

# STUDENT LIFE

## The Resolution Revolution continues for 2006

By Melissa Whitten  
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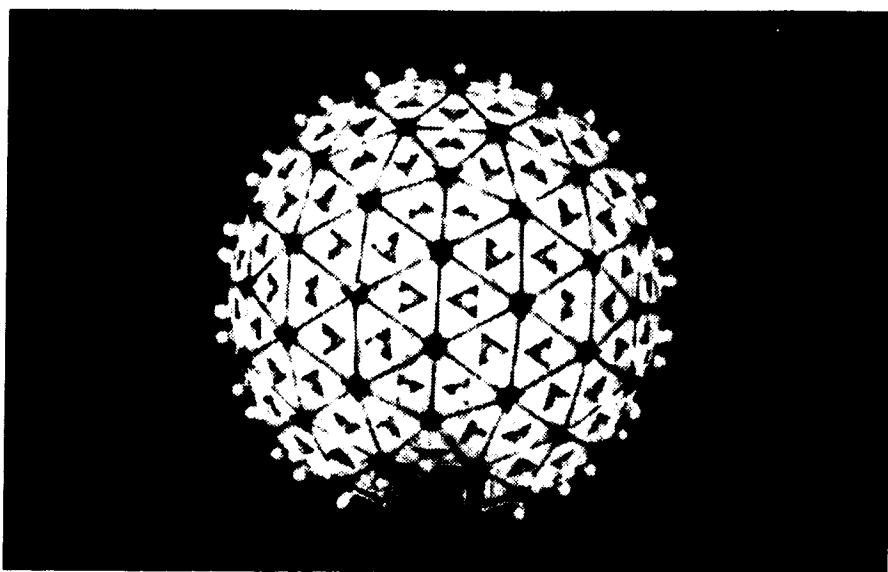
5...4...3...2...1...Happy New Year's Resolution Time! A giant sparkly orb is not the only thing dropping this New Year. Traditionally, millions of Americans are determined to drop bad habits they have acquired, and some find it difficult to follow through.

Resolutions come in all shapes and sizes and can be as common as losing weight or quitting smoking or as creative as to never make resolutions again. Whatever the case, it seems to be a trend that Americans just won't shake, regardless of the not-so-promising track record of failure.

The majority of resolutions are focused on health issues. Freshman Chelsea Ebert says that she will begin her Weight Watchers program upon entering 2006. She wants to get in shape and avoid unhealthy junk food, which she believes will make her

healthier and happier. She has thought ahead, though, and points out that the New Year will begin Jan. 3, after the majority of yummy party leftovers have been eaten. Freshman Mandy Spearly also is taking steps toward a healthier new year as she has vowed to eliminate soda as her primary choice of drink. "A lot of people don't realize how bad it is for you; it seems like something small, but it makes a big difference for your health," Spearly believes that her goal will be easily achieved because it is something small and practical.

Whether it is taking a smaller portion here or simply ordering the water there, students especially are making resolutions that will better themselves. Sophomore Arne Weidland says that he is going to try to step up his studying next semester as he will be starting at main campus and has to pay special attention when the time for declaring his major arrives. A large portion of students are like Weidland in promising themselves better study habits as a res-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
New York drops the ball New Year's Eve, don't drop the ball on your resolutions.

olution.

Making these vows is the easy part, but actually following through long enough to see results is another story.

According to a New Year's Resolution Poll conducted online, 45 percent of those polled had health-related resolutions, whether it was to exercise more,

stop drinking or smoking or eating healthier. On the flip side, 26 percent answered that they had no resolution because they "usually only last a day or two anyways." Results like this are slightly less than encouraging for those who are seeking a new lifestyle this coming holiday season and after.

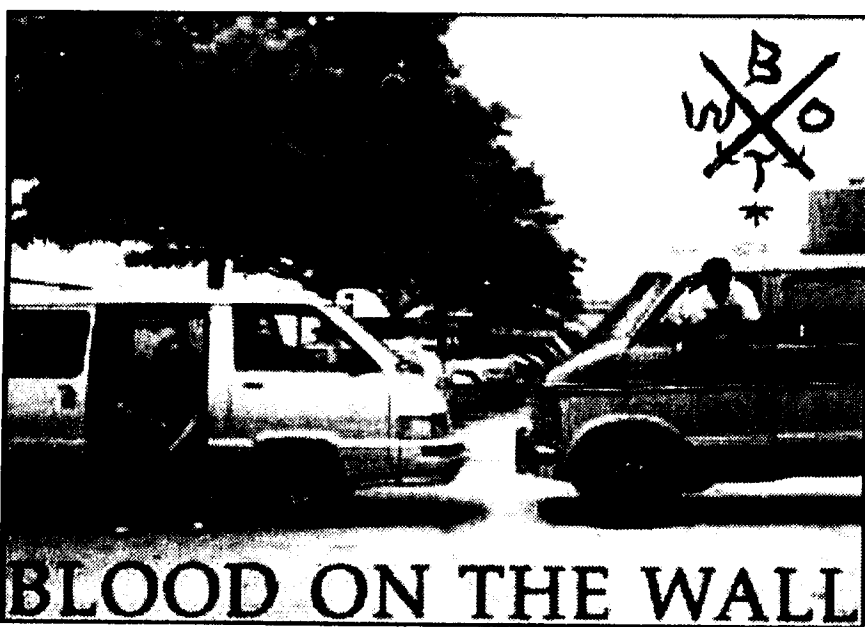
The New York Times provided a list last year of ways to help retain your resolution that may have helped some who found their attempt to be unsatisfactory. It stressed the factor of repetition and advised resolution-ists to remind themselves daily of the goal, to track their progress and to talk about their plan. "The best case scenario is to find yourself a buddy who shares your New Year's Resolution and motivate each other." Another important aspect of achieving the desired outcome of January first and beyond is to not beat yourself up over occasional slips and to reward yourself for doing well. The key to breaking any habit is moderation not obsession.

## Q&A with Blood on the Wall's Brad Shanks

By Sean Mihlo  
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No, no, don't hysterically lunge at the telephone to speed-dial the paramedics. This isn't an emergency. This is a wake-up call. Meet Brooklyn-via-Kansas's Blood on the Wall, a three-piece that somehow manage to balance the experimental noise elements of Sonic Youth with the dreamy, yet frantic mumbles and melodies of dream pop masters Moose. The band, fronted simultaneously by siblings Brad and Courtney Shanks (he plays the guitar, she plays the bass, both share vocal duties) and backed by former Ida drummer Miggy Littleton, got its proper beginning in 2001 writing and recording a handful of songs, two of which ended up on their first self-released seven inch record. A few vinyls later, in 2004, the trio released their eponymous debut on The Social Registry, a label that boasts some of today's best new independent music. After touring the country with bands like Enon and the Fiery Furnaces, the group settled down and began to write for its sophomore album. Half a decade later, after Courtney's chance meeting with Miggy in New York and Brad's move from Lawrence to join the two in Brooklyn, Blood on the Wall released "Awesomer," an expansion of the concepts that were first presented on the band's debut. From the knee-jerkingly emphatic "Gone," to "I'd Like to Take You Out Tonight," which features shimmering guitars that embrace Courtney's beautiful, breathy vocals,

Blood on the Wall consistently redefines the idea of evolving as a musical entity, encompassing many forms of rock and roll. After releasing "Awesomer" in September of this year, the band traveled cross-country to promote the new album. Next week, the band will kick-off an East Coast tour of the States, accompanied by labelmates Psychic Ills and culminating in a performance for Pitchfork's New Year's Eve bash in Chicago.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Blood On The Wall releases their new album, *Awesomer*, their sophomore effort.

**The Behrend Beacon:** Blood on the Wall has been a band for about five years. What spurred the interest in creating a musical project with your sister?

Brad Shanks: We get along pretty good. We have a clothing store in Brooklyn called Rejoice Exchange. Between the time there and the time spent making music, we see a lot of each other so it can be a little nerve-racking, but any real argument tends to roll off our backs.

**BB:** Having just released your sophomore album, "Awesomer," in September of this year, how does the

material from this effort feel in relation to the songs on your self-titled debut? You guys seem to experiment a lot with different song styles, not just sticking to one specific genre of music and often blending diverse

styles on your records. Is that an accurate statement?

BS: It is accurate, but it is not intentional. A lot of people think "Awesomer" is more diverse than the first record, but I think the opposite. I feel like we are honing in on our sound. It might stem from just liking a lot of different music, so your influences show at different points within the same record.

**BB:** There's this frantic energy in your songs that's totally exciting and infectious. What is the writing process like for Blood on the Wall? It seems like you guys are consistently on tour, so do you write, or even record, on the road?

BS: We really haven't toured too much before this record, but we are planning to do a lot more throughout 2006. We don't have much time to write on the road, but when I'm home, I sit on the couch for hours and just play guitar and drink coffee and watch movies. Most of the songs I write are from just [messing] around on the guitar while watching a movie. I won't be thinking about it because I'm way into the movie, but then I'll remember I'm playing guitar because a lick of some sort has surfaced and I have realized that I have been playing this pattern over and over again while being entranced by the movie. (The movie could be anything from "Star Wars" to "Caddyshack" to "Cockfighter.") I know "You Are a Mess" and "Right to Lite Tonight"

were partly written this way.

**BB:** When and where did you guys record "Awesomer"? How was the recording process for this album different from the last?

BS: We recorded "Awesomer" at Rare Book Room in Brooklyn, NY with Nicolas Vernhes in two different sessions. Two songs were recorded in the fall/winter of 2004, I think, and the rest in spring of 2005. We recorded the first record with Nicolas at RBR also, but for "Awesomer" we had more time, and we were given the chance to make the record we really wanted to make. I think it shows.

**BB:** If all three of you were sent into outer space forever and could pick only one song each to listen for the rest of your natural lives, which song would each of you pick?

BS: Mine would be "Banned in DC" by the Bad Brains because it is kind of like two songs in one. You got the fast part and then one of the greatest breakdowns ever, and I can never get sick of H.R.'s voice. Miggy would probably pick this old reggae song called "Barbwire" because he DJs it all the time and it is awesome. In fact, I want that to be mine too. Courtney would more than likely listen to a Misfits song or a Led Zeppelin song like "D'yer Maker."

For more information, visit the band's website at [www.bloodonthewall.com](http://www.bloodonthewall.com)

## ASCII approves online shopping

By Logan Stack  
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Dear ASCII,

How safe is online shopping? I've heard that it's safer than giving your credit card to a waiter in a restaurant, but I've also heard of people having their number stolen after shopping online. - C.K.

Dear C.K.,

It is simultaneously very secure and very insecure. Overall though, if you use a credit card, you are pretty safe.

The way the data is transferred from your computer to the computer of the online retailer, like Amazon.com, is very secure. Even government computers would take a long time to figure out your credit card number by trying to eavesdrop when you tell it to Amazon.com. That's because the credit card information, along with your address and such, is all encrypted.

There are two weak points whereby your credit card number could be stolen. Your computer and Amazon.com's computer. If you have certain types of spyware, they can grab your credit card number when you use it online. Cleaning off your computer with AdAware and Spy Bot Search & Destroy will drastically reduce the chances of this happening.

Amazon.com isn't going to have spyware. They may be attacked though. The tens of thousands of credit cards stored in Amazon's database act as a big shiny lure for criminals.

It can be a problem if you're not buying from Amazon.com, but from "Bob's Shady Online Store" or some other ill-reputed retailer. The same sorts of scams which happen off-line can happen on the Internet too. The store can charge whatever it wants to your card once it has the number. You gave it to them, so they've got it; no computerized break-in involved. It's illegal and they'll almost certainly be caught by the credit card company, but sometimes they're a company based out of somewhere where US law does not apply.

If you use a credit card, you usually are liable for very little, if any of the purchases you don't make. My Visa card, for instance, holds me liable for \$50 if my credit card is used fraudulently by someone else. Regardless of how much they manage to charge to it, I only have to pay \$50.

You should always keep your receipts. Check them against the bill at the end of the month. Most of the criminals who break into large online retailers like Amazon.com steal thousands of credit card numbers. They then charge all of them a small amount for as long as they can get away with it. So you may only be charged \$10 or \$20, but the charge will appear again and again every month until you notice it and cancel the card.

Do you have a computer question? Then ask ASCII! Send an e-mail to [ASCII@psu.edu](mailto:ASCII@psu.edu) with "Ask ASCII" in the subject line, and you may see your question answered in the first issue of next semester's paper.



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