

Editorial

Support global reform

A privilege of growing up in America is the Democratic sensibilities instilled in each of us. We're taught that true governance cannot be accomplished by one man, that every voice, whether big or small, from every corner, should be heard.

In fact, we are accustomed to the luxury of our personal freedoms, which have been a work-in-progress here in the United States for the last two-and-a-half centuries.

Lately, our protests have amounted to calls for reform and pragmatism.

Thus, the true brevity of the history unfolding on the other side of the world escapes us.

The actions of those in the Middle East are far greater, harkening back to times when our hodgepodge of colonies and settlements were in the inception stages.

People with guns living in conditions you and I would compare to a poorly planned camping trip in the desert are making pilgrimages en masse to the nearest population center and demanding they be heard.

The demand is reasonable and a necessity of our human condition: the freedom to decide. America and its citizens should support those with visions of democracy emphatically, wherever they are.

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Life

Fear, loathing the aftermath

By Gabriel.Stoffa@iowastatedaily.com

Remember, celebrate Hunter S. Thopson's life, work, legacy

“When I die and they lay me to rest, Gonna go to the place that's the best, When I lay me down to die, Goin' up to the spirit in the sky” — Norman Greenbaum Sunday, Feb. 20, 2011 marked the sixth year since Hunter S. Thompson committed suicide.

Nothing spectacular compared to the wild insurgency in the Middle East and elsewhere, but for those with the mad desire to still find truth instead of the filtered unreality the media provides us with because we demand it to be no other way, the anniversary of Hunter's death is a reminder to not become complacent.

It is a reminder to not remain so feverishly addicted to the ideas fed to us by those in power. It is a reminder to not let the poetry of words and the art of informing to be diluted by the celebrity hacks and model faces babbling about inane fashion and stylish causes their bubble-heads think make a difference.

Most importantly, the anniversary of Hunter's death is a reminder to fight, tooth and nail, for a better world of devoted leaders instead of allowing the jabbering slime busy destroying the Constitution in order to appease a bunch of ill-informed Americans come to power and destroy any hope of making a better world.

I first learned about Hunter in 1997 when I heard about a new film in the works: “Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.” I was fascinated by the main character and wanted to know if this was someone I could look to and learn from as I grew up, or if it was just another sensationalist figure from history.

Finding his books and reading any piece of work I could get my hands on, my eyes were opened to the notion that any profession could be turned into the rockstar lifestyle I had dreamed of since I first found that fleeting rush of excitement when a group of people applaud you for your efforts.

I now had a pattern to look to for inspiration as I discovered who



I was and how I should continue confronting authority; taking nothing at face value and allowing no one to ever dictate to me what I should or should not do.

The teenagers to college kids of today do not, for the most part, know who Hunter was, apart from perhaps a character played by Hunter's compatriot, Johnny Depp in a movie about drugs.

It is almost criminal that a man of Hunter's stature should not be embraced by the young generation today. The pacing and lifestyle youth so embrace is a comical attempt at the rebellious persona of Hunter.

Hunter became bound by the exaggerated personality the media made him out to be; he saw what people thought he was and would act in a way even more exaggerated so as to further fashion the myth, the legacy he knew his life's work would leave.

Youth today are wrapped up in the same sort of destructive influ-

ence to live up to what the media makes them out to be, while still striving to find themselves and discover a way to make a difference.

Hunter's near-accidental creation of “gonzo journalism” is now the perfect representation of how youth today communicate.

Hunter's gonzo style of reporting inserted himself into the story, becoming a main character while still observing; participating instead of seeking to remain merely objective from ringside.

Youth today share their every action, from what they had for breakfast to their feelings about an important issue. Their absorption of information demands a personable feel that is rarely fully achieved because the illusions the various industries make for public consumption are pieced together not from the reality of the event, but from the interpretation believed to be more marketable to the viewers.

Thanks to the marvelous and

frightening advances technology has made to the way we live, gonzo journalism is essentially an everyday thing. Every man, woman and child is now a reporter with Twitter, Facebook and blogs disseminating information with personal twists and insights sometimes trivial and unfounded, and sometimes moving and informed.

For now, never mind the parallels between Hunter's methods and today's youth, focus for a moment back on the influence Hunter had on history.

Hunter's coverage of politics, and wild use of drugs and alcohol while in the field, through his use of fiction and fact laid the groundwork for how to entertain while still informing. His words were one of those rare times when a writer captured the feelings of people without pandering to any preconceived notion of rules or properness. He was and will remain as one of the greatest journalists in history, not just because what he covered was important, but because of the way it drew people in and held their interest.

Though Hunter used drugs and alcohol to an unhealthy degree, the methods of the brilliant rarely conform to the standards of the majority. Buy the ticket, take the ride.

Many things he did were illegal, but he was not harming others — not greatly at least — with his actions and constantly strove to take the corrupt out of the positions of power they so often hold.

Somewhere in writing this my train of thought has derailed. I cannot continue on right now without falling into a rut of rhetoric. This may be due to the way I celebrate Hunter's life every year on the day of his suicide by indulging my senses after some of the many ways in which he did.

I will close then by reiterating my point: Hunter S. Thompson is a hero to me. He influenced my life in ways I may never fully comprehend. I want others to recognize who he was and learn from the genius his work provided.

I want everyone to see the world for what it is and be a part of shaping it, rather than sitting back and not involving themselves madly and fully.

Res ipsa loquitur.

Technology

Digital protection turns consumers into criminals

By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

Media corporations should trust customers

There has been a variety of news in technology circles in recent weeks about the case Sony is making against a hacker (or if that has a bad connotation for you, tinkerer) who figured out how to “jailbreak” the PlayStation 3.

All 21-year-old George Hotz wanted to do was to use the OtherOS feature to run Linux on his PS3 hardware, something Sony disabled last year. But now Sony is coming after him with a squadron of lawyers and guns blazing because in modifying his PS3, Hotz possibly provided users with a way to violate the DMCA (Digital Millennium Copyright Act), designed to legally protect the encryption Sony uses on their PlayStation disks (Hotz contests this).

In a similar scenario, let's say last weekend you went out to the store and decided to buy a copy of “The Social Network” now that it is out on DVD and Blu-Ray. You take it home, but eventually start worrying that the dog or the baby might start using the disk either as a Frisbee or a chew-toy. You decide you want a backup of the movie for safekeeping, just like that pile of MP3s on your computer from your CD collection.

Once again you are faced with digital encryption on the disk that prevents you from simply copy-pasting the content. Now if you figure out how to download some simple software from the net to circumvent the encryption and back up your movie, you just became a movie pirate.

Now, you may think that doing things like this isn't illegal. Heck, they decided before I was born (1984 - Sony Corp. of America v. Universal City Studios, Inc.) that making your own copy of your favorite TV show episode on a tape is okay thanks

to “fair use” principles, so why not movie or video game disks?

Well, after doing some research, you may notice that in general, the same principles don't necessarily apply to other media. I think a lot of people do believe that it is fair to allow consumers to make a backup copy of media for their own personal use or to use hardware that they have purchased in whatever way they want, but there is technically no provision for that in fair-use law or in court decisions (note the “Citation needed” where Wikipedia says you can make backups of your movie disks).

For me, as a college student, I live in a small dorm room and also tend to move around a lot (I've had 8+ addresses in the last 5 years) as I change rooms on campus and go back and forth to internships. This means that I really didn't want to be hauling my very large DVD collection around with me as I move. What I'd like to do is be able to keep a copy of my movies stored on my computer hard drive or on my iPod while the disks themselves stay back home in Minnesota.

Sadly, I am not allowed to do this, not because the technology doesn't exist, but because the movie companies' fear of illicit mass-produced copies drives them to treat me, their end-customer, as a potential criminal.

Technically, ripping a disk to make a backup of its contents is illegal if it is protected by encryption software put there by the copyright owner (all Hollywood movies have this encryption), according to the DMCA, though I question whether it should be illegal for consumers to view their media the way that they want to. I understand it is illegal to make copies of movie DVDs or Blu-Ray Disks to distribute to friends or family who haven't paid for the movie or to rip a copy of disks from Netflix to keep for personal use. But should it



be illegal to keep one backup copy of media you own just in case someone steps on the disk, the dog chews it up or it gets melted in a fire? Should you be required to always use the actual disk when you watch a movie? I don't think so.

When they were released a few years ago, HD-DVDs and Blu-Ray disks started to use a newer, more difficult to crack brand of encryption to stop movie pirates from copying the disks. But, within a year committed movie geeks (or pirates or hackers if you prefer) found the hidden code on the disks that would unlock the encryption (it was 09 F9 11 02 9D 74 E3 5B D8 41 56 C5 63 56 88 C0 if you were wondering). The studios' system is smart and lets them replace the code if it is found, but each time a new code has been used, it is simply located and the movie ripping continues.

In Hotz's case, his use of a similar encryption code to unlock the PS3 has caused Sony to attempt to muzzle

him because of the possibility of his hack being used to allow the copying of PS3 games. Notably, Hotz has said that he expressly didn't want to allow users to break the disk encryption; he just wanted to get back the functionality that Sony needlessly removed from the PS3 last year.

Sony's move to remove software functionality that they sold to consumers was questionable and unprecedented in the electronics industry. Personally, I support George's efforts, because I hesitate to get a new PS3 without the Linux-running, protein-folding features that originally piqued my interest in that console.

As consumers, we are witness to an expensive and ever-increasing arms war between media companies who have legitimate reasons to protect their content.

A good portion of the cost of a DVD, Blu-Ray disk, or PS3 game is for the setup and licensing of the CSS or AACS encryption that is required

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to be used on commercial disks. The only reason these encryption schemes exist is to prevent the disks from being copied by unauthorized publishers, but because they have always been cracked, they seem to have little real value and only cause a useless increase in the cost of media and decrease in consumer value (because the media can't be copied or backed up).

To some extent it all boils down to trust. If you were the media corporations, do you decide to trust consumers with their content and spend your money to ensure that police find and detain those that create large quantities of illegal commercial copies of media? Or do you treat everyone as a criminal, add an expensive barbed-wire barricade around your product when you sell it to customers, and then brutally attack anyone who gets through the fences?

I'm not sure there's a perfect answer, but as a consumer I dislike the extra cost and hindrance that digital protection adds to DVDs, Blu-Ray disks and video games. It makes me a criminal for simply enjoying a movie the way I want to enjoy it, when the real criminals are the groups overseas that create illegal batches of disks by the millions to sell on the black market.