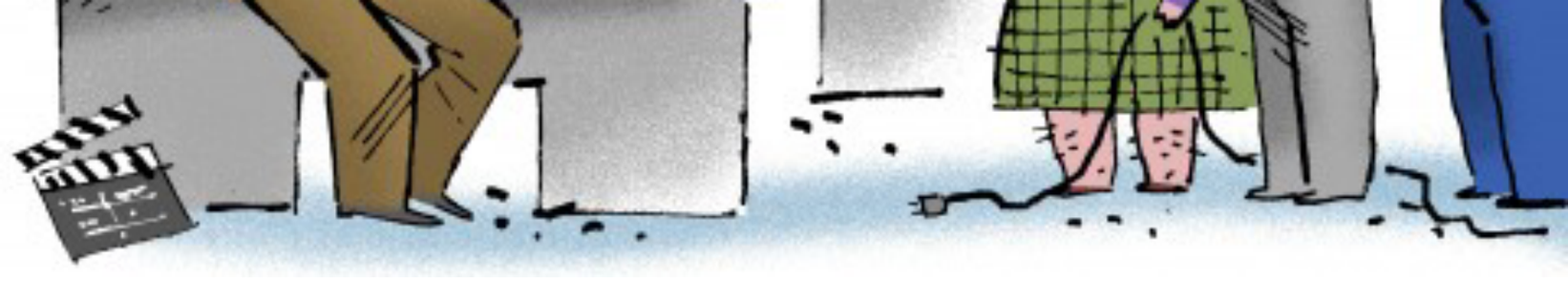
The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1268: Playing Pinocchio—give us fake trivia on the media

Plus winning Yelp-style reviews of places like Hades, Oz and a bird feeder



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

(Click here to skip down to the winning faux-Yelp reviews)

Robert Redford almost wasn't cast in "All the President's Men" because producers didn't think he was handsome enough to play Bob Woodward.

The Linotype machine was invented by a Latvian machinist named Etaoin Shrdlu.

Soy-based printing ink was developed in Britain to add flavor to the fish and chips served in newspaper cones.

The Style Invitational's never-ending crusade to mislead the world continues this week close to home, thanks to a contest suggestion by Obsessive Loser Jeff Contompasis. **This week: Tell us some humorously bogus trivia about the news media or the publishing or broadcast industries,** as in the examples above, the last two by JefCon himself.

The optical illusion in the photo on the sales page (left) is a little more convincing than what arrived in the mail (right), modeled by the torso of the Royal Consort. (Left, Wish.com; right, Pat Myers/The

Washington Post)

Submit entries at the website **wapo.st/enter-invite-1268** (all lowercase).

Winner gets the **Lose Cannon,** our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a stretchy T-shirt that, if you use a whole lot of imagination (and you carry a dark background around with you at all times), looks as if a cross section of the wearer's torso has been cut away with a saw, except for the spine, which now stands cartoonishly between the chest and abdomen. The Empress saw this advertised on her favorite Portal for Cheap Loser Prizes, Wish.com, and sent away for it. Let's say the photo in the ad was more convincing.

Other runners-up win our "You Gotta Play to Lose" Loser Mug or our Grossery Bag, "I

Got a B in Punmanship." Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "We've Seen Better" or "IDiot Card." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). **Deadline is Monday night, March 5;** results published March 25 (online March 22). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline "Smarty Pans" is by Chris Doyle; Chris, Jesse Frankovich and Jeff Contompasis each submitted the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at *on.fb.me/invdev*.

The Style Conversational The Empress's weekly online column — published late Thursday afternoon — discusses the new contest and results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .

SMARTY PANS: THE YELP REVIEWS FROM WEEK 1264

For **Week 1264** we asked you to write humorous Yelp-style reviews of novel places.

4th place:

Dr. Kvack's waiting room is super-crowded, but you won't believe how fast it clears — it took me just 10 minutes to see him. Even better, as soon as I mentioned my lower back pain, he dashed off a three-month scrip for Vicodin. Quick and easy!! ★★★★★ (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

3rd place:

If you're a connoisseur of fine art, you've got to get yourself to **Mrs. Fletcher's third-grade homeroom** at Elm Street Elementary. The work is consistently impressive, but that of one prodigy, Bevis Wildenkrantz III, merits extra mention. His "House With Smiley-Face Sun" is worth the trip alone. — B.W., Greenville (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

2nd place

and the cute plush E. coli bacterium: If you're looking for a good Irish pub in Manhattan, do *not* go to **St. Patrick's** on Fifth Avenue. For such a fancy place, the service was lousy — we had to stand in line just to get to the bar, and then all they had were bad wine and some bread. And the

bartenders were dressed like they were in a school graduation. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

Ford's Theatre: I actually thought the show was pretty good. Now you can all stop asking. — M.T. Lincoln, Washington (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

The weak in review: Honorable mentions

Famed for its year-round warmth, **Hades** offers the discerning traveler a sinfully luxurious chance to stretch out on the brimstone beaches of the River Styx and moan along with the wailful whimpers of some of history's greatest dictators. Best of all, accommodations are provided free of charge and you can stay forever. (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

The agonizing fire, the throat-searing brimstone, the screams of pain and despair from my fellow damned . . . I worked all my life to qualify for this place, and it's everything I'd hoped for. Five pitchforks! (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.)

Bird Feeder at 347 Maple: A fine exemplar of the whole-grain movement, with a menu that's seedy, nutty and nutritious. The only failing was accessibility problems for the bushily tailed; it required great effort to pick up my order. — Rocket J., Frostbite Falls (Dan Helming, Maplewood, N.J.)

Mom's Bed and Breakfast: The proprietor is a control freak. She serves vegetables you don't want to eat, nags you to wear a sweater, even orders you to go to bed. It's free for the first 18 years, which is nice, but that lady needs some boundaries. (Alex Blackwood, Houston)

I**-66 HOT lanes:** Five stars — for now! NoVA commuters, have I got a tip! You heard I-66 has been converted into an outrageously expensive toll road? So I'm fuming about the $37.25 I'll have to pay to get to work. Then I reach my exit and — get this — *they forgot to install the tollbooths!* Hurry, enjoy the free commute before those bozos realize their mistake! (Hildy Zampella, Falls Church, Va.)

Jacksonville: "It's really nice, but New York has a lot to offer, too. Or maybe Arizona?" — K. Cousins, Washington (Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)

I'm sorry to report that **Jimmy John's** does *not* live up to its promises. Yesterday I ordered a Totally Tuna sub, buried my nose in it, handed it back . . . and was told, "That'll be $7.21"! "Free smells," my foot. (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

I've been hunting on six continents. I've taken down everything from pumas to leopards to tigers. But *nothing* beats **Narnia** for big game. You won't BELIEVE the lion I bagged. — D.J.T Jr., New York (Todd DeLap, Fairfax, Va.)

The sign should've alerted me to the shoddiness of **Cindy's "Leminade" stand,** where I wasted a quarter on super-sweetened bilge. Requests for a sprig of basil were met by uncomprehending stares, and demands to speak with management drew threats to “call Mommy.” Thankfully, this pop-up joint seems to have gone out of business. (Frank Osen)

Ben’s Chili Bowl: I’m sorry but that dog was only half-smoked. (Ward Kay, Vienna, Va.)

The **Mordor** volcano tour was fascinating, but the locals were pretty hostile and the giant tower with the CBS logo on it was kind of tacky. Why do we have to have product placement everywhere??? (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

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Oz: One star — terrible customer service! The people I met were mostly friendly but badly misinformed. When I arrived after a difficult trip, they sent me and some equally frustrated travelers to see some “wizard,” who made us go through a bunch of hoops and ended up not helping at all. From now on, I’m staycationing in Kansas. (Ward Kay)

Washington Monument: This is terrible! It doesn’t look anything like him! (Duncan

Stevens)

Has anyone noticed that the **free library box** in front of the Fitzgeralds' house has gone seriously downhill? The glass hasn't been cleaned in ages, the quality of the books has deteriorated ("Baby-Sitters Club #12"??) — and would it kill them to add a bench and some refreshments? (Frank Osen)

Three stars for the **walking tour of U.S. 1** in Northern Virginia: The scenery is great, and you'd be surprised at what you find on this stretch of road. But try not to go in midsummer or the dead of winter: the orange jumpsuits and yellow vests they give you are either too hot or not warm enough. I think I'd just pay the fine next time. (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

Go ahead and take a load off at **John's**

Porta-Potty at the construction site at Fourth and Main — they're clearly concerned for your privacy and semi-comfort. Rain, snow, they've got you covered. (High winds? Not so sure.) Shallow breathing recommended. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Manassas Transfer Station: Simply put, this place is a dump. (Daphne Steinberg, Alexandria)

The Bastille: One star. Accommodations extremely uncomfortable. Staff rude. Fortunately, I am assured that our stay will be short. — M. Antoinette, Paris (Duncan Stevens)

The radicchio and arugula salad at **George's Cafe** is as bitter as I felt when I found out that George was cheating on me with that waitress. The lettuce is as limp as his reproductive equipment; the dining atmosphere is that of hooker perfume. The only solace is that George's prices are as cheap as the tramp he ran off with. (David Kleinbard, Mamaroneck, N.Y.)

D.C. has lots of great parades, but don't bother going to the one the **Marine Corps** holds in late October — the marchers all seem to be in a hurry, and the few clowns and jugglers are only at the end. (Kevin Dopart)

The restaurant **Hooters** has excellent chicken wings (I guess that's where they got the name), but I was disturbed that young ladies taking my order wore revealing shirts and scanty short-shorts. I'm not aroused by the shapely female servers, but not because I am gay! I cannot condone the shameful objectification of women (unless it's by my boss), but as I said, these wings are really good! So I'll definitely dine here again soon. — review by MothersBoy (Bill Dorner, Indianapolis)

That specialty theme park at **Disney World** is great! This auto buff found the number and variety of cars astounding -- and there was no admission fee! I spent the day wandering down row after row of new and old vehicles in the whimsically named "Parking Lot A." (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

Mos Eisley Cantina: This bar brings in some good musical acts, but the patrons look like the "before" ward at a cosmetic surgery practice, and there's too much violence--one old guy cut off my buddy's arm for no good reason. Avoid. (Duncan Stevens)

I had $45 burning a hole in my pocket, so I tried the **I-66 express lane**. So much fun watching all those poor suckers stuck in rush hour traffic while I sailed on through -- The distressed looks on their faces were priceless! Made it to my anger management therapy with 10 minutes to spare! (Frank Mann, Washington)

The expedition began with 16 stalwart souls. After countless examples of tragedy, perseverance, heroism, and, yes, eventually cannibalism, only I survived and made it to the **South Pole.** Was it worth it? I don't know ... I thought there would be a bigger pole. (Gary Crockett)

And Last: Our class visit to the **Washington Post newsroom** was delightful and informative. The only negative was some woman sitting by herself

wearing a ridiculous hat (something with an octopus?), reading a huge stack of paper. She would alternate between cackling like a witch on laughing gas and barking out something about “true rhymes.” Frankly, she frightened the children. (Todd DeLap)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1268.

Still running — deadline Monday night, Feb. 26: our contest for bad ideas for product spokesmen. See wapo.st/invite1267.

Comments

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook.
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