STUDENT LIFE

Murder mystery dinner mystifies audiences

Tanaz Balaporia/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Nine cast members participated in the Murder Mystery Dinner held last week in McGarvey Commons.

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When I heard that the Matchbox Players were going to organize a Mystery Dinner, I immediately went home to start convincing my husbandto go. I really wanted to attend, and I wanted to share this with him. To my surprise he agreed, saying that it sounded like fun. As soon as the tickets went on sale, I was in line to purchase ours.

Those of you who attended the Mystery Dinner on March 18, already know what I am going to say about this event. For those of you who did not attend, my advice to you is to pray that they do this again, and get your tickets early next year.

We were greeted by the Captain of the ship as we boarded the Guilded Vessel, which was the transformed McGarvey Commons. This was followed by a marvelous cocktail hour complete with appetizers and drinks. While we nibbled on cheese, crackers and a variety of fruit, we were entertained by Vicki Baldwin playing the piano. It was a great opportunity to mingle with the cast, who at this time were already in character.

As the last few guests arrived, we were all invited to take our places at our tables. Then we were serenaded by the opera singer, Bella. While we waited for our salads to arrive, a burst of excitement erupted as the Inspector rushed in to announce the murder of our host, Mr. Frath. Although we were visibly upset by Mr. Frath's passing, we had come on board to have our dinner.

The dinner started with a salad of spring mix and field greens topped with italian dressing and accompanied with hard rolls. It was followed by the main course of breaded boneless chicken breast, mashed red-skinned potatoes and both green and yellow string beans and carrots. Dessert was a delightful slice of cheesecake with a drizzle of cherries in sauce and coffee. It was sometimes hard to decide what to give ones attention to, the wonderful meal or the clues. Chancellor Burke had to choke down a bite from his dinner as he was unexpectedly asked to read a clue in the form of a letter.

All through dinner, the cast reminded us that they were not able to have their dinner because they had been ordered to stay in the sitting room until the inspector returned. Clues were thrown at us from the cast of characters in rapid succession and all characters who were accused of being the murderer. My friends and table-mates were bound and determined to solve this mystery before the dinner ended; every one of the characters had a motive and the opportunity. We would frantically discuss different aspects of the investigation, listening carefully to what was said and (our professors would be proud) even taking notes.

The cast was marvelous in their performance. They effortlessly got the audience fully involved in the narrative.

A great time was had by all of Frath's guests, in spite of his sudden passing. And as for who-done-it, pray that the Matchbox Players stage a Mystery Dinner next year.

RSS on the web: What's it all about?

By Logan Stack
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Dear ASCII,
Some of the web sites I visit have a little orange button labeled "RSS." When I click on it, I get something that looks like raw HTML code. What is this?
- Confused and pondering

Dear Confused,
RSS is a way of publishing regular updates to a web site and sending them out to subscribers. The file it links to is actually XML, a more general language than HTML. RSS is increasingly being used all over the web.

Most news sites offer an RSS feed and podcasts are just an RSS feed with an attached MP3. That's right, you don't need iTunes to listen to podcasts.

To get in on the action, all you need to do is get an RSS client, which is a program you can download off the Internet. There are many RSS clients out there, including Feed, for Mac OS X, SharpReader, for Windows, and Straw for Linux. But there are hundreds of free clients out there, so browse around until you find one you like.

In the client, click on "subscribe to an RSS feed." Your client will ask for the address of the feed. Paste the address of that XML file into the

client. From then on, your client will automatically alert you whenever the RSS feed is updated.

The clients work like an e-mail client. You have an "inbox" for each feed. Inside each "inbox" are all the "messages" that you've downloaded. You can open a "message" to read it. These may contain just text or they can also have images, MP3's, even video or executables like games. As always, be careful about running executables you find online.
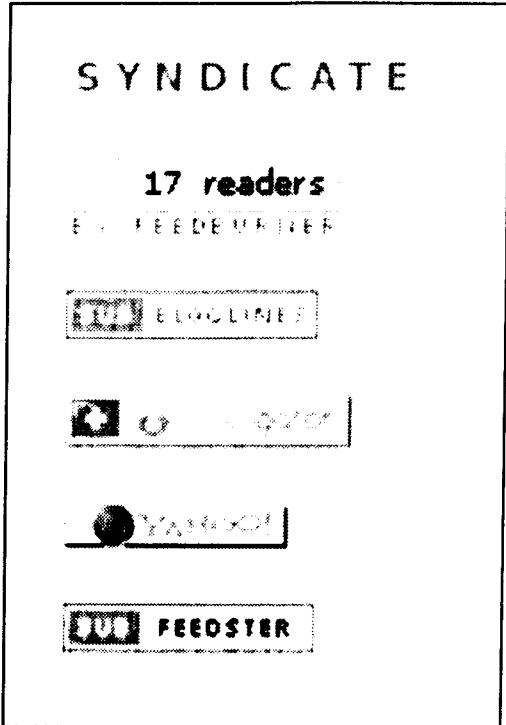
There are all sorts of sites which offer RSS feeds. News sites and podcasters are very common. But blogs, web comics, Bit Torrent sites, and many others may offer feeds for your convenience. RSS is one of those "hot new technologies" in web publishing.

RSS doesn't actually stand for one thing anymore. It can stand for "Really Simple Syndication," "Rich Site Summary," or "RDF Site Summary," depending on the technology behind it. Most RSS clients support all three branches of the RSS standard.

The little orange RSS button may also say XML, or appear as a little orange square with concentric arcs. This icon isn't required, but it's common enough that most sites will use it instead of having a normal text link.

Do you have a computer question? Then Ask ASCII! Send an e-mail to ASCII@psu.edu, and you may see your question answered in next week's column.

SYNDICATE

17 readers

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Barbie ideal is fashion in the past

By DeAdra Walker
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Our society is one driven by image. As human beings, we tend to mimic what we see. Even more so, we mimic what is most commonly accepted. The majority tends to mimic what is seen as the norm. Images of this alleged norm comes via the television, magazines and the internet. It is futile to even attempt to avoid them.

These images are introduced early on. For females, these images initially make their appearances masqueraded as play things. Specifically, these images can be seen in the form of Barbie and Barbie-like dolls.

While the makers of these dolls have attempted to make changes in the dolls' appearances, such as widening their waistlines or reducing the bust sizes, dolls fifteen years ago mirrored pin up models. The dolls' ultra tiny waistlines and fairly large busts created the coveted hourglass figure.

Upon seeing this as children, females equated this image with the picture of perfection. Many young girls in turn took this as the only ideal and the ultimate "perfect," thus giving young girls the desire to reach this unrealistic and fantasy shape.

With this alleged ideal body type came ideal articles of clothing to be worn to accent the body. Take the mini skirt for example. Most commonly, this is a denim skirt that falls high on the wearer's thighs accentuating the ideally slender

and long legs and lower body. It also fits closely on the wearer's hips and its "barely there" appearance has traditionallybeen seen as "attractive" and "sexy." In addition, the notion that less was more became "attractive" and "sexy" as well.

The problem in all of this lies in the simple fact that there is not simply one "ideal." "Perfect" has come to not mean just one thing and has since opened up in a multitude of different directions. Beauty is no longer limited to a certain bust size, weight or hair color. In the shifting of this "ideal," there has come a shifting in the clothing that best fits these ideals. Keeping with the idea of skirts, they too have evolved. Most recently, the fashionable skirt falls past the knee and around the middle of one's calves. It fits closer around the wearer's upper thighs and casually bells out toward the legs. This particular article allows for the femininity of a flowing skirt, while keeping its modesty. In addition, this skirt can work for a multitude of body types, and is not just limited to Barbie's hourglass figure with her wide hips and legs that pencil down to a point.

The fact of the matter is that "perfect" has no size dimensions. Magazines, television, dolls and even opinionated writers may preach lengthy sermons on the do's and do not's, and the what and what not to wear's. Essentially, the final say lies in what the wearer deems as comfortable. Comfort in one's own skin—that is the "ideal" and the "perfect."

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