arts editors we learned that covering foreign arts is far from a top priority at the papers. "Our mandate is clearly to cover the local arts scene first," says *The Houston Chronicle's* arts-and-entertainment editor Lindsay Heinsen. "Then come regional and national arts."

When local papers pick up international arts news stories from the wires, they can end up in the arts or foreign-news sections, or even on the front page. Recent examples include the destruction of the towering Bamiyan Buddha statues by the Taliban in 2001. And then there was the juicy scandal of the overweight Russian ballerina who sued the Bolshoi Ballet, which ended up being the most widely covered international-arts story in October 2003. A local angle always gives stories a sense of urgency, for instance when *The Providence Journal* expanded its coverage of the 2003 looting of the Baghdad Museum after

some of the stolen artwork turned up in town. Similarly, *The Houston Chronicle's* interest in Nazi-pilfered art increased when it was revealed that a Matisse at the local Menil Collection had been stolen during World War II.

With recurring events like the Venice Biennale or the Cannes Film Festival, arts editors find themselves in a difficult bind. They want to cover the events. Yet articles written abroad can cost several thousand dollars, and most budgets don't allow for a reporter to travel that far. "The way things are now," notes Ed Smith, *The Denver Post's* arts and features editor, "I'd rather cover Cannes with two extensive wire stories, like we did last year." There are of course exceptions. Both the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Chicago Tribune* sent reporters to Cannes in 2003. "We felt that that's where the news was," says *Tribune* arts editor Scott Powers.

A local angle sometimes opens up additional opportunities. An editor from *The Providence Journal* once accompanied a city high school class to the Edinburgh Theatre Festival in Scotland. *The Houston Chronicle* recently sent its art critic to Moscow's Pushkin Museum to cover the display of works from Houston's Museum of Fine Arts. The *Chicago Tribune* meanwhile covers London stage premieres involving local celebrities and also keeps close track of Daniel Barenboim, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's globe-trotting artistic director.

A common and relatively inexpensive way to get foreign arts coverage is for staff writers or trusted freelancers to travel abroad on their own and cover arts events along the way. In return, writers pick up a modest freelance fee to cover part of their travel expenses. According to Smith, *The Denver Post's* young pop critic receives a \$2,000 travel budget when he visits European concerts and "sleeps on his friends' couches for a long time." The *Chicago Tribune's* visual-art critic, Alan Artner, writes from wherever he's holidaying. Cities like Chicago and San Francisco also get a steady influx of international art companies and exhibitions, so there is often more than enough to cover in town without

going away. "They have trouble covering everything here," notes Powers.

The editors we spoke with all agree that globalization has made the world a smaller place, but

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF FOREIGN ARTS, OCTOBER 2003

	ARTICLES BY NON-STAFFERS:	ARTICLES BY STAFFERS:
Charlotte Observer	27	1
Chicago Sun-Times	25	21
Chicago Tribune	23	9
Cleveland Plain Dealer	25	7
Contra Costa Times	12	2
Denver Post	21	5
Houston Chronicle	43	8
Miami Herald	46	15
New York Times	26	120
Oakland Tribune	6	0
Oregonian	16	1
Philadelphia Daily News	8	8
Philadelphia Inquirer	18	17
Providence Journal	12	0
Rocky Mountain News	17	4
San Francisco Chronicle	30	13
San Francisco Examiner	2	2
San Jose Mercury News	31	3
Wall Street Journal	8	8
USA Today	15	12
Average:	20.55	12.8

they don't seem to assign themselves a big role in this "global village." Their main concern is to inform readers about their own particular region. The underlying and widespread assumption is that readers with international artistic interests will turn to *The New York Times*. Half of the *Times's* readers now live outside the New York City metropolitan area, and for this audience the

Times has become the main source among newspapers for foreign arts features and reviews. According to Richard Pena, program director of the Film Society of Lincoln Center and director of the New York Film Festival, the *Times*' power over the fate of foreign films, for instance, is "almost absolute." No attention from the *Times* means instant death, since most foreign films get very limited distribution and therefore attention.

This doesn't mean, however, that the *Times*' foreign arts sections are truly global. As senior arts writer John Rockwell notes, "London gets the most coverage by far. There's a natural English bias, and there's always been a constant cultural flow between London and New York." Steven Erlanger, the *Times*' culture editor from January 2003 to May 2004, admits that the paper's correspondents should travel more. "There should be more arts stories from Russia, Spain, Italy. There's not enough Asian culture either, and we could do better on national sub-cultures like Latin art."

Rockwell says that the process of deciding what gets covered is "pretty helter-skelter." Critics sometimes get tips from the *Times*' London bureau and other sources. Suggestions have to then make it past the culture editor, who is always mindful of tight travel budgets.

Rockwell believes the *Times* currently covers more foreign arts than when he joined the paper 20 years ago. The nature of the coverage, though, has changed. Criticism has given way to more, and briefer, reported pieces. But the

Times' overall devotion to culture remains impressive. Negotiations are taking place for later deadlines, more newspaper space and, most importantly, an increase in the number of culture reporters. Rightfully so, says Erlanger. "The arts section brings in 35 percent of the paper's revenue. We know there is a large, interested audience out there."

But the *Times*' arts section stands out not only in its resources but also in its approach. The paper prides itself on being an arbiter of world events, an attitude reflected in its cultural coverage. Many European papers operate in the same way. The Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad*, Britain's *The Guardian*, Germany's *Die Zeit* and France's *Le Figaro* all regularly publish internationally oriented arts articles, and even if their writers don't always report from the site of a story, the papers strive to make these pieces relevant to their readers. If there isn't a local angle, they'll create one. A *NRC* article might use the skillful organization of an exhibition in Washington as a model for the Netherlands; a British news story on Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali can be spiced up with local examples.

American regional papers would greatly benefit from using this strategy more often. It could broaden their readers' outlook without cutting them loose from their local roots. In a world so grimly filled with the fear of anything "foreign," that appears more than ever to be an urgently important goal.



PART IV: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

A HISTORY OF ROCK CRITICISM

BY ROBERT CHRISTGAU

WHEN DO WE SAY television becomes a cultural reality? Around 1948, right? And when did *The New York Times* radio columnist Jack Gould begin his move to TV coverage? November 16, 1947, with a review of the Theatre Guild production of a play called *John Flaherty*. Nor was Gould alone. John Crosby of the *New York Herald Tribune* was only the most prominent of countless TV critics scattered at dailies nationwide by the early '50s.

When do we say rock and roll becomes a cultural reality? Around 1955, right? And the first rock critic at a daily paper? The locally beloved, nationally obscure Jane Scott, who was 45 on September 15, 1964, when she reviewed a Beatles concert, commencing a long, effusive career at the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. Nationally, however, this meant nothing. I'm aware of two generalists—downtown columnist Al Aronowitz of the *New York Post* and, crucially, jazz critic Ralph J. Gleason of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, later gray eminence at *Rolling Stone*—who wrote about pop music occasionally. No doubt there were others, as well as classical dabblers (one was Robert Micklin, who ceded *Newsday's* rock beat to me in March 1972). But dedicated critics? In the dailies? In the '60s? Not bloody likely. Stringer-turned-major-domo Robert Hilburn wasn't hired to replace forgotten stringer Pete Johnson at the *Los Angeles Times* until 1970. The insufficiently legendary Lillian Roxon, a hip and sharp-tongued version of Scott till her death in 1973, was a pop specialist at Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald* for years before she joined New York's *Daily News* in 1971. *The New York Times* relegated its occasional daily rock coverage to the dreadful freelancer Mike Jahn until 1972, then shared it between

better writers Ian Dove and John Rockwell until Rockwell came on staff in 1974.

By then—beginning with Richard Goldstein of *The Village Voice*, whose Pop Eye column began in 1965—rock criticism was epidemic. It was a staple of the nascent alternative-weekly business, de rigueur in short-lived lifestyle

It was, of course, the '60s. The New Journalism was in the air, along with loose talk of freedom, revolution and astrology.

monthlies like *Eye* and *Cheetah*, raison d'être in such fanzines-going-commercial as Paul Williams' seminal *Crawdaddy*, Robert Somma's cerebral *Fusion* and Dave Marsh's gonzo *Creem*. You could read it in *Life* (Albert Goldman), *The New Yorker* (Ellen Willis), *Saturday Review* (Ellen Sander), and *Esquire* (myself). And of course, rock criticism was the backbone of the most successful magazine startup of the late '60s, *Rolling Stone*.

So why were the dailies so slow to catch up? Beyond the home truth that, artwise, the dailies are always slow, there were three reasons. First, the special hold of classical music on the high-brow sensibility should never be underestimated. Since opera and symphony seem the embodiment of genteel culture, popular music of every kind, jazz included, has always gotten short shrift critically. Second, rock criticism's '60s strongholds were mostly underground or counterculture, a formation the

dailies in their lowest-common-denominator caution resisted more recalcitrantly than the upmarket slicks. But I believe the third reason was most important. Rock and roll was supposed to be for kids.

Well, right. In the '50s, rock and roll *was* for kids. But even then that meant older kids, which is to say teenagers—incipient adults. You'd think some journalistic visionary would have tried to instill the newspaper habit in this demographic. Any failure to do so certainly rests more with such factors as the demon television and the imminent demise of Western civilization than rock criticism or the lack thereof. Still, some alert, thoughtful, entertaining music reviewing might have made a difference. Yet neither arts editors, with their middlebrow prejudices, nor general editors, with their hardboiled ones, seem to have considered it.

Thus rock criticism underwent a journey rather different from that of film (which was helped along, as TV criticism was later, by the movies' links to theater and hence literature). Strictly speaking, film criticism had a prehistory in the trades, as did rock criticism, with rhythm-and-blues proponent Paul Ackerman of *Billboard* the key name. Movie fan magazines began with *Photoplay* in 1911; date their musical counterparts to the swing magazines of the '30s or 1943's *Hit Parader*. But by 1920, with the 1915 release of *Birth of a Nation* a benchmark, the dailies had a lock on the critical appraisal of cinema in America, where the traditional newspaper standards that defined it as movie reviewing predominated.

At the new music mags and alternative weeklies, no such standards were in place. It was, of course, the '60s. The New Journalism was in the air, along

with loose talk of freedom, revolution and astrology. None of us was getting paid much, and few had actual jobs or believed we needed them. There was a world of necessity out there, and before long it would step on our necks; in the meantime, however, rock criticism was a literary haven. Even at *Rolling Stone*, where former daily reporter John Burks was charged with imposing order, the first reviews editor was only hired in June 1969. Greil Marcus wouldn't abandon his doctoral studies for a full-time career as an intellectual gadfly until 1972, and his standards were plentiful and stringent. He wasn't above rewriting submissions with no consultation (and little complaint). But when he was brought onboard to oversee a section that had previously come together ad hoc, he set himself against *Stone's* already entrenched culture of reverence. Marcus wanted fans who expected records to change their lives and got mad when they didn't. He wanted, he says, "betrayal and outrage and enthusiasm."

Standards established, he left in early 1970, and before the end of the year the job had passed to columnist Jon Landau, the straightest of the old *Crawdaddy* crew. A sometime record producer, Landau by 1977 was managing Bruce Springsteen, an artist he had famously dubbed "rock and roll future" in Boston's *Real Paper* before their business relationship began. Relying heavily on writers from the Boston alt weeklies as well as the Bay Area, Landau professionalized *Stone's* section while promoting an auteur theory derived from Andrew Sarris. This turn from the prevailing Kaelism—an unsystematic responsiveness that valued lively writing above all else—had the commonsensical effect of insisting that the artist with his or her name on the cover was expressing a vision traceable from album to album. But it also reinforced the culture of reverence by paying obeisance to trusted mainstays, including many singer-songwriters whose less-than-meets-the-eye equivalents in film Sarris regularly roasted to a crisp. Much of Landau's cadre has faded away. Janet Maslin and Stephen Holden both ended up at *The New York Times*, where

Maslin never wrote about music and Holden is now a film and theater critic who occasionally deigns to praise adult pop and/or dismiss anything liked by kids.

Countering *Rolling Stone* at a lower level of profitability was *Creem*, which soon lured Lester Bangs from California to Detroit, where he set a wildly irreverent tone many others there emulated. *Creem* was born to be brash—even now Dave Marsh writes with a chip on his shoulder in the self-published, outspokenly left-wing *Rock & Rap Confidential*. But it got truly crazy once Bangs started spouting copy and charisma. Except for Richard Meltzer, who first appeared in *Crawdaddy* and was Bangs' only acknowledged rock-critical

Rock's commercial juggernaut became impossible to ignore, as did the actually existing musical interests of working journalists whose hair kept getting longer and whose mean birth date kept getting later.

inspiration, no colleague at *Creem* (or anywhere else) approached Bangs' particular brilliance. Unfazed by fame, yet so drunk on his own élan vital that his attempts at cynicism were often endearing, he wrote from an emotional, explicitly subjective laff-a-minute vantage that still offends prigs who consider the first person a sin. His unending passion for music fed off his knowledge and into his insights. *Creem* continued to embody a culture of irreverence even after Marsh and Bangs had moved to New York, in 1973 and 1976 respectively. If *Rolling Stone* gave the world Springsteen, *Creem* provided early contributor Patti Smith.

This polarity was far from absolute,

however. Multiplatinum demigod and punk godmother both resisted singer-songwriter gentility and arena-rock pomp with rebel poses, terse song forms and hard beats, and got hosannas in both *Stone* and *Creem* as a result. Different as they were, both magazines valued idealistic cunning and formal courage in not just the music they praised but the writing they published—auteurist gravitas had no more place in the straight press than gonzo nose-thumbing.

My aim when I took over the *Village Voice* Riffs section in 1974 was a synthesis—Meltzer meets Maslin, Holden meets Bangs. I also wanted more politics, more women writers and, please God, a few blacks and some salsa coverage—as well as more ways of seeing black music, as the word "disco" became the latest way to imply that African-American pop wasn't "artistic" enough. And though I didn't succeed to the extent I'd hoped, the attempt proved prophetic in the weeklies and, by osmosis, the dailies as rock criticism grew up. The *Voice's* Pazz & Jop Critics' Poll, which became official with a mailing to 24 close colleagues in 1974—and which in its 2002 edition canvassed some 1,500 critics and tallied ballots from 695 of them—provided an excellent way to gauge this growth.

Hand wringing is always a temptation in retrospectives like this, and I'll indulge before I'm through. Rock criticism was certainly more fun in the old days, no matter how cool the tyros opining for chump change in netzines like *PopMatters* and *Pitchfork* think it is now. But let me accentuate the positive. How did we get from a Beatlemania that went without significant critical consideration in the daily press to an embattled megabusiness that attracts locally generated reviews and features from the *Portland Press Herald* to *The Fresno Bee*? And this in addition to scads of weekly leisure guides and a shelf full of specialized national magazines, including no fewer than three cash cows ruminating on hip-hop—a style many baby-boomers refuse to recognize as music at all—that are also, what a coincidence, the first ever to

attract respectable numbers of African Americans to popular music journalism?

The answer is basically simple. With *Rolling Stone* a beacon, editors and publishers slowly climbed aboard. Rock's commercial juggernaut became impossible to ignore, as did the actually existing musical interests of working journalists whose hair kept getting longer and whose mean birth date kept getting later. Not that every hire advanced the craft. At the smaller papers, the popular music beat was (and still is) often tossed to whatever ambitious copyperson or local loudmouth put a hand up. Nevertheless, canons of artistic quality, critical vocabulary, historical overview and cultural commitment quickly asserted themselves. The aesthetic was hell on pretension and in love with authenticity, excitement and the shock of the new. Although it valued formal imagination over technical skill, it expected tuneful songwriting and regularly got hot for strong tonsils or slippery fingers deployed in the service of form, authenticity or both. The prose that articulated these standards favored a slangy informality that didn't rule out academese unfit for use in a family newspaper. Blues-and-country-had-a-baby and *Sgt.-Pepper*-begat-the-concept-album proved handy origin myths. With the circa-1976 advent of punk, the Velvet Underground was anointed a seminal band even though it hadn't sold many records, which was a crucial paradigm shift. Most important, and most remarkable, was that rock criticism embraced a dream or metaphor of perpetual revolution. Just as Marcus had insisted, worthwhile new bands were supposed to change people's lives, preferably for the better. If they failed to do so, that meant they didn't, in the cant term, "matter."

These generalizations are so sketchy they approach caricature; variations are legion, exceptions innumerable. But they sum up the ideology that underlies some gnostic gospel or other at *Spin* and *Creative Loafing* alike, and even in the dailies, where tastes and stylebooks can get pretty hidebound, they pertain big-time. From what I see at Pazz & Jop time, rock critics have more rebel rheto-

ric in them than any other journalistic subclass. The punk upheavals, which kicked in shortly after rock criticism established itself and were supported far more enthusiastically by the press than by record companies or radio, spawned a profusion of more-uncommercial-than-thou fanzines and an explosion of college music writing in official campus newspapers and insurgent publications.

Meanwhile, back at the dailies, punk put a permanent crimp in any hopes that the geek in the corner with the earphone head would automatically cough up the celebrity inches editors covet. By

*Consumers need
gatekeepers far more
now than when popular
music was what got
played on the radio and
made the charts.*

the mid-'80s, a burgeoning indie-rock subculture had turned so-called "critics' records" into a staple of discretionary coverage, a deal sealed when Nirvana briefly made alternative a byword. Of course rock critics had to provide backstage interviews and arena-pop reviews, although at the larger papers these tasks were often handed off to second-stringers, gossip columnists and entertainment reporters. But where a movie reviewer was obliged to acknowledge the weekly blockbuster, the plethora of musical options made it harder for editors to dictate specifics. Big prestige records—Sting solo albums, say—were widely reviewed. But surefire bestsellers in low-prestige genres like disco, metal and teenpop were counted less newsworthy than the latest by R.E.M. (launched as a critics' band) or the Replacements (never anything else). Disagreements between the cops on the beat and their sergeants at the desk occasioned considerable friction, and the superior officers often prevailed. But it's remarkable that there was an argu-

ment at all, and this stemmed in considerable measure from the history of rock criticism outlined above.

Personally, I think authenticity is a crock, and believe today's rock-critical orthodoxy is far too dismissive of pop forms and audiences, even at the dailies—the terse song forms and hard beats early rock criticism championed were explicitly pop usages. But there is an editorial logic to reviewing R.E.M. rather than Rick Springfield, Lucinda Williams rather than Mandy Moore—not just journalism's principled commitment to aesthetic quality, which we of course assume, but the self-evident fact that music criticism's reading audience is a subset of music's listening audience. Music is sensual, preverbal, counteranalytic and sometimes pretty dumb (which does not equate with bad). Except for sometimes pretty dumb (which does equate to bad), criticism is none of these things, even in its blatant consumer-service form.

Yet with music coverage ensconced, editors now dream of attracting the kids their predecessors disdained rather than the alienated college students they ended up hiring, who while less numerous are an apter target. The hardboiled middlebrows at the desk still glance at *Billboard's* Hot 200, woeful shadow of its 1999 self though it may be, and wonder why their paper hasn't weighed in on the new one by this Chingy guy (it is a guy, right?). Nor is there reason to believe these touching dreams will disappear. Editors will always think they understand "the reader" better than their minions. Nevertheless, giving rock critics their head contentwise is in the best interest of everyone concerned—readers and listeners, writers and musicians, captains of the music and journalism industries.

Rock criticism's literary dimension has been squeezed hard by a design-driven journalistic marketplace where print is seen as "gray." In *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, *Vibe* and every other national music mag, review lengths have diminished inexorably, and the feature essay has gone the way of the California condor. Even in the alternative press, the drive to transform "arts coverage" into

“entertainment guide” is visible everywhere. Only on the Net, where the few critics with paying gigs suffer similar strictures but hobbyists enjoy more latitude, are the gonzo first-person and the mad harangue tolerated.

The musical marketplace, however, exerts rather different pressures. No longer does rock or any other kind of pop seem a commercial juggernaut. Yet whether the villain be “electronic theft” or the shortsighted abandonment of artist development in pursuit of the malleable audience and the high-overhead blockbuster, the end result is the same. And it’s not what self-serving doomsayers seeking punitive copyright laws claim, either. Music isn’t “dying”—although maybe some fun pop kinds will lose their juice once rich-and-famous is bled to a husk by reality television. It’s just spreading out.

Before the downloading panic, the key statistic about popular music was the approximately tenfold increase in album-length releases between 1988 and 1998. The figure has dipped some, but even if the current estimate of 27,000 new titles annually is correct, almost every artist ever cut loose by a major label—as well as innumerable up-and-comers and going-nowheres—will

continue to hawk more hours of recorded music than there are hours in a year for years to come. Assuming the Recording Industry Association of America doesn’t destroy online music altogether, the Internet will make it easier to access, and for better or worse will help shift consumer focus from albums to individual songs. But there’ll still be more music than anyone can absorb, especially anyone with other things to do.

This means that whether the technological future is utopian or draconian, the consumer-service aspect of rock criticism has been redefined. Consumers need gatekeepers far more now than when popular music was what got played on the radio and made the charts. They need people whose life-work is seeking out good music of every sort and telling the world about it—maybe not literally, but with the linguistic informality (and rebel rhetoric) the mood and ambition of quality popular music still regularly demand.

Thus we have the influential *Blender* model—several hundred brief, graded record reviews arranged alphabetically, a format that traces back through *Entertainment Weekly* to the *Consumer Guide*. Here, regrettably if predictably, uniform length and the refusal to pre-

sume reader sophistication flattens too much of the prose. Things are looser in the hip-hop press, but propagandistic myopia, compounded by permissive editing, renders even *XXL* and *Vibe* duller than they might be. The alt weeklies continue their wildly inconsistent work, constrained more than ever by escalating newsprint costs and insulting word rates. And finding the provocative criticism you’d hope would be flowering on the Net—I could name a few random obsessives, and there have to be more—is harder than unearthing the one riveting indie-rock album in a pile of patched-together freebies. Informed gatekeepers do perform a social function, and they’re rarer on the Net than in college radio.

In theory, and conceivably in practice, the dailies could help fill this need. The newspaper business missed its chance to define rock criticism at the outset. Even if it had been on point, however, the rush of reality would certainly have outstripped the definitions. Now that same business shares with *Rolling Stone* the opportunity to hang on for dear life as it follows a story that’s never disappeared from human life whether it got into the papers or not—and, bet on it, isn’t about to now.

SUBJECT/OBJECT

FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE IN CRITICISM

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

FICTION CRITICS ARE usually novelists. Poetry reviewers are, with very few exceptions, poets. Nearly half of all art critics are also artists. But when you look to the two commercial art forms that earn more than these three art forms summed and cubed, something funny happens. Film critics are rarely directors or actors, and pop music critics are rarely musicians. And though some of my fellow musicians disagree, this seems appropriate. Film and pop are art forms that work quickly, and through wide dispersal. Their impact leapfrogs training or literacy. To understand these forms is not necessarily to know their blueprints but to be able to absorb and understand their impact. Because I am both a musician and a pop critic, I can count measures and subdivisions more easily than someone without any musical training. But my ability to identify time signatures doesn't necessarily put me ahead of any other critic with good ears and a lot of energy. Pop music and film replicate because of their immediacy. Image and sound both have global transparency. You don't need to know where Britney Spears learned her trade to participate fully in her work, to access the zing of a song like *Toxic*. And though an analysis of the song's chromatic loop-de-loops might be pointed and interesting, it will likely speak to a narrative of production that runs alongside the text but doesn't necessarily relate to how the text lives and bounces around in the world.

Pop is an art form built by and for amateurs, who are sometimes remunerated on a scale beyond the ken of professionals in any field. Faced with this extreme social algorithm, professional musicians often resent their time in expensive music schools and on

the club circuit. So without perceiving it themselves, musician critics can become champions of the obscure or the technically proficient simply to realign the relation of their art to the world and to alleviate their personal disappointment. Who can blame them? Move the goalposts and the score changes. The problem here for a

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musician who wants to be a critic is that much musically innovative and socially rich pop music—especially now—is a direct repudiation of the idea of an apprenticed, learned craft. Just as it would be a mistake to let, say, conservative economist Francis Fukuyama review a book by Marxists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri—not that such a blatant editorial mistake would happen at a major newspaper in 2004—professional musicians are *precisely* the last people who should review popular music. Pop is the eruption of an unknown voice using overlooked technology. Knowing how it usually goes is exactly what you don't want.

Musician critics may let their professional bias discolor critique sometimes, but they also have a body of material knowledge that can enhance the discourse around pop music. Musician critics David Grubbs and Franklin Bruno remind us that there are fruitful ways for a musician to use specialized knowledge as a booster for analysis. “Probably, given how popular

music works,” says Bruno, “it’s less important that critics know much about, say, harmony, than about recording technology.” As Grubbs adds, “I have a decided preference for critics who understand the nuts and bolts of their given subject—not because years spent in the salt mine confer authority, but rather because these things aid a writer’s powers of description. Think of *American Pastoral* and Philip Roth learning how leather gloves are crafted.”

With professional frustrations set aside, musician critics are well-suited to enrich critical analysis with insights into modes of production and the material basis of an aesthetic, the latter an area of huge potential for pop criticism: What equipment has enabled what genres? What songs are being quoted in which other songs, and how often? How common are certain rhythmic patterns, and where did they first appear? Too often, though, the musician critic reaches for a form of self-pity common to many craftspeople rubbing against the digital age. “You try it” was the refrain I heard from many musician critics, indicating distaste for both critics who don’t play an instrument—critics could easily respond, “You try going to 200 shows a year”—and players succeeding in a musical field the musician perceives as inimical to their training. The trained jazz improvisers resent the hip-hop artists who don’t play an instrument but sell records, the hip-hop artists resent the rock bands who receive more press coverage, the indie artists resent the critics for pointing out where the indie artist went to college. Musicians, not surprisingly, take music fairly personally.

But so does everybody. That’s what makes it popular music. Like others,

musicians and critics frame their experience in the first person. This is sympathetically enhanced by the high degree of first-person subjectivity in pop. Multiply all of this and you see a high dose of informal subjectivity in pop criticism. (This variable is less prevalent in art criticism, where a statement such as “The big titanium bunny made me think of when I learned to ride a bike” would not likely appear.) All this first-person yammering is a good thing for pop criticism, which has room for both high theorists and bedroom diarists. The problem with a musician critic’s first-person complaining is not that it’s complaining—it’s the claim to authority that, in turn, blocks perception. If a musician believes, *prima facie*, that *he knows better*, his critique is no more than an expression of pique and an explicit rejection of the democratizing power of the music at hand. But if the critic and listener can agree to occupying the same unstable and overheated ground, then anything is fair game—Althusser’s theory of ideological state apparatuses, the difference between Chet Atkins’ and Steve Vai’s use of the whammy bar, and how it feels to buy your first stereo with your own money.

This is all framed by the fact that pop criticism is anchored by (or defined against) the reality that pop music is mechanically reproduced and sold. The reader of pop criticism is a consumer in a way that someone considering going to a gallery show is not. A minority may read pop criticism as prose or philosophy, but to the larger audience it is a betting broadsheet. Will I win, lose or

show with my 10 bucks? When answering that question, what constitutes expertise for the relevant critic? Knowing how to play the guitar or, perhaps, knowing how to listen to records in the same way as other listeners? “I could never have written about Lucinda Williams’s *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*, for instance, because the sound is so compressed I cannot stand to listen to it,” admits bassist-writer Tim Midgett. “If I hadn’t had a hand in mastering a bunch of records in my life, I

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might not have that problem, but I have it, and I have to be aware that my ears are the way they are.” The average reader likely agrees with *The Village Voice* critic and Burnt Sugar bandleader Greg Tate, someone whose musical expertise has not hampered his critical faculties: “I prefer critics with informed and passionate ideas about the art they review, who can write engaging prose, and could care less about their musical proficiency. Those who only deal with the product have proven as insightful as those with technical insight.”

With some exceptions, informed polymaths have more to offer readers

than the deep specialists. In the late 1960s, then-editor Greil Marcus published rock critic Lester Bangs in the relatively new *Rolling Stone*, even though he had published very few pieces. Bangs—who himself wrote and recorded music and even thought of ditching writing and becoming a full-time musician—then used the high copy needs of various review sections to stay busy and develop his craft. And while record reviewing is not the same beast it was when Bangs started in 1969, writers can still get a byline with almost no résumé. It is this unsupervised nature of pop criticism that has allowed remarkable stylists and thinkers to work with more formal daring and political chutzpah than their brothers and sisters across the aisles in the book review section.

Most of the important figures in pop criticism—Robert Christgau, Greil Marcus, Ann Powers—are not musicians but rather experts in hearing and understanding lateral connections. Pop tends to saturate and bear the mark of the present more than it boomerangs back and forth through time. A musician craftsman is often the opposite kind of agent, invested in the longitudinal history of a small niche. Whether an autodidact or a conservatory graduate, a musician comfortable with the pop audience and willing to subordinate technical knowledge to the needs of that audience would be a valuable critic indeed. Let’s hope we see more of this kind of critic, and soon. Blackberry rock is scheduled to peak in about five minutes.

CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITICISM AT THE CROSSROADS

BY JOSEPH HOROWITZ

WILLIAM JAMES HENDERSON'S review of the premiere of Dvorak's Symphony "From the New World" in *The New York Times* of Dec. 17, 1893, is one of the most impressive feats in the history of American musical journalism. Henderson begins:

The attempt to describe a new musical composition may not be quite so futile as an effort to photograph the perfume of a flower, yet it is an experiment of similar nature. Only an imperfect and perhaps misleading idea of the character of so complex a work of art as a symphony can be conveyed through the medium of cold type; yet when there is no other way, even that must be tried.

There follows a detailed account—of origins and intentions, methodology and programmatic allusions—that to this day may be the most evocative description of Dvorak's symphony ever penned. No one has more eloquently put into words the polyvalence of the famous Largo, in which the influences of plantation song and *Hiawatha* intermingle. "It is," writes Henderson, "an idealized slave song made to fit the impressive quiet of night on the prairie." He continues:

When the star of empire took its way over those mighty Western plains, blood and sweat and agony and bleaching human bones marked its course. Something of this awful buried sorrow of the prairie must have forced itself upon Dr. Dvorak's mind when he saw the plains after reading "The Famine" [Henderson here assumes

familiarity with Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, which all literate Americans once knew]. It is a picture of the peace and beauty of today colored by a memory of sorrows gone that the composer has given us at the beginning and end of his second movement.

It should not surprise us that this great era in American music criticism—the 1890s—was equally a great era in American classical music. Critics were focused on the creative act—and so were conductors, orchestras and audiences.

But Henderson's review is most remarkable where it deals with the question most debated about this work a century ago: "Is it American?" Boston's critics would answer: No. To Philip Hale, of *The Boston Home Journal*, Dvorak was a naive interloper, a "negrophile" susceptible to the notion that "the future of American music rests on the use of Congo, North American Indian Creole, Greaser and Cowboy ditties, whinings, yawps, and whoopings." New York critics disagreed, none more inspirationally than Henderson:

In spite of all assertion to the contrary, the plantation songs of the American negro possess a striking individuality. No matter whence their germs came, they have in their growth been subjected to local influences which have made of them a new species. That species is the direct result of causes climatic and political, but never anything else than American. Our South is ours. Its twin does not exist. Our system of slavery, with all its domestic and racial conditions, was ours, and its twin never existed. Out of the heart of this slavery, environed by this sweet and languorous South, from the canebrake and the cotton field, arose the spontaneous musical utterance of a people. That folk music struck an answering note in the American heart. . . . If those songs are not national, then there is no such thing as national music. It is a fallacy to suppose that a national song must be one which gives direct and intentional expression to a patriotic sentiment. A national song is one that is of the people, for the people, by the people. The negroes gave us this music and we accepted it, not with proclamations from the housetops, but with our voices and our hearts in the household. Dr. Dvorak has penetrated the spirit of this music, and with themes suitable for symphonic treatment, he has written a beautiful symphony, which throbs with American feeling, which voices the melancholy of our Western wastes, and predicts their final subjection to the tremendous activity of the most energetic of all peoples.

Henderson's review is today inconceivable in our daily press for three powerful reasons. The first is simply its length—3,000 words. Our reading and editorial habits preclude such leisurely exegesis. (Were Henderson's review to be quoted in the *Times* today, not a single paragraph would survive untrimmed.)

Second, Henderson was intimately familiar with the symphony and its composer before he sat down to listen to or write about it. A century ago New York's leading musicians and critics were members of the same community of culture. Contemporary accounts tell us that no sooner had the symphony ended than Dvorak's box was mobbed by music critics falling over one another in their eagerness to be the first to congratulate him. Henderson received the city's most notable conductors, singers and composers weekly at his home. His great friend Henry Krehbiel of *The New York Daily Tribune*—the acknowledged "dean" of New York's music-critical fraternity—was then the leading scholarly authority on plantation song; he was a de facto artistic adviser to Dvorak in America, feeding him samples of "Negro melodies" and Native American chants. On Dec. 15—the day before the premiere, two days before Henderson's review appeared—Krehbiel published a 2,500-word analysis of the *New World* Symphony, based in part on discussions with the composer and incorporating no fewer than 14 musical examples. Henderson also had the benefit of attending a "public rehearsal" of the *New World* Symphony, also on Dec. 15. When it came time to file his review, he was ready.

But the third reason Henderson's feat is unthinkable today is the one that most interests me. Today's music reviews are mainly about the act of performance. Henderson's review of the first performance of the *New World* Symphony is silent on this topic. The name of the conductor, Anton Seidl, is not mentioned once. Nor is the reader ever told what other music was played on the same program. In the proper order of things it simply did not matter.

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great era in American music criticism—the 1890s—was equally a great era in American classical music. Critics were focused on the creative act—and so were conductors, orchestras and audiences. By far the most performed composer in New York was Richard Wagner, who had died just a decade before. A living composer, Dvorak was widely acknowledged as the city's pre-eminent musician (imagine such a thing today). Of paramount importance to Dvorak—as to Seidl or Henderson or

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Krehbiel—was the creation of an American canon. That is: It was generally assumed that, as in Germany, France, Italy or Russia, the musical high culture of America would be grounded by a native repertoire of sonatas, symphonies and operas.

In Boston the Symphony regularly performed the music of Boston composers. No one pretended that they ranked with Mozart and Beethoven; no one cared. George Chadwick alone was performed 78 times prior to Serge Koussevitzky's arrival in 1924. In New York Seidl hailed Edward MacDowell as a greater composer than Brahms. That he was wrong is beside the point.

But no great American symphony was written, and no American canon materialized. Instead, American classical music degenerated after World War I into a culture of performance. Not American composers, but American orchestras, and foreign-born performers resident in America, comprised its

spine. The symbol of classical music for millions of Americans was an Italian conductor, Arturo Toscanini. Never before had a noncomposer enjoyed such living supremacy in the world of classical music, usurping the place of a Mozart or Beethoven, Wagner or Richard Strauss. Never before had a conductor of such stature and influence been so fundamentally divorced from the music of his own time and place. As if by default, classical music ceded leadership in American musical life to genres more vernacular. Popular music proved the more significant, more distinctive American contribution.

Certainly the American composer ceded leadership. However much Aaron Copland, through his writings as much as through his music, tried to redirect attention, Americans remained fastened on the dead European masters. So, over time, did conductors cede leadership. In New York before World War I, a Seidl or Theodore Thomas or Gustav Mahler championed the living composer with missionary fervor. So, in Boston, Philadelphia and Minneapolis, did Koussevitzky, Leopold Stokowski and Dimitri Mitropoulos. After 1950, however, only rarely were conductors true tastemakers. Rather, American orchestras became marketing and fund-raising machines terrified of alienating their subscribers. Gone, too, were the great classical music entrepreneurs of yesteryear: visionaries like Henry Higginson, who invented, owned and operated the Boston Symphony; or Oscar Hammerstein, whose short-lived Manhattan Opera bravely defied the elitism of the Met.

Instead, the nation's leading music businessman was Arthur Judson, creator of Columbia Artists Management, who insisted that only the public could lead taste. When the New York Philharmonic's gutless programming was challenged in 1931, Judson—who was also the Philharmonic's manager—could write, "I believe within the next few years the Beethoven Fifth, no matter how badly played, will be welcomed because of the message it conveys." Judson also advised, "There are certain composers like Bruckner and Mahler

who have not yet been accepted heartily by the American public. . . . We can only go as far as the public will go with us.”

Today the leadership vacuum remains. And yet, with the waning of modernism, important American composers (and other American composers alas less important) are reconnecting with orchestras and audiences. The erosion of high culture, the interpenetration of what had been elite and popular arts, may yet put classical music out of its misery. In my forthcoming history of *Classical Music in America*, I write:

What does “classical music” mean today? If the term is to retain anything like its old aplomb, it must refer to a moment now past and to its attendant prestige and influence. What comes next in these post-classical times? We will find out. Certainly we will not abandon Bach and Beethoven. Bruckner’s symphonies will continue to furnish cathedral experiences in the concert hall. But this tradition, on its own, can only diminish. Renewal, if renewal there will be, will likely come from the outside—from a postmodernism freed from the pantheon and its backward pull. The possible convergence of old ways and new will greatly depend on composers and other persons determined to lead taste.

What the composers may contribute remains an open question. . . . Equally unknowable, equally crucial is the coming contribution of the tastemakers—the people who run orchestras and opera companies, write about them, broadcast and record them. Traditionally, America’s high-cultural currents have benefited from the shaping initiatives of individuals of vision—or submitted to the vicissitudes of the market. . . .

[Steve] Reich, [John] Adams, [Gidon] Kremer are not “classical musicians.” Rather, they are eclectics for whom neither Europe nor the concert hall represents the measure of all things musical. Unquestionably they point toward

a post-classical music of the future. But there is no predicting the topography of this new terrain, or its crucial impact upon the residual classical music landscape it will diminish or synergistically refresh.

To chart the history of classical music criticism in the United States is to discover a similar trajectory yielding a comparable crossroads. Krehbiel, to my mind, marks the apex—for his intellectual distinction, for his cultural breadth, for his activist role in advising and supporting Dvorak, in helping to engineer an “all-American” concert movement, in studying and promoting the folk and indigenous music of many

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nations, in annotating the programs of the New York Philharmonic, in translating German and French librettos as part of the fruitless but enlightened campaign for opera in English, in tirelessly lecturing and teaching professionals and laymen. More than a writer he was an organizer, a doer. The culture of performance sidelined critics as it did composers. In New York they were reduced to chronicling Toscanini’s concerts as rites of triumph. As chief music critic of the *Times*, Olin Downes felt called upon to testify:

The first Toscanini concert of the season by the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra took place yesterday evening in Carnegie Hall. This meant an auditorium again crowded to capacity with the most impressive audience of the season—an occasion when music lovers in all walks of life assembled to hear Mr. Toscanini’s interpreta-

tions and do homage with him to the genius of Beethoven.

To his chagrin Henderson lived long enough to witness this genre of criticism and to groan in 1934, “Critical comment . . . is almost entirely directed to the ‘readings’ of mighty magicians of the conductor’s wand. . . . Can [the public] ever again be trained to love music for its own sake and not because of the marvels wrought upon it by supermen?” Downes was a new critical breed—a populist who advised the layman, in a 1941 essay, to “Be Your Own Music Critic.” This trust-the-public attitude ran parallel to Judson’s wait-and-see admonitions on repertoire.

During my own short tenure as a *Times* music critic, I discovered that I did not believe in the vast majority of the musical events I was sent to cover—and I feel quite certain that a Henderson or Krehbiel would have found New York’s concert fare of the late 1970s mystifyingly superfluous. I did not think that I was a particularly good *Times* music critic, nor did I think that a *Times* music critic was a particularly good thing to be. I could not accept the paper’s capitulation to a degenerate status quo. I could not abide its insistence that critics not write in the first person, and the linked prohibition on consorting with those they wrote about. The latter restriction—more an attitude than a coherent policy—was vaguely understood to be as venerable as the *Times* itself. And yet Henderson did not keep his distance from musicians and musical institutions—and neither, for that matter, did Olin Downes. As far as I am aware, the arm’s-length rule originated with Harold Schonberg, who became chief music critic in 1960. And neither Harold nor anyone else on the music staff seemed to share my discomfort with third-person pontification.

In retrospect the third person was already a terminally embattled posture of “objectivity” during the years—1976 to 1980—I was forced to employ it. The third-person omniscience of a Henderson or Krehbiel was girded by their confident grasp of music’s trajectory and its necessary future. By the

late 20th century there no longer existed a cultural consensus to do the girding; the mainstream, or what was left of it, was crippled and diffuse. Today, in an even more variegated and confused cultural environment, first-person opinion is inescapable even at the *Times*. Logically this concession dictates a more engaged critical presence. Granted, befriending the artist or impresario risks imbalanced judgments. But what personal judgments are not imbalanced?

There is a classical music crisis. It is artistic and economic, sociological and institutional. It cannot adequately be surveyed or understood on the sidelines. Those who write about classical

music need to know how and by whom orchestras and opera companies are run. They need to discern whether programming is captive to marketing and development or—as at Harvey Lichtenstein’s Brooklyn Academy of Music, where I toiled in the 1990s—whether it constitutes a creative initiative, galvanizing marketing and development in its wake. They need—like Alex Ross in *The New Yorker*—to command the full cultural landscape, to know where the high-low synergy is cooking. This degree of knowledge is possible only via immersion and advocacy—the charged posture of W. J. Henderson reviewing the *New World Symphony* 110 years ago.

Our fractured times require leadership from institutions, from composers, from conductors, from critics—once, long ago, a more bonded community. For all of us in music the moment is undeniably difficult—but also opportune.

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REFLECTIONS OF AN OUTSIDER CRITIC

BY M.J. ANDERSEN

IN THE FALL of 2002, Robert Melee's mother was for sale. The cost was \$6,000 an hour, during which time you could do with her as you chose. Evidently no takers emerged. And it is no surprise, considering the frightful figure Mom cut at the opening of Melee's show "You Me and Her" at the Andrew Kreps Gallery in New York's Chelsea neighborhood. For there she sat, in an elevated glass box, clad in nothing more than a boa and fishnet hose.

A grappling with Mommy across many media, Melee's exhibition included paintings, mobiles and video pieces. The ensemble functioned as a kind of creepy burlesque show on parent-child relations, with an indictment of suburbia thrown in for good measure. High as the yuck factor was, inscrutability ran a solid second: I visited the show one afternoon when Melee's mother was absent, and wandered through with no sense of who the specified "Her" might be. (A transsexual in a fright wig? Or was that her actual hair?)

I am not, by profession, an art critic. But as an editorial writer for a mid-sized daily, I am convinced that visual environments have more to do with our cultural identity, and hence our politics, than most public-policy devotees might allow. And so I look—at museum shows, at work in galleries, at billboards, movie posters and window displays, even at color schemes in hotel lobbies (where mauve, I am glad to report, has at last died a much-deserved death).

If we can speak of "outsider" artists, why not outsider critics? I consider myself one of the latter, and will admit to all the implied deficiencies. The beauty of this designation is that it covers most people who make up the potential audience for art: We are inter-

ested, somewhat informed, and would like to know more. Often, we also have no clue about how to evaluate much of what we see. Outsiders sense that more might be said about the work of Robert Melee than "Yuck." (Eeeee-uw! for instance.) And so, for help, we turn to the critic. Usually we do not turn to the insiders who write for such specialty

Pity the poor mainstream art critic. He or she tills marginal soil, despite an explosion in art production in recent years.

journals as *Artforum*, *Art in America* or *ARTnews*—lovely as those folks may be—but to critics writing for mainstream publications: the newspapers and general-interest magazines that orient us quickly on a range of subjects.

Pity the poor mainstream art critic. He or she tills marginal soil, despite an explosion in art production in recent years. The National Arts Journalism Program's 1999 study, *Reporting the Arts*, found that mainstream publications allot to the visual arts the least space of nearly any art form. (Film is the big leader.) Not surprisingly then, for the critic, economic insecurity is part of the game. NAJP's *The Visual Art Critic* (2002) found that most practitioners at the more than 250 publications studied are freelancers. Of those who have full-time positions, many are obliged to cover other subjects.

Overwhelmingly, critics reported feeling a burden to explain why visual art mattered. In other words, not only do art critics feel perpetually called on to justify the work they review; in the

same breath, they work to justify their jobs. Small wonder, then, that most placed a premium on the freedom to simply describe work and attempt to place it in context. Fully two-thirds of those polled claimed a kind of booster role for themselves. The real stunner was that only 27 percent felt it important to determine the quality of the art they described. Job insecurity may account for some of the reluctance to judge. But not all. It is therefore worth asking whether the working conditions that confront most critics today have produced a kind of critical vacuum (the occasional diatribe notwithstanding), and whether that in turn has led to a decline in what art aspires to, even as the quantity of art itself soars.

A CRITIC WHO is inclined to sort through and judge, to evaluate technique, ponder an artist's intent, discern attempts to grapple with or reject forebears, has her work cut out for her. No coherent movements in the making of art currently exist. At the same time, art history is long and growing longer. A tradition once confined largely to drawing, painting and sculpture fractured decades ago, spawning a variety of new forms: conceptual and performance pieces, earth works, video art. The 2002 Whitney Biennial suggested that the parameters for what may be considered art are broader than even the most up-to-date critic might allow. The biennial featured, among other things, a project by the Auburn University School of Architecture to make houses for the rural poor out of recycled materials. The show's curator, Lawrence Rinder, asserts that the bounds of artistic practice and experience are even more capacious than the biennial survey proposed.

This explosion of forms has

occurred alongside a proliferation of styles within media. As the critic Raphael Rubinstein argued in a March 1, 2003, essay for *Art in America*, recent years have brought forth so many styles in painting alone that it has become impossible to keep track of them all. An inability to survey the entire landscape in one medium (and these days, that landscape is international) makes it difficult for a critic to speak with authority. On what basis, then, should he or she presume to judge new work?

Some of the best conversations I have had on this subject have been with curators, who, perhaps surprisingly, express sympathy for the position of contemporary art critics. The lack of clear trends is confusing and difficult for the critic, acknowledges Judith Tannenbaum, curator of contemporary art at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. But it is healthy for art. "It gives people room to go in their own direction," she notes. By contrast, during the post-World War II era, when critics such as Clement Greenberg laid out the rules for what successful Modernist art should be, "a lot of stuff was left out."

In some ways the curator's task resembles the critic's. An unrelenting and unrealistic attentiveness to the new is required, along with continuous self-instruction in what has come before. Curator and critic both attempt to find meaning within a realm of shifting standards. Curators, however, must choose what to show: They perceive certain connections, imply value of some kind, decide what is worth looking at and why.

But the mainstream critic is limited to what museums and galleries offer, usually in a given geographic area. Critics who wish to encourage local production of art while also raising questions regarding value must walk a very fine line. Not judging is the easiest path. Moreover, philosophical support for not judging is easy to find.

When artists inevitably rebelled against the dictates of Modernism and tried out a number of alternatives, critical thought also changed course. Lumped under the catchall title of post-

modernism, much of the theory became incestuously entwined with the new work, a development that the Modernists have much to answer for. Piece after piece could not be understood except as an expression or extension of theory. And for that, a viewer often had to look outside the work itself. Thus Robert Meleë's recent output did not intrinsically divulge that his mother was the subject—literally a piece of work. The movement continues to affect art students, many of whom can be observed trying to work out its premises in forms lame and lamer.

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For postmodernists, grand pronouncements are beyond contemplating, since master narratives are all suspect, and every attempt at assigning values betrays a form of hierarchical thinking (e.g. Mozart is better than Madonna) that serves the interests of the powerful. The critic who attempts to judge under such circumstances is at best uninformed, at worst a lackey of those better left unnamed. Yet while postmodernism's chief assumptions have lately been under assault, little in the way of a bigger, better idea has come to take their place. We might say no to postmodernist thought while feeling unclear on what we might instead say yes to.

Postmodernist ideas have influenced curators as well as artists, of course, and with some positive effects. More women and black artists have broken through, as have aspirants with no classical training. But attempts by museums and galleries to appear more inclusive are not all they may seem, for in the end choices

must still be made. New hierarchies will be unavoidably established. Often the "de-skilled," the shocking and the simply baffling are raised up in what is finally a parody of the democratic impulse. The sometimes-comical result is that art exhibitions, claiming to have trampled on the distinction between "high" and "low" art, instead have cemented it.

Unable to "read" the objects or enterprises offered up for their inspection, bewildered viewers are apt to decide the problem is with them: Perhaps the surest way to know that a thing is art is if you cannot understand it. For such audiences, art by definition remains high art. They know that the true low art of our time flourishes safely off the premises, at neighborhood arts-and-crafts fairs and at the local multiplex. No matter how much theory we throw at it, the distinction between high and low art resists erasure. Critics who duck this problem only increase their travails.

FACED WITH SO many intertwined dilemmas, what's a mainstream art critic to do?

I say, more judging.

I say this with all the authority of your uncle in Abilene, but I say it all the same. The world grows increasingly crowded with representations of reality. Which ones have urgent meaning? Do any of them ensnare us in falsehoods? How shall we know what to prize? These are not idle aesthetic questions but questions intimately bound up with our dreams and our ideas of how to live—ideas that shape our public policies.

The culture wars of the 1990s demonstrated a fierce hunger for a discussion of values. Unfortunately, when the skirmishes involved the visual arts, crude judgment frequently rushed in to fill a void. With forthright critical discussion of artistic values so routinely lacking, defense of free speech became the fallback position. And it ended up sounding surprisingly feeble. It is not only the curious viewer who longs for a discussion of values in art; no one craves judgment more than artists themselves. Spend time with a few of them and you will see how true this is. A

thoughtful critique can move and challenge an artist even if it is fiercely rejected.

The best critics will always try to keep themselves open to new work and new ideas. But in the end, a passion for art entails preferring one attempt to another and being able to say why. Without judgment, critics will never convince their editors that the visual arts matter very much. A world of equivalents is nothing to write home about.

All discussions of cultural values impinge on one another. An arts critic writing with some insight about, say, a painter's attempts at self-portraiture can engage those who may not have thought much about painting but have struggled with how to see themselves. Art that challenges the power of museums to pick winners and losers can be shown to resonate with many people's experiences of corporate life. The formal qualities of a piece of sculpture can evoke questions about nature or spirituality.

Critics who pursue such connections should, in the long run, find relief from their perceived burden of having to justify art. Those who succeed will need to be well grounded in the humanities and to keep abreast of all

aspects of culture. But it is just as important for them to see as much actual work as possible. Editors should therefore move heaven and earth to give writers more travel money. Creative ways of doing this might be found by transferring some dollars out of the film budget, for example, or occasionally combining the art critic's role with that of the travel writer.

Editors reluctant to invest should look up the studies. The National Endowment for the Arts' *Survey for Public Participation in the Arts*, conducted roughly every five years, found in 1997 that 68.3 million people—or slightly more than a third of all American adults—had visited an art museum or gallery at least once in the previous 12-month period. It was the highest level of attendance among seven benchmark activities, which included going to concerts and plays. To experience art, unlike TV and even film, people must go out and see it.

EVEN WITH BETTER support from editors, art critics will continue to dwell in an insecure world. If, every time they encounter new work, critics must first grope for a set of standards to apply

(for example, is the work skilled or de-skilled, and how good is it on those terms?), how can they speak with a consistent voice—and therefore some credibility—from week to week?

One answer has been found by Jerry Saltz, the almost compulsively readable art critic for *The Village Voice*. Saltz inserts himself into his work as a kind of art-world Candide, managing to be both insider and outsider at once. The critic-as-character strategy does have limitations, since it sacrifices a clearly worked out aesthetic for something more provisional. In hands as nimble as Saltz's, though, it is rarely boring, and enough to give even the most unschooled reader the courage to go out and look.

Saltz, it turns out, would not dream of not judging. Saying critics should not judge, he once wrote, "is like saying bakers shouldn't bake." Today's art critics must work from an inevitably limited base of knowledge. But so must everyone who lives a life. The critic who does not dare to question Robert Melee's Mommy extravaganza, or try to explain what is wrong with it, might be better off baking pies.

WHEN DRAMATURGS RULED THE EARTH

BY ROBERT BRUSTEIN

ONCE UPON A time in America, theater criticism was a universal practice. During the 1960s and '70s, every newspaper and commercial magazine had regular drama critics, and most small publications and scholarly journals devoted significant space to what was happening in New York City.

At the time, four major newspapers were being published in the city, each with an influential reviewer. True, there were not as many as in previous decades, when seven newspaper critics ruled Broadway. But the shrinking of the newspaper world didn't diminish its fascination with the stage. The pages that *The New York Times* now calls Arts and Leisure were then known simply as the Theatre section, devoted primarily to reports on plays and interviews with playwrights (today, the same pages are largely devoted to features on action movies and warring rap stars). During that period, *The New Yorker*, *Time* and *Newsweek* were growing almost as influential as the dailies; George Jean Nathan was still holding forth in *Esquire*; and even the little magazines were beginning to have some impact.

Before I began reviewing for *The New Republic* in 1959, Stark Young and Eric Bentley had been its well-respected theater critics. Mary McCarthy was scorching theatrical earth for the *Partisan Review*; Richard Hayes was composing very stylish columns for *Commonweal*; Harold Clurman was fulminating brilliantly in *The Nation* and Kenneth Tynan was just beginning his legendary tenure at *The New Yorker*, bringing cosmopolitanism, passion and wit to that magazine's rather empty urbanity. In addition to regular reviews, articles on the theater were frequently being featured in such publications as *Harper's*, *The Atlantic*, *Life*, *Harper's*

Bazaar and *The Village Voice*. And there was also *Theatre Arts Magazine*, a relatively high-circulation journal totally devoted to stories about the American theater.

The beginning of my time at *The New Republic* corresponded with a resurgence of highbrow criticism in a field that most intellectuals had previously scorned. It was a time when young

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Turks at smaller publications were agitating for a whole new kind of theater—engaged, experimental, impudent, irreverent and smart. Broadway had gotten tired. At one time it had combined passion for musical megahits with tolerance for more serious work, whereas now it seemed more and more driven by the box office. If there was any art or intellect to be found in New York theater, you had to look off-Broadway.

I came to *The New Republic* very much under the influence of my predecessor, Eric Bentley, who in 1946 had stunned academics and intellectuals by identifying the playwright as a "thinker." I added my two cents in 1958 with a piece called "The Theatre Is Losing Its Minds," along with some analytical articles on the current Broadway scene for *Commentary* and *Harper's* that pleaded

for higher theatrical standards and greater dramatic complexity. Now I had a visible weekly platform, right next to Stanley Kauffmann's film column, from which to inveigh against the vulgarity and greed of the commercial stage.

My timing was fortuitous, for my very first review, in September 1959, was of an event that proved to be a beacon of the off-Broadway movement, the Living Theatre's production of Jack Gelber's *The Connection*. All of the major newspaper critics had panned this Beckett-inspired play about the narcotic haze of drug addiction. But along with a number of other critics from smaller publications, I found this play to be a breakthrough in its naturalist staging and writing as well as a gauntlet thrown in the face of the whole theater establishment. It was the very opposite of a well-made Broadway artifact; Pirandello-like, it invaded the audience's space, not only breaking through the fourth wall but following you into the lobby. Between Donald Malcolm's review in *The New Yorker* and write-ups in *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, the play managed to catch on and capture an audience—perhaps the first time that small-press reviewers had been able to overturn an unfavorable mainstream judgment.

During the early '60s the most influential drama critic was writing not for the *Times* but for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, namely Walter Kerr. Kerr was an intelligent critic whose eloquent prose style embodied decidedly Philistine views, further limited by his strict Catholic upbringing. Always ready to praise some escapist musical or domestic comedy, he persistently panned anything by the great modernists Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov and Pirandello; totally missed the boat on

Marat/Sade; and declared, after seeing *Waiting for Godot*, that Samuel Beckett was “out of touch with the hearts and minds of the folks out front.”

In short, Kerr was a perfect foil for us young Turks. And our ranks were definitely swelling. The scholar-critic Richard Gilman took over Richard Hayes’s position at *Commonweal* and then left (to be replaced by Wilfrid Sheed) to become the drama critic for *Newsweek*, one of the earliest examples of an intellectual covering theater for a mass magazine.

Gilman left his *Newsweek* job to join my faculty at Yale School of Drama. The lively universalist Jack Kroll took over his position and maintained *Newsweek*’s literate posture, blending Gilman’s intellectual weight with his own populist energies. John Simon wrote serious and scholarly theater reviews for *The Hudson Review* before *New York* magazine encouraged him to sink his fangs into unsuspecting actors and playwrights. Meanwhile, a new periodical called *The New York Review of Books* had appeared during the newspaper strike of 1962–63, started primarily in revolt against the *Times* book review section. The noted literary critic Elizabeth Hardwick became the *New York Review*’s regular biweekly theater critic, writing tough-minded articles that, if somewhat short on theater knowledge, at least treated the stage as a forum that was missing a great opportunity. Susan Sontag replaced Mary McCarthy as the resident theater scold of *Partisan Review*. The scholar-translator Albert Bermel began to review for *The New Leader*. All shared a pronounced distaste for the profit-driven products of Broadway and a desire to endow American theater with some of the quality it had traditionally enjoyed in Europe and Russia.

As theater critics, we were making the same kinds of demands on plays as literary critics were making on books and intellectuals on general culture, questioning the reputations of the enshrined and proselytizing for underestimated new talent. We were feeling our oats and beginning to share our efforts with a much wider public. At the

same time, artists and intellectuals alike were becoming annoyed with the stranglehold maintained on the arts by *The New York Times*, which, despite Walter Kerr’s influence with theater insiders, always had more influence with ordinary theatergoers. Brooks Atkinson’s successor at the *Times*, Howard Taubman, was proving even more tone-deaf than Kerr to the exciting new things that were happening on the New York stage. An impudent new mood was in the air, symbolized by Joe Heller’s

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responsibility for
the results.*

Catch 22, Stanley Kubrick’s *Doctor Strangelove*, Nichols and May, and Paul Sills’ Second City troupe, that was apparently below the threshold of these reviewers. A long advertisement in the *Times*, instigated by Philip Roth among others, called for a radical change in the quality of that paper’s cultural writing, and to everybody’s surprise the editors seemed to take notice.

At least that was how I interpreted the moment in 1965 when I was approached by Clifton Daniels, the *Times*’ managing editor, who inquired whether I might be interested in becoming the paper’s theater critic. Flattered as I was by the proposal, daily reviewing was clearly not in my future. Theater notices in those days had to be completed between the falling of the curtain and the rising of the sun, and I was unable to write that fast. More importantly, though I had no hesitation about speaking my mind from a seat of relative powerlessness, it was quite another thing to be responsible for the potential unemployment of so many

theater workers or the mental health of so many sensitive artists. So I turned down the offer and recommended Stanley Kauffmann for the job.

It was a favor for which he may never forgive me. Stanley was appointed and lasted about a year. After a highly contentious season, in which he annoyed Broadway producers by asking to review previews, he was replaced by Walter Kerr, responding to the *Times*’ invitation to leave the *Herald-Tribune*. The revolt was over. A few years later, the *Times* would consolidate its return to traditionalism when Kerr moved to the Sunday section and the paper’s dance critic, Clive Barnes, took over the daily post.

The ’60s was also the decade when the resident-theater movement was moving into full gear with the financial aid of the Ford, Rockefeller and Mellon foundations, not to mention the budding National Endowment for the Arts. Barricades were being built between critics from smaller publications and nonprofit theater on the one hand, and the major critics and the commercial stage on the other. My confrontation with Walter Kerr over Jonathan Miller’s production of Robert Lowell’s *The Old Glory* at The American Place Theatre was typical. Kerr dismissed it out of hand. I found it one of the finest of the year and an occasion for rejoicing that a major American poet was writing for the stage. My review concluded with a mock challenge to Kerr: I offered to stop reviewing Broadway musicals if he would agree to stay away from off-Broadway experiments.

Kerr treated my proposal with the disdainful silence it probably deserved. And his attitude was even more lofty when—after abandoning my critic’s job for the next 13 years—I moved to New Haven to start the Yale Repertory Theatre. Kerr wanted to come up and review our productions. I wrote to him that these were essentially the workshop projects of a developing company, and as such should not be subjected to the hit-flop standards of the commercial theater. Would he kindly stay away? Kerr replied, “I will respect your wishes. I wish I could respect your manners.”

Ouch. A few years later, forced by the funding climate to depend more and more on national recognition, I would be humbly begging Kerr to come. He did, and wrote reviews that were rarely more than mildly patronizing.

As for reviewers in cities supporting resident theaters, they were mostly would-be Walter Kerrs who had cut their teeth on pre-Broadway tryouts and Broadway tours. For a while, we tried to foster critics' learning, scholarship, style and knowledge of theater process through a DFA program in drama criticism at Yale. Yet most of our students couldn't find newspaper jobs when they graduated (Michael Feingold of *The Village Voice* was a notable exception), probably because the editors didn't want anyone more informed than their readers. As a result, I finally had to admit defeat and let Yale's criticism program devolve into a program in literary management.

The critics whom I most wanted to evaluate our work—and that of non-profit companies forming all over the country—were my former colleagues. But now that America was finally developing the kind of theater they had been calling for—dedicated to art, not profit, to works of high literary sensibility rather than mere entertainment—those needed to do the work of evaluation were headed elsewhere. Hardwick, Gilman, Sheed and others went back to book reviewing and general critical essays; Sontag became a novelist; and Bentley occupied himself writing plays.

Jack Kroll was a constant visitor and an intelligent analyst of resident theater, though even he was not allowed to review everything he wanted. William A. Henry III, a gadfly of Yale Rep while he was undergraduate theater critic for the *Yale Daily News*, later developed into a very cogent critic of plays produced outside New York for *Time* magazine. John Simon would have come more often if we had provided him with a limousine, but we knew he hated any deviation from a traditional approach to the classics. The others showed very little interest in our work or that of other resident theaters. Indeed, by this point they had mostly

stopped reviewing plays.

It is hard to say with any accuracy why the intelligentsia lost interest in the theater just as it was in the process of reform. One reason, surely, was what many consider to be the collapse of Broadway. It is one thing to write screeds about the vulgarities and stu-

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pidities of a powerful cultural behemoth. It is quite another to take responsibility for the results. For years Broadway had been synonymous with American theater and attracted huge audiences. But now it was buckling at the knees, felled by escalating ticket costs and diminishing creative excitement. Box-office sales had fallen precipitously. The flops outnumbered the hits. The commercial theater was ceasing to create, or even attract, the major stars whose names could keep box offices humming. And even leading playwrights such as Miller, Williams and Albee were finding it hard to get commercial production. If their plays finally did reach Broadway, they were usually panned—and this time not by their old antagonists but by *The New York Times*. Indeed, after 1979, when I had returned as reviewer for *The New Republic*, I felt compelled to defend the same playwrights I had once criticized, sometimes if only to counteract the perfunctory way they were being dismissed by Frank Rich, who had developed unprecedented power as the latest critic for the *Times*. Combining Atkinson's gravitas with Kerr's show-biz savvy, along with a bit of Simon's vituperation, Rich was becoming known as the Butcher of Broadway.

There had always been something

vaguely parasitical about our critical feeding off of big Broadway reputations. We needed them, not just to exercise our vocabulary of scorn but to provide us with a negative context. We also needed their reflected glamour. (In an article called "Ann-Margret and the Critics," Rocco Landesman, a theater aficionado before he became a Broadway producer, shrewdly analyzed the motives of small-publication critics, saying that we were secretly as starstruck as anyone else.)

I suppose I was naive to believe that the new resident-theater movement could attract the kind of critical minds commensurate with its ambitions. First of all, who would provide these New Yorkers with travel money for trips to Minneapolis, Louisville or any of the other "remote" places where plays were being produced? *Partisan Review*? *The New York Review of Books*? From time to time, my own theaters—first the Yale Repertory Theatre and then the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge—invented pretexts for intelligent writers to come see our work, though rarely in their capacity as critics. We invited the likes of Lizzie Hardwick, Harold Clurman, Eric Bentley, and Susan Sontag to lecture, direct, or write plays. Michael Feingold, Albert Bermel and Stanley Kauffmann spent time with us in Cambridge as adapters, translators or panelists. None of these eminent people ever wrote about any of our productions or, to my knowledge, those of any other resident company outside of New York.

Instead, the work of my theater and of similar ones throughout the nation was being reviewed by the local media, who were applying the same standards to Shakespeare and Beckett as to the commercial claptrap being shuttled to and from a greatly weakened Broadway. In an article called "Where Are the Repertory Critics?" I called for a new kind of critical mind, one capable of recognizing that a resident theater was not a show shop turning out hits and flops but rather a living organism of artists developing alongside audiences. I begged for the critic who could recog-

nize that the actor he praised in *Waiting for Godot* may have been the same one he had panned the previous week in *Twelfth Night*, that there were links between plays and performances capable of being appreciated by a discerning intelligence. Most of the local reviewers I spoke to about this issue complained that they lacked the space and/or the editorial support to offer anything more than snap judgments and a synopsis of the plot.

My final effort to change the prevailing intellectual climate took place in 1992, when the American Repertory Theatre ran a symposium on critics and criticism. The weekend symposium was intended as an opportunity for a number of critics to sit on panels with theater artists and, through discussions about the nature of American theater criticism, air their disagreements. Following an amiable keynote address by Benedict Nightingale, former Sunday critic for *The New York Times*, the blood began to flow. Frank Rich had been invited but declined—wisely, no doubt, since he turned out to be a major target. There had been, for example, a backstage feud going on between him and Jack Kroll ever since Rich anointed him with the title Jack-the-Hype, an appellation Kroll took the opportunity to rebut in public. Jules Feiffer took ferocious exception to John Simon's exceptional

ferocity, and both engaged in the kind of rough-and-tumble rarely displayed outside of gladiatorial combat. And Kevin Kelly of *The Boston Globe*, perhaps because he hadn't been invited, would reserve his own comments for future reviews of our work.

Looking back, though, I believe this was a very healthy act of catharsis that, without perhaps changing any minds, demonstrated the fact that there were alternatives to the prevailing system of reviewing. The event also showed that if there was discontent with the state of American theater, there was also considerable dissatisfaction with its criticism.

Did anyone care? Certainly, to judge by the dwindling amount of space being devoted to plays in newspapers and magazines, interest in the theater was diminishing among the general public. *Time* and *Newsweek* had virtually dropped their regular drama coverage. The last theater article I can remember being published in *Harper's* was a screed aptly called "Theaterophobia" by the movie critic David Denby. After Frank Rich abandoned daily criticism to become an op-ed writer, the *Times* lost much of its interest in the theater, as well as some of its power, and at present has given up its Sunday theater column as well. *The New Yorker* continued to cover theater—mainly when John Lahr, who spends half his year in London, got

a chance to praise some English import—but in a desultory way. Even *The Village Voice* cut down its once-hefty reviewing staff. The heyday of American theater criticism seemed to be officially over.

I'm not foolish enough to ring death knells for the American theater or for American theater criticism. Somehow, people of extraordinary talent—playwrights, directors, actors, composers, designers—continue to work against the odds. And there are still people of intellect, writing for Internet organs like HotReview (Jonathan Kalb) or in cheeky journals like *The New York Sun* (Jeremy McCarter), or even for mass-circulation dailies like *Newsday* (Linda Winer), who are responsive to the more adventurous expressions of the form. In academic journals, Elinor Fuchs and Arthur Holmberg are always worth reading for their scholarship and wit.

Whether these people will manage to establish the kind of influence enjoyed in the past is doubtful. But if there is one thing we have learned over time, it is that theater criticism cannot simply be the negative expression of a disgruntled voice railing at lifeless objects. It has to recognize, endorse, and advance the possibilities of renewal. Without this, criticism becomes simply another mode of performance, and the critic another actor gesticulating in the void.

THOUGHTS ON ARCHITECTURE CRITICISM

BY ROBERT CAMPBELL

MY FAVORITE DEFINITION of a critic is by the French author Anatole France, who wrote, “A good critic is one who describes his adventures among masterpieces.”

That’s the ideal. Good criticism isn’t a judicial system or a system of punishment. As a critic, you shouldn’t be primarily a member of the taste police. You should be a fan, an appreciator, an enthusiast, someone able to awaken your readers to the wonder of the world as it is as well as the wonder of how much better it could become. My favorite example in any field is the American critic Randall Jarrell, who wrote about poetry with a sense of shocked and delighted discovery. It’s easier to raise people’s standards by admiring what’s good than by knocking what’s bad.

Architectural criticism is in some ways unique. Other critics are, to a large extent, consumer guides. They help you decide which play to see, concert to attend, book to read or restaurant to try. Architecture is not “consumed” in the same way. Except in the case of an occasional spectacular and heavily hyped new art museum, we don’t normally buy a ticket to see a building. The question, therefore, is why have architecture critics at all? What is their purpose?

I think it is to stimulate a conversation in society about what constitutes a good place for human beings to live and work in. A work of architecture must always be understood as a contributing part of something larger than itself. It’s rare that it can usefully be evaluated as an isolated art object.

For that reason, I think architecture critics go astray when they imitate critics of other arts. The experience of works of art other than architecture is normally a

“framed” experience. When you look at a painting, you see it in a frame. It is framed off in space. When you go to a movie, it begins and ends. It is framed off in time. Buildings, however, are framed neither in time nor in space. They exist in relatively stable relation to their spatial context, especially the con-

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individual building.*

text of other buildings. And they exist indefinitely in time.

It’s helpful to remember that this used to be true of painting as well. Before the Renaissance, a painting invariably existed in some permanent relation to a cultural and physical context. Perhaps it was an altarpiece, integral with its church, meant not as an artwork to be appreciated in isolation but rather as an illustration of the meaning of Christianity. Or it was a mural, or a floor mosaic, or a decorative frieze, all of them permanently attached to some larger place and system of values.

Then it dawned on someone in the Renaissance that you could take the painting off the wall, frame it, sign it and send it out to the marketplace, where it could be sold. Painting changed forever. Now you could talk about an Uccello or a Kandinsky as a commodity, as a brand-name product.

Something similar has happened

more recently to architecture. It too has become frameable and signable. We have found a way to rip the building out of its context in time and space. The change here, of course, came with the arrival of contemporary media, especially with the invention of photography in the nineteenth century and the rise, starting about 1930, of architectural photography as a profession of highly skilled practitioners. Photography is the removal of context. A photograph of a work of architecture frames it off from the world and freezes it at a single moment in time.

We now live in a culture so pervaded by media that we barely notice it. It is a world of framed images in our magazines, on our screens, and increasingly in our imaginations. We have therefore come to think of buildings as we think of paintings. We think of them as existing not in a specific time and place, but in the worldwide media stream of images.

I’m often reminded, in this connection, of the Smith house, designed by the architect Richard Meier and built in the mid-sixties on the coast of Connecticut. I’ve never been there, and neither has anyone else I know. But it is familiar to every architect in the world, at least those of my generation, through photographs by the great architectural photographer Ezra Stoller.

In this case, it seems to me that the image, not the house, is the end product of the design process. The house becomes merely a means to the image. The image is a far more potent and influential presence in world culture. Inevitably, once that’s realized, architects begin to design with an eye to the eventual photograph.

Art exists in order to be appreciated. It is a grave error, but one commonly

made by critics and others, to believe that buildings exist primarily for the same reason. A building is a work of art too, but of a different kind. Which brings me to my own definition of architecture. It's this: Architecture is the art of making places. The places may be rooms and corridors, or streets and squares, or gardens and golf courses. As far as I'm concerned, they're all architecture, because they are all places made for human habitation.

And that's how you experience architecture: You inhabit it. You don't merely look at it or walk around it. You *inhabit* it—either literally with your own body or figuratively with your imagination—as you look up, perhaps, at a window and imagine yourself to be inside looking out.

You inhabit with all your senses. Think of a visit, let's say, to a church in an Italian hill town. You enter the church, and suddenly the air is cool and humid. The ache in your knees speaks of the steps you have climbed to get here. The intense sun outside is replaced by the shadowy cave of the church. Sound here is more hushed, yet more reverberant. You hear a motorcycle start up outside, making you feel how intensely you are inside. You're starting to smell the candles now. Light draws you toward the altar. As you move across the floor, you realize it's been carved into a kind of landscape by many people walking over time. And as you move, you begin to have the primal experience of architecture—perceiving that space configures and reconfigures around you as you move through it.

Not too much of that experience is purely visual. Yet in the media culture, we pretend to ourselves that framed images can wholly represent places.

There are, of course, some kinds of art that resemble architecture in being unframed. Installation art is precisely a reaction against the framed object on the white and placeless museum wall. Such art interacts with its context. One thinks, for example, of Donald Judd's work in Marfa, Texas, where his art is inextricably involved not only with the preexisting town, its landscape, and its history as a military base, but also with

the living and working quarters of the artist. But such works are very much the exception. Most art is framed off. Most art is also useless. Indeed, Robert Rauschenberg defines art as that which has no use. But architecture can neither be framed, nor can it (with rare exceptions) be useless.

Buildings exist in relation to other buildings. Together they shape the spaces, both indoors and out, in which we live our lives. It is the quality of the world of interactive spaces that matters most, not the aesthetics of this or that individual building. As the Luxembourg architect Leon Krier has suggested, when an architect designs a building he or she should think, "I am making a piece of the whole world."

*New styles of
architecture now
appear every few years
and enjoy a brief run of
fashion. They then fail
to disappear.*

It is the shift from thinking about architecture as the making of places to thinking of it as the making of frameable aesthetic objects that has made architectural criticism so much more problematic today than in the past. It is possible to establish criteria with which to evaluate the quality of a place. But it is difficult, to say the least, to assess the merit of an arbitrary formal exercise. As a result, there is today no consensus about what "good" architecture is.

That wasn't always true. The profession of architectural criticism as now practiced was begun by Ada Louise Huxtable, the *New York Times* critic from 1963-82. There had been a couple of notable predecessors—Montgomery Schuyler in many publications from 1880-1914 and Lewis Mumford in *The New Yorker* in the 1930s and 1940s—but Huxtable was the first full-time professional architecture critic writing for a newspaper.

Huxtable knew her values and

expressed them emphatically. And the *Times* encouraged definite opinions. She recalls that the editor who gave her the job, Clifton Daniel, would often say in the early days, "Make up your mind, Ada Louise. Make up your mind." Huxtable had little difficulty in doing that, because she was a dedicated modernist. She wrote in an era when modernism was still fresh, and the battle to establish it over historic styles was still in progress. The pale ghost of early modernism's social agenda, based on socialist political beliefs, was still present. So was the movement's infatuation with the machine.

Huxtable was the public voice of the modernist consensus in American architectural culture. She was also, coming as she did from an art history background, a dedicated preservationist who despised new buildings that revived older styles. When, in 1970, she won the first Pulitzer Prize ever given in the field of criticism (and later, in 1981, received a MacArthur Fellowship), she solidified the status of architecture criticism as a beat for major newspapers.

Today the old modernist unanimity has disappeared. New styles of architecture now appear every few years and enjoy a brief run of fashion. They then fail to disappear. We've seen styles called postmodernism, deconstruction, blob architecture, modernist revival, new urbanism and neoclassicism. We've seen notable architects become fascinated with, among many other themes, tectonic-plate movement, linguistic analysis, fractal geometry, climatic sustainability and junk materials as primary sources for architectural form.

We've seen a revival of architecture's being perceived as an elitist cult activity to be appreciated only by the knowing, in-group aficionado. We've witnessed, by contrast, a powerful reversion to the traditional, a move that is certainly a reaction against the confusion and, to many people, incomprehensibility of contemporary styles. An example would be a place like Princeton, which is now anxious to restore the "brand image" of the school as established by its neo-Gothic architecture of 100 years ago. And we've also seen, in the work of someone like

the Dutch architect and writer Rem Koolhaas, a kind of slummer's delight in the worst excesses of populist, capitalist sprawl development.

In this swamp of multiple and arbitrary viewpoints, where does the critic find a place to stand? It's no longer possible to be, as Huxtable was, the voice of a clear consensus that believed in itself with an almost messianic fervor. In the absence of a fixed set of values against which to appraise a building, how does a writer make value judgments? What, to ask the question once again, is the purpose of an architecture critic?

I would argue that the only answer to that question is to abandon our habit of looking at architecture as a frameable art like painting, and to see it again, as we did before photography, in a larger context. We have to reach outside architecture to find the values by which to judge it. It sounds corny to say, but it's time to remember that architecture is about how we should live on our planet. It is about where we live, not what we look at. I suggest that the future of architecture lies in re-attaching it to these larger issues.

You can summarize these issues with the one word "health"—personal health, social health and planetary health. Architecture can, for example, help keep us from being obese by creating walkable, bikeable communities, or by offering enticing public stairs instead of hiding them behind the elevator, or by keeping us in touch with the natural world. It can help preserve democracy by creating settlement patterns that draw different kinds of people into public places where they mix, meet and learn about one another's concerns. It can help preserve the planet by curbing the kind of mindless sprawl development that destroys nature while poisoning the atmosphere and maximizing consumption of planetary resources.

Spelling out those aims is the work of another essay. The purpose of this one is to point a way out of the current mess of values-free aestheticism. The role of architectural criticism, unlike that of other kinds, is to make connections between architecture and other values. Or as Columbia University President

Lee Bollinger put it in a spring 2003 talk on journalism in general, it is to mediate between confused experts on the one hand and common sense on the other.

In no way do I mean to play down the purely architectural merits of buildings. We can all delight in mastery of metaphor, craftsmanship, invention, light and space, and in the way a building, like a poem, can comment on its predecessors and thus join the great narrative of architecture history. There is all this and much else besides. But those joys aren't enough.

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Nor do I suggest that the critic approach a building with some kind of predetermined checklist of qualities against which it should be measured. Not at all. As I suggested in the fantasy of visiting an Italian hill town, your first duty as a critic is to immerse yourself in the work. Values have to be placed on hold while you do that. A building can be good in ways that never would have occurred to you until you were there. The critic should come as close as possible to drowning in sensual experience, only then striking out for the shore of some kind of formulation.

But when the formulation comes, it must be to place the building within the framework of a larger world of values. As the landscape architect Reuben Rainey once eloquently put it, "Design is, in essence, giving form to value." That has always been true. The world we build is a readable graph of the values of the people who create it. Often it's a graph of power. When the king is in charge, the palace is the biggest building. When it's the cardinal, it's the cathe-

dral. When it's democratic government, it's the capitol. When it's the corporation, it's the office tower.

Take office towers: One may think of them, especially ones built in recent decades, as being inexpressive of values. They are simple boxes of leasable space. They look like the carton the real building came in. But that, of course, is precisely the value they broadcast so eloquently: that what matters in the world is commerce and nothing more. Where the party-hatted spires of older skyscrapers like the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings were a metaphor for a kind of joyous individual aspiration under capitalism, the boxtops of today speak of a more collective, anonymous corporate culture.

That's just one example. Architecture is always eloquent, not just a slide show. We should be asking, though, whether it's eloquent about the values that matter long-term. Only when we ask that question will we recover from our infatuation with each passing visual style.

The British critic J. M. Richards once wrote, "Architecture cannot progress by the fits and starts that a succession of revolutionary ideas involves. Nor, if it exists perpetually in a state of revolution, will it achieve any kind of public following, since public interest thrives on a capacity to admire what is already familiar and a need to label and classify."

We must ask architects to first imagine a better world and then supply the buildings that will help to create it. Buildings must be placed, and understood, within a web of larger values. When that happens, the public—some of whom suspect that architects have "revolutionary values" and subscribe to a private set of aesthetic beliefs nobody else understands—may once again become appreciators and supporters of good architecture.

In its landmark 2001 study *The Architecture Critic*, the National Arts Journalism Program came up with some sobering facts. Of the 40 critics surveyed, 32 disagreed with the statement, "Generally speaking, we can be proud of the new built environment we have

developed over the past 25 years.” Of the 10 American buildings the critics liked best, none was completed later than 1939, an amazing 65 years ago. I don’t fully agree; I would certainly place the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, by Louis Kahn, on that list. But the larger point is true. For all the fuss over isolated avant-garde works like Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, nobody

really believes we are living in a great era of architecture.

When we succeed in reconnecting architecture to the needs and values of the larger world, that disbelief will end. So will the skepticism of the public. Interest in architecture will grow. So will the number of architecture critics, now pathetically few.

The critics who responded to the

NAJP survey understand this. Much of their writing crosses the border between architecture and broader social and environmental issues such as ecology, sprawl, urbanism, planning and preservation. Like President Bollinger’s journalists, they are seeking to mediate between expertise—in this case, that of the architects—and the common sense of the larger public.

THE FINE ARTS ON TV

BY DONALD MUNRO & JOSHUA SEFTTEL

THE WOMAN'S LIPS are lush and insistent. "I confess I love that which caresses me," they say. The tightly framed shot of her face is a pretty good way to snare your garden-variety channel surfer. Her mouth is full and sensuous, her voice dramatic and beckoning. "Stand up and look at me, face-to-face, friend-to-friend," the lips continue. And even though we simply see a person talking—no sex, no violence, none of the frenetic stuff to which television audiences are said to be addicted with the passion of crack addicts—there's something about the intensity of her delivery that makes the moment compelling. Even the most disinterested observer might linger.

Can TV cover the fine arts? Sure it can. But it's so rare we've almost forgotten it can be done. As the lips segment continues, it's a mystery as to what it's all about until we are introduced to Robert Pinsky, a former United States poet laureate, framed in a more standard interview shot in which we can see his entire face and upper body. "The medium for a poem," he says, "is breath."

Yes, the subject is poetry. On *television*. This piece—on WGBH-TV's acclaimed *Greater Boston Arts*, which features people from all walks of life reciting the words of Sappho and others—is devoted to what some would consider to be among the least telegenic of topics. You can almost sense the casual channel surfer, for whom fine-arts coverage on television is synonymous with stuffy *Masterpiece Theatre* reruns and poorly lighted ballet recitals, recoiling in horror. How dare this show be so intriguing—and so fluent in the language of television—that it tricks me into watching something about poetry?

It would be nice to think that poetry is being covered in seductively creative ways on television all across the country.

Of course, such a claim would be pure fiction. For the most part, TV simply ignores such subjects as theater, dance, visual arts and—God forbid—poetry. And when the attempt is made, it often falls flat. A fixed camera tries to capture a theater performance. A dancer keeps getting lost on a dark stage. A large and resonant painting looks flat and unin-

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teresting on the small screen.

"I think that arts programming on commercial television doesn't necessarily work," says Shari Levine, a vice president and executive producer at Bravo. "It just doesn't have a big enough audience. We've done opera in prime time—the viewer wasn't interested."

Though Levine says there aren't hard statistics available on how much Bravo has shifted away from fine-arts offerings in the last five years, she notes that the network—which is home to such shows as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*—now positions itself as a mainstream-entertainment channel. Even when audiences do flock to, say, *The Three Tenors* on PBS, most of their members are over 55—not the sort of viewers that commercial networks crave.

Charles M. Gray, a professor of economics at the University of St. Thomas

in Minneapolis, says general television coverage of the arts has decreased over the past decade. Even classical music—one of the fine arts thought to be best-suited to television—dropped 8 percent in terms of media-participation rates between 1992 and 2002, as compared to 1982-1992. The 2002 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* indicated that only 18 percent of the population, or 37 million people, viewed a classical music performance at least once on TV, video or DVD in a 12-month period. "We can presume that the media, by and large being a for-profit media, don't see there's a profit in this," says Gray, citing a study he and Joni Maya Cherbo conducted for the National Endowment for the Arts based on the 2002 survey. "And the non-profit media became a smaller percentage of the total."

So much for the giddy assumption, when cable first appeared, that more channels would mean better coverage of such niche markets as the fine arts. How much "A" is left in the A&E network these days?

As for network TV, you can pretty much forget about it, except for such holdovers as the venerable *Sunday Morning* show on CBS, which still manages to work in an arts-related segment most weeks.

On one hand, some think that the less arts coverage on TV the better, simply because the medium can't do justice to the subject. "Normally television—even public television—should be kept as far away from art as a convicted child molester should from a neighborhood playground," wrote Christopher Knight, a fine-arts critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, in 2003. "Mass culture thrives on piety, genuine or fake, and piety suffocates art." Others say it might be more useful to think of television not as a sub-

stitute for experiencing the arts firsthand, but more as a preview. For no matter how inferior it is to the real thing, it can pique the interest of the audience. Gray's research also indicates a strong link between media exposure and attendance at live events; someone who'd seen an orchestral performance on TV was thus more likely to attend a live concert.

Then there's the issue of the arts requiring context and background, especially among audience members who didn't have childhood exposure through their parents or from a strong educational influence. "Arts are complex things to consume," Gray says. "They're not like potatoes and meat. We have to develop what you might call 'consumption skills.' The media can be an important piece of that."

Something's better than nothing, it seems.

Are there any art forms that TV is able to portray well? While classical music and opera can sometimes adequately translate, theater is a challenge. The exception might be plays with very small casts; an Albee drama might come across better than a play by Shakespeare. The visual arts are difficult, too. "If I were a painter, I would cringe to see my work on video," says Boston choreographer Caitlin Corbett. Then again, she adds, capturing live dance on TV isn't exactly a breeze either: "How can you? It flattens the essence of it."

At one low-budget extreme, dance can seem terribly static on television—faraway and disengaged—with one or two fixed cameras providing almost perfunctory visuals. At the other end of the spectrum, though, TV's penchant for the close-up can destroy its overall look and feel. "Then you're missing all the choreography because you have to look at the sexy dancer," says Corbett, whose Caitlin Corbett Dance Company juxtaposes everyday movement with cutting-edge modern dance. "You wind up not doing justice to the work."

Corbett says the best dance pieces she's seen on TV are those in which the videographer collaborates with the choreographer instead of taking a purely

documentary approach. That collaboration includes a long pre-shooting discussion, so the videographer understands the dance well before filming begins. "When you're really able to see dance is when you aren't trying to treat it as a live art," she says. Then again, Corbett adds, the bigger the budget, the better the chance that a visually sophisticated mainstream audience will pay attention. "Equipment has everything to do with it," she says. "Lighting has everything to do with it. The higher-end production you have, the better it's going to be."

Stephanie Stewart, the series producer of *Greater Boston Arts*, says that lately it's become more of a challenge to

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raise money for arts segments on her show. "It takes an enormous amount of perseverance to continue making arts for television, given that arts do not garner large audiences and so need to be justified on other, non-market-driven terms," she says. "Even in public broadcasting, making this case just keeps getting harder." And while the cost of production has come down in recent years—shooting and editing are cheaper by meaningful margins—Stewart notes that experienced producers may be forced out of the business if their salaries are cut too severely, causing production values to suffer.

You can't help but imagine, then, that if enough resources were put into covering the fine arts on TV, almost anything could look good—from the stuffiest

opera to a segment on the most static of sculptures. Think about how much money a television network puts into broadcasting a professional football game—the myriad cameras, the top-notch direction, the fancy graphics. Compared to the craft and expense of such endeavors, arts programming, for the most part, is like a Friday-night high school football game televised on cable access, using a stationary camera from the press box. Such a presentation might get the job done for die-hard fans and the players' parents, but for everyone else, it's so unappealing you can't move your remote finger fast enough.

Yet TV can pull through despite its limitations. Programs such as *Sunday Morning*, *Greater Boston Arts* and the cancelled *Egg* have regularly transformed the fine arts into compelling television. Yo-Yo Ma's six-part *Inspired by Bach* film series, coproduced by PBS, racked up awards at the Berlin and Venice film festivals. The PBS series *Art: 21* garnered strong reviews for producers Susan Sollins and Catherine Tatge and director Charles Atlas, who "let the artists do the talking on their own behalf, both in the studio and at various exhibition venues," Christopher Knight noted in an *L.A. Times* review.

Sometimes it's about finding a strong narrative in an arts story, such as when *Sunday Morning* delved into the mystique of the Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, who became the It Girl of the art world after interest in her was sparked in the 1980s. The result was strong on biography—including the scandal of what reads today like a modern-day date rape. With such a fascinating character, the story had extra "zip," says executive producer Rand Morrison.

At other times, it's about using the very limitations of the subject matter to make a compelling visual story. Consider when *Greater Boston Arts* chose to do a piece on a postage-stamp exhibition. When the producer and cameraman arrived at the gallery a few days before the exhibit was to open, they found a harried curator, a room with blank walls, and postage stamps all over the floor. There was nothing to film.

The producer ran to the store and

bought a large magnifier while the cameraman dug through the back of his van and found a pane of clear glass. They laid the stamps on the pane, placed the curator on one side with the magnifier in her hand, and shot the interview through the glass. The result was a visually arresting interview that featured the artwork in the foreground and the curator in the background, playfully distorted by the magnifier as she spoke about the stamps.

And then there's poetry. If WGBH can make it look good, isn't there hope?

Even by the finicky standards of a medium that values the visual above all else, the *Greater Boston Arts* segment on poetry comes across as good television. When the first woman—with those compelling lips—recites the opening line, the image itself draws the viewer in.

There's no doubt that the pull of this piece, and of others created for the series, is visual. We drink in the details on the very real faces we see in front of us: the

odd-shaped nose of a man, the big plastic-rimmed glasses of a woman, the silver hoop earring caught in a sliver of one

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frame. People are drawn to people.

Stewart, at WGBH, never stops thinking about the visual, no matter what genre is being presented. For her, that's what sets TV apart. And even though it might make the job tougher, it also makes possible—when the stars and funding align—arts coverage that is

art in itself.

In many ways, fine arts will always be an awkward fit on TV—unless something pretty strange happens to the nation's drinking-water supply and Super Bowl-sized audiences start tuning in to 30-minute segments on disaffected abstract-expressionist painters. In that case, production values would become so lavish that it would be hard *not* to make art exciting. But the hope remains that by taking a creative approach, even a niche market can be nurtured.

"I don't think the good old days are behind us, but I do think we have to come up with some antidotes to the relentless demands of the market when it comes to the arts," Stewart says. "In a celebrity-driven society, can you name a living artist who is a household name? The problem is engendering the interest of a broad audience and of funders despite the fact that no one will get rich from it."

BELOW THE RADAR

COVERING THE ARTS UNDERGROUND

BY DOUGLAS WOLK

A LINE THAT SNAKES AROUND the block for hours leads to a manhole, through which people climb down to an abandoned 19th-century train tunnel filled with a tunnel-themed art-and-video show; no newspaper covers it. More than a thousand people crowd into a warehouse basement in which artists are displaying their work everywhere, musical and acrobatic performances are happening in multiple rooms, and the bar is serving absinthe; no newspaper has even been notified that it's happening. A truck with a sound system pulls up to the front of the public library, and 100 people sitting on the steps abruptly burst into an elaborately choreographed five-minute dance routine, then disperse; organizers are careful not to let the news media know about it. At a "subway party" in San Francisco, a reporter introduces himself as being from *The New York Times*, tries to interview participants and finds himself shunned as a tool of the corporate press.

There's always more interesting art going on in any city than a newspaper has room to cover. Especially in the last 10 years or so, the arts and culture underground has fallen out of touch with newspapers to the point where dailies and even alternative weeklies may not be in the loop about significant artists and events, while the Internet is becoming the preferred source of information for young readers. Artists who operate below the radar may not know how to seek out publicity from traditional print media; they may simply not care about "validation" from the press. In some cases, especially if the circumstances of their work are legally dodgy, they may actively try to avoid press coverage. At the same time, the smart young audiences that newspapers want to court

are increasingly suspicious of them—partly because their cultural world is being ignored. What's a paper to do?

"You can't really cover something unless you have someone who's invested in it," says Jeff Stark, editor of "Nonsense NYC," an e-mail omnium-gatherum of unusual and uncategorizable New York events, which is sent out

"If you're interested in covering the arts, you have to be going out to find them. They don't come and find you."

every week with the note that "you do not have permission to use any of the listings for your commercial publication." Stark has been on both sides of the underground/journalism divide. A former editor at Salon.com, he's also one of the people behind the Madagascar Institute, a wildly inventive Brooklyn arts collective that had never been mentioned in the *Times* until the group's director, Chris Hackett, injured himself and attracted the FBI's attention with an accidental explosion in January 2004.

"If I was a music editor at a major daily," Stark says, "I'd never hire anyone who didn't go out at least four times a week. Journalists can get really lazy—they think they know about a city because they've lived there for a while, and they forget that there are new people arriving and trying new things. If you're interested in covering the arts, you have to be going out to find them. They don't come and find you. Papers should be interested in finding good stories and interesting things that are

happening in their community—at the most basic level that's their job."

Those stories don't often come prepackaged as press releases or as listings from regular advertisers and well-established venues. Flyers—especially in record stores, no matter what medium they're promoting—and word of mouth are the traditional tools of the underground, but new culture is increasingly publicized, discussed and evaluated on the Internet—sometimes on e-mail lists like "Nonsense NYC," sometimes on Web sites. As Robert Kimberly puts it, "An Internet presence is the reverse of a mass mailing: You only have to create it once for anyone to see it."

Kimberly runs a Weblog called "Las Vegas Arts and Culture" that he started in the fall of 2003 to cover his city's scene, which he thinks its newspapers neglect. "This will sound terrible, but I don't subscribe to the local papers," he says. "I don't find anything of interest in them." He launched the site, with free software from Apple and a free account from Blogger, in response to a specific event: Survival Research Labs, the infamous Bay Area robots-and-explosives group, had planned a large-scale performance in Las Vegas, "and a lot of people didn't know about it—and they were people I knew would love it. I thought, this is the final straw."

Heidi Calvert, who runs the multi-purpose art space Bluespace, in Los Angeles, says she doesn't read the papers either, especially for coverage of art, and doesn't have much hope of newspapers' covering her scene anytime soon. "We're just doing it ourselves. The artists go around passing out flyers, and we use Tribe and Friendster and Myspace and Livejournal to promote our events.

Even the *L.A. Weekly* is picky about what they cover—maybe you have to know someone there or you have to be connected with celebrities.”

In Portland, Ore., James Squeaky runs a Yahoo! mailing list, “pdxshows,” for people who want to get the word out about informally organized happenings—mostly music, but sometimes other art events. He notes that the *Portland Mercury*, one of two local weeklies, covers some of the same territory, partly because its music editor is thoroughly keyed into the local scene: “We’re fortunate to have the *Mercury* in Portland, but I haven’t quite figured out how to get those events into good hands at the *Willamette Week*.”

That’s a constant complaint from artists and event organizers who haven’t dealt with print media in the past. They don’t know where to start or whom to call or what form to use for their information, and papers make it difficult to connect with the right person. Some journalists are so lazy they won’t get around to anything that doesn’t come from a paid publicist. Another Portlander, artist and occasional journalist Tiffany Lee Brown, notes that “part of the wall between these events and coverage is simply a presentation issue.” She consulted with the local group 2 Gylrz Performative Arts to help them understand how to deal with the press for their hard-to-classify “Interactive Language Festival,” and notes that “with a great deal of determination and focus on the part of the organizers, 2 Gylrz was able to get some mainstream media coverage for the festival—a lot of which made sense and was accurate.”

But other artists and events producers aren’t so well-equipped. David Cotner, who writes about avant-garde music for *L.A. Weekly*—and sends out a weekly e-mail list, “Actions,” which catalogues experimental performances all over the world—says that “there has to be an editor who’s there for writers to say, ‘Okay, go ahead and run with it.’” And he notes that artists who don’t have regularly scheduled events (and press releases going out on a regular basis) can be a hard sell.

The contents of the “Squid List” rarely overlap with those of the print newspapers. “Just look at what the papers cover,” Beale says. “We’ve got the underground art scene, but San Francisco’s got an established opera, the symphony, SFMOMA [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art]—by the time they’re done with that, they’re not going to drill down to any of the good stuff. I’m sure they’ll be writing about Survival Research Laboratories in 20 years; if Lawrence Ferlinghetti does something now, of

“There has to be an editor who’s there for writers to say, ‘Okay, go ahead and run with it.’”

course it gets written about. To me the newspapers are pretty far away. Especially in cities that have only one paper, there’s such an obligation to cover all that mainstream stuff.”

One source of the problem is that newspapers traditionally have their arts coverage neatly arranged in categories: film, music, theater, visual arts and so on. But a lot of underground art doesn’t fit easily into any section. It can be amorphous and event-based, and it often only happens once. As Beale puts it, “The film critic gets a screener, the drama critic goes to the preview; what do you do with this? If you’re going to cover it, you almost need an ‘other’ section. It’s outside the established art world—the point is not to make money selling it.”

Stark has less patience for newspaper editors who can’t find a spot to cover worthwhile but uncategorizable events: “If it’s that good, make room for it! I’m sorry for that music writer who needs to push their story back a day, or that fifth film that was opening that weekend that isn’t going to get written about, but if you’ve got a good story, run it! I think that we journalists want everything to be in neat little sections, but our readers don’t care as much

about it within the fold of the arts section. Find the space and go with it.”

Conversely, there’s the problem of what to do about artists and events organizers who actively shun publicity—not on ideological grounds but because they’re legally dubious. “House shows—that is, bands playing in someone’s basement—in particular, run into problems with police knowing about them ahead of time,” Squeaky says. Some kinds of events become more open to publicity over time, though. As an example, Beale cites Santacon, the tradition of having dozens of people in Santa Claus suits running amok across a city: “In the early days we definitely didn’t want any press—we had a lot of problems with the cops back then. Now I think police departments know about it and don’t care.”

In any case, the consensus is that newspapers should try to be respectful of artists’ wishes—and that reporters and newspapers that have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the underground arts world are much more likely to find their subjects cooperative. “Keep an open mind,” Cotner says. “Don’t have preconceived notions. Know when to keep your mouth shut. And once you get in the community, be friendly—most people are genuinely happy to talk about what they do.” Notes Stark: “The number one thing to do is what MTV did, and what all the magazines that have been successful in getting younger readers have done: *Bring on younger people*. You’ve got to listen to them and let them be part of the news organization. If you want people reading your listings to be smart 23-year-olds who go out a lot, then you’d better have a smart 23-year-old who goes out a lot editing that section.”

It’s also vital to avoid the error of separating coverage of newer, edgier art from a grayer “conventional” arts section. In practice it can make young readers trust newspapers even less. “I hate when newspapers launch those spin-off boutique papers that are supposed to do a better job of reaching out to young people and the arts,” Stark says. “It only ghettoizes them into this

substandard thing, and it ends up looking like a pathetic advertising grab.” Brown also argues for covering everything interesting in the same place: “We have social categories based on

class and education and employment and subculture, and they tend to prevent us from experiencing a wide range of art. I welcome publications and events that get people to crawl out of

their comfortable little boxes. That’s part of the reason I want mainstream media coverage—it opens the doors to people being able to discover something new and possibly mind-blowing.”

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGICAL SUMMARY

SCOPE OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

This research project was the second phase of an analysis of arts-and-culture coverage by metropolitan newspapers. The first phase was performed in October 1998. The second phase replicated the same procedures five years later, in October 2003.

In both phases the National Arts Journalism Program, in New York City, analyzed 15 metropolitan daily newspapers (weekday, Saturday and Sunday editions) from 10 markets. In 2003 two additional dailies from the same markets—the *Philadelphia Daily News* and the *Contra Costa Times*—were added. In each phase three national dailies were analyzed: the coding was performed in 1998 by the Center for Arts and Culture in Washington, D.C.; in 2003 by NAJP.

THE METROPOLITAN TITLES ANALYZED:

Charlotte:	<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>
Chicago:	<i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> <i>Chicago Tribune</i>
Cleveland:	<i>The Plain Dealer</i>
Denver:	<i>The Denver Post</i> <i>Rocky Mountain News</i>
Houston:	<i>Houston Chronicle</i>
Miami:	<i>The Miami Herald</i>
Philadelphia:	<i>Philadelphia Daily News</i> (2003 only) <i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>
Portland:	<i>The Oregonian</i>
Providence:	<i>The Providence Journal</i>
San Francisco	<i>Contra Costa Times</i>
Bay Area:	(2003 only) <i>The Oakland Tribune</i> <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> <i>San Francisco Examiner</i> <i>San Jose Mercury News</i>

THE NATIONAL TITLES ANALYZED:

The New York Times
USA Today
The Wall Street Journal

We requested the late home edition of each newspaper. Of the 20 newspapers, 14 published seven days a week; three, six days; and three, five days. So the month of 31 days in October 2003 should have rendered 584 separate issues. We received and coded 583 (*The Oakland Tribune* on Oct. 6 was missing). A few issues were delivered with some missing sections, 33 of them in total. The absence of most had minimal impact on our study. However, 10 of the missing were specialist arts sections. As a consequence, the data are somewhat understated for *The Plain Dealer* (one weekend supplement), the *Houston Chronicle* (one weekend supplement), *The Oakland Tribune* (two weekend supplements and one daily arts and leisure section on the 6th), *The Oregonian* (one weekend supplement and three daily A&Ls), and *The Providence Journal* (one daily A&L section).

PAGINATION

Each newspaper divides itself into sections. For broadsheets the sections are designated by the letter of the alphabet that precedes the page number. For the four tabloids in our study—the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, *San Francisco Examiner*—a section is designated by an internal title.

Each section was classified according to one of seven categories: news, business, sports, daily A&L (arts and lifestyles), weekend arts, nonarts features and advertising. News sections typically consist of the front-page “A” section and the Metro. Daily A&Ls were defined as the section containing the television listings grid; they typically go under such titles as Living or Life. Weekend arts were typically formatted as pullout supplements, often in tabloid format. Nonarts feature sections included topics such as travel, food, home and cars. Advertising sections had to contain no editorial matter whatsoever. We did not include national magazines such as *Parade* or pullout advertising supplements that were unpaginated with the newspaper’s section-letter system.

The number of pages for each section was counted and expressed as a proportion of the newspaper’s total. In cases where a section, supplement or magazine had a smaller, tabloid format, its size as a proportion of pages would be greater than its proportion of newsprint. Pages sold as full-page advertisements were counted for the specialist arts sections (the daily A&Ls and the weekend supplements) and calculated as a percentage of their total pagination.

ARTS AND CULTURE COVERAGE

Every section of each newspaper was scrutinized for articles and listings on arts and culture. These

included, but were not confined to, coverage of entertainment television; movies and DVDs; recorded and live music and music videos; publishing; the performing arts; decorative arts such as haute couture, interior design and arts and crafts; architecture; museums and libraries; entertainment radio; and video games. Stories on art news, policy and business were included as were the nonarts-related activities of artists, performers and celebrities. Stories in the weekly TV guide were included, but their grid of listings was not (since it was double-counted with the daily grid).

Excluded were stories on culture in the sociological sense: food and drink; religion, philosophy, education and the humanities. Nonarts media stories were excluded: nonentertainment television, including news, sports and advertising; magazines; other journalism; spectator sports; consumer fashion; media business; Internet, Web site and online media; technology; consumer electronics; and telecommunications.

Only editorial content was included. Advertising was excluded.

In October 1998, editorial content was divided into articles and listings as part of our analysis after the coding was performed. This meant that listings content—including the daily TV grid, calendar items and non-bylined thumbnail reviews—were coded back then as if they were articles and only subsequently reclassified. In October 2003, we changed the procedure so that the coder would first make the decision about whether an item was an article or a listing before performing subsequent coding. Phase-to-phase comparisons on this measure may be distorted by the effects of this change of procedure. However, we are confident that the October 2003 method is the more accurate of the two.

NEWSHOLE CODING

The dimensions of each article and listing were measured to obtain its area (height and width), which then was converted into nominal 2-inch-wide column inches. The area referred to the space filled by copy. Headlines, graphics, pull-quotes and images were not included in the measurement. In those cases where the layout used varying widths, the predominant width was measured. Each item was classified according to its artistic discipline (TV, movies, music, etc.) and the newspaper section in which it appeared. Listings were not further coded. Articles were.

ARTICLES CODING

An article was described by transcribing the headline, or if that was cryptic, by a brief précis. If the article was about a single artistic production, performer or institution, its title and name were noted. A total 7,217 articles were coded at the metropolitan newspapers and 1,530 at the nationals. Each article was further classified according to five attributes:

- Its prominence in the newspaper: whether it was a lead story.
- Its byline: written by a staffer or freelancer or provided by a syndicator or newswire.
- Its focus: a local, national, out-of-town or international story.
- Its type: news, feature, review, gossip, obituary or other type of journalism.
- Its artistic discipline: Seven broad categories were movies, music, TV, books and the performing, visual and decorative arts.

Artistic disciplines were further divided into such subcategories as pop-and-rock, classical and jazz music; theater, opera and dance in the performing field; fiction, nonfiction and self-help in publishing; painting, photography and sculpture in the visual arts.

QUALITY CONTROL

Coding was performed by Columbia University students in the fall of 2003 on NAJP premises. To minimize error, each issue of each newspaper was handled by two different coders. The first was assigned the task of locating the A&C articles and listings; the second revisited the same newspaper as a double check and performed the coding data entry.

Data were entered in a custom-written online interface, which contained built-in error checks to screen for illegal codes and ineligible newspaper sections. A field was designated to flag articles whose inclusion or exclusion was ambiguous, and they were resolved by Andrew Tyndall, the project's research analyst. Tyndall designed the coding structure and was in charge of the study five years earlier.

Tyndall checked the verbal description of each article to make sure it conformed with its code. For a double check all articles with the same code were grouped and proofread by coders to flag inconsistencies in categorization. Because any coder error in long articles would have a disproportionate effect on the findings, items of outlying length were coded twice.

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Preparing *Reporting the Arts II* was a truly collaborative effort. It required the help of many, many people who gave not only of their time, but also offered their advice, guidance and support. Without them this study would not have been possible.

We had a lot to keep track of: 8,747 articles had to be found, collated, reviewed, argued over, analyzed, measured, dissected, catalogued and finally added up as part of our audit of local and national newspapers. Nick Castrop was our database designer and dealt with the Web-hosting. Our tech guru, Dan Reshef, was responsible for setting up the computers, user accounts, keeping the system running and general technical support. Oscar Torres-Reyna was the database analyst. Ellen Adamson and Dennison Demac copyedited all the text and caught many potentially embarrassing errors.

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