

PERSPECTIVES

Code of Cool

Following set standards of behavior, ridiculous as they may be, is a method of twenty-something survival

Sunset Boulevard was bumper to bumper, and we just wanted to be a part of it. My friends and I traveled to Los Angeles for spring break and tried as much as possible to go where the action was. On Friday night, we rolled down the Sunset Strip alongside low-riders and parents' BMWs and attempted to blend in with the vacant Hollywood youth. We rolled our windows down, drove at a leisurely pace and turned up a hip-hop station playing songs such as "Hard Knock Life" and "Who Let The Dogs Out?"

Opinion



Ashley Bach

I stifled a laugh as I laid my hands on the steering wheel, but I maintained a serious, straight-ahead look and kept moving. Like many attempts to be "cool," we were probably just making fools of ourselves, but in present company, we fit right in.

Whether it be the bar scene, classes, work or travel, most college students — whether they admit it or not — try to maintain a certain level of calm and composure otherwise known as cool. Entering a bar and ordering drinks should be done with authority. Jobs and classes should be treated with distance, and cameras and maps should be hidden away on vacation.

Being cool is a strange monster, however, that eludes any real definition or limits. The most common standard is a certain level of apathy. One who is cool should not care about the trivial, like paying rent or the next meal, instead focusing on attaining more coolness. But this is the world of cool's biggest contradiction.

For most, the very act of being cool means caring about everything, always being fully aware of how people perceive your actions, appearance and attitude. I tried it once in high school, and it was hard work. And unless you can do it well, your deepest intentions shine through.

This is why being "cool" is so often more comical than composed. The fraternity guys who sit on their roof, AC/DC blasting by my apartment on any half-sunny day, or the girl at Max's who laughs too heartily at a joke while

searching the room, are laughable at best.

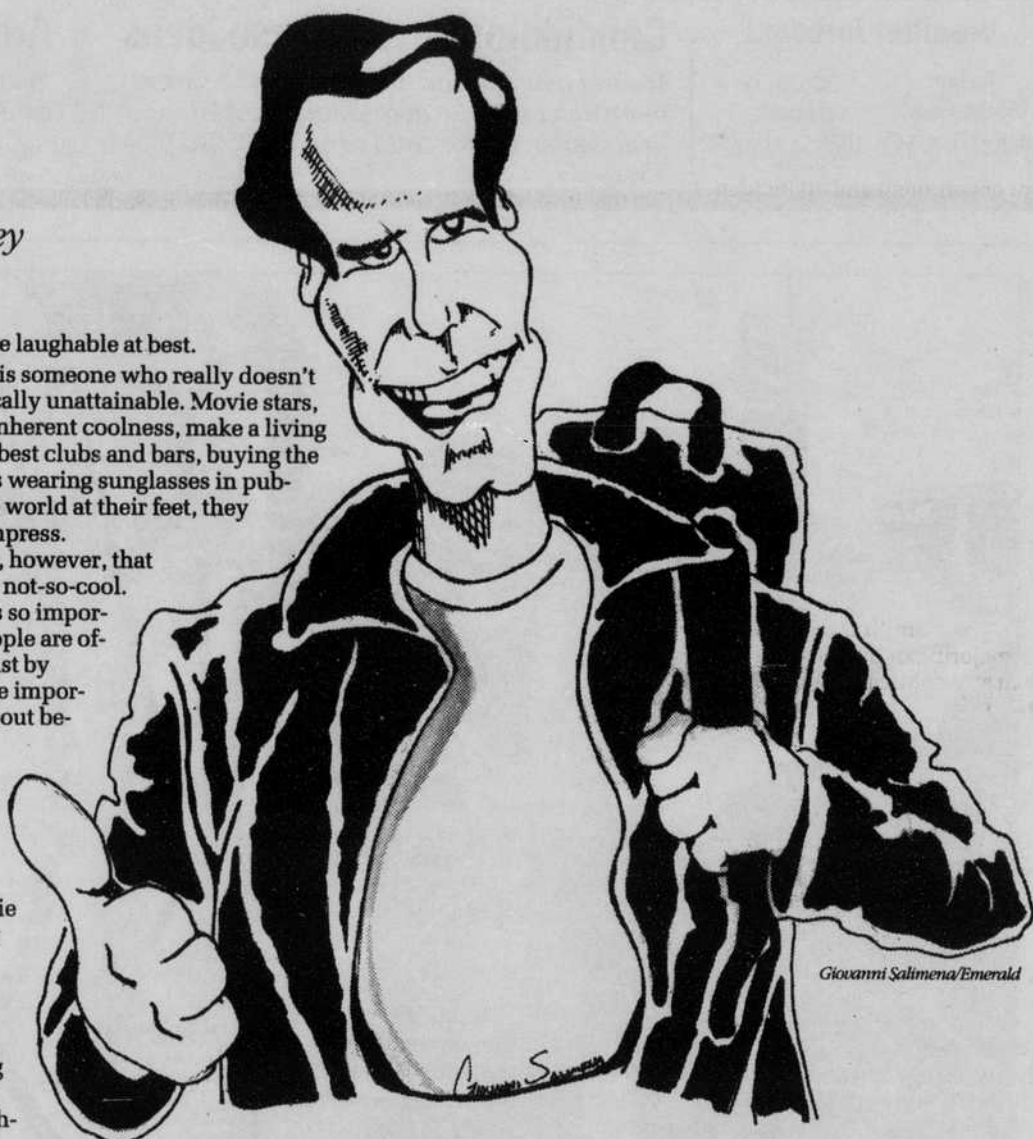
The nirvana of cool is someone who really doesn't care, but this is practically unattainable. Movie stars, who already have an inherent coolness, make a living out of frequenting the best clubs and bars, buying the best things and always wearing sunglasses in public. Despite having the world at their feet, they continue to dress to impress.

It isn't just behavior, however, that separates the cool and not-so-cool. Because appearance is so important, good-looking people are often crowned as cool just by showing up. And more importantly, being cool is about being young.

Much to the chagrin of eager returning students and aging GTFs, the cutting edge of social behavior will always lie among teens and early twenty-somethings. Nothing is more depressing than seeing older patrons on the dance floor or bellying up to the bar at places claimed by more youthful celebrants.

In the end, being cool is about an understanding, a mutual knowledge of what it takes to be an insider and part of the crowd. I'm not pretending this is right, or that it makes any sense. But it's out there, and it's something that needs to be recognized.

Even people who claim to not care about being cool are probably attempting to achieve their own sort of cool, one that defies current standards. And if they do this for attention, they're really no different than anyone else.



Giouanni Salimena/Emerald

As long as people are insecure and care about what others think, hallmarks of human nature, a certain code of behavior will always exist. Because we're young, our insecurity — and code — is amplified. Until we create our own worlds, full of family, a career and independence, it may be the only rules we have to follow.

Ashley Bach is a columnist for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Letters to the Editor

Students, researchers invited

Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals invite the vivisectioners at the University to a community forum on Monday, April 19 at 7 p.m. in Room 125 of the Law school. We are holding the forum to give the public a chance to learn more about the animal research taking place at University, as well as animal research in general. SETA will provide two speakers who are opposed to animal research for ethical and scientific reasons, and we hope that some of the vivisectioners will come to express their point of view. There will also be an unbiased moderator to facilitate the forum.

SETA feels that if the animal researchers choose not to come to this forum they are sending a clear message about the dependability of vivisection, both ethically and scientifically. Why else would they choose not to attend unless they are scared of public scrutiny and questions?

This is a challenge for the vivisectioners on this campus to be honest about their practice and prove their responsibility to the public's concerns. SETA hopes that members of the community, whatever their opinions on animal research, will use this forum as a chance to learn more about vivisection. It is free and open to everyone.

Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

OSPIRG vital

OSPIRG's opponents who say that OSPIRG is asking for too much money simply

to fund campus-based volunteer efforts are missing the point and knowingly mischaracterizing the message that OSPIRG has to share. OSPIRG serves as a vehicle for students to have an impact on important issues that affect them and other Oregonians on and off campus.

As a state legislator from Eugene for four years, I have first-hand experience with the impact that OSPIRG has on efforts to protect Oregon's environment, save consumers money, keep education affordable, preserve student autonomy concerning incidental fees and cleanup government. OSPIRG's staff and grassroots energy serve as a critical counterbalance to the millions of dollars in special-interest money that has put greed before good public policy in Oregon.

We have a long way to go before we can solve all of Oregon's problems, and we need student groups such as OSPIRG at the University to assist in doing that. An OSPIRG chapter at the University will assist individuals in getting involved in addressing issues which directly affect students. The \$2.88 allocation students are being asked to vote on is a worthwhile investment in your future both on and off campus.

Floyd Prozanski
State Representative

Programs too limited

How generic is Wonderbread? About as generic as the University. Most students fit into traditional categories and traditional

departments, but when they don't and strive to expand their education beyond the University's traditional boundaries, shouldn't they be supported? Unlike Evergreen, Brown and other institutions that encourage and support students to create their own degree programs suited to individual goals and interests, the University discourages it. Try going to the independent study department — which typically graduates two students per year or less — and finding encouragement to take an extra step in your college education. You'll be met with discouragement every step of the way.

With few exceptions, the University offers generic courses in generic departments. This makes it very difficult to be a tenaciously individualistic student and inhibits ingenuity and creativity in undergraduate education. Don't we have the right to get what we pay for and be supported in attempts to take our education into our own hands?

Rachel Rosner
Political Science/Philosophy

Consider student views

I am writing this letter to bring your attention to David Sanchez, a friend of mine who is running for student senate seat No. 1. I wish to convey the difference between Sanchez and his opponent on the progressive slate.

Although David Sanchez advocates the

progressive slate's position, he feels it is imperative to maintain his individuality so he can be flexible in representing every student successfully. It is vital to prioritize the interests of the students over the interests of the progressive slate. The single distinction between Sanchez and his opponent is the fact that David will have the capacity to consider the issues presented individually. An independent approach shows that David is eager to research the position of the students, rather than simply rely on the opinion of others. I am proud to support David Sanchez because he will readily celebrate diversity while serving in the ASUO. I trust other students will back Sanchez when making their influential vote on April 14-15 in the primary elections, and on April 21-22 in the general election.

Kelly Sorg
Undeclared

CORRECTION

In the April 8 issue, "Myriad issues pass before senate" should have read: "Additionally, she updated the senate on the student incidental fees, which was set at no greater than \$163.04 per student per term, assuming all the ballot measures pass." Also, Eric Pfeiffer should have been identified as the student confirmed for the arts and letters/journalism seat. The Emerald regrets the errors.