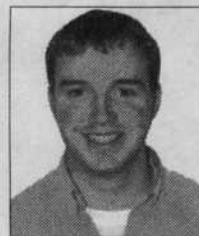


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# Pulse Relax

On Thursday  
Sports editor Peter  
Hockaday and Pulse  
columnist Mason  
West pull the old  
switch-a-roo



Tuesday, December 3, 2002

## Stamp out impersonal mail with stationery

Nika Carlson  
Living Columnist

The holidays are filled with easy excess — high on quantity and low on substance. We gorge ourselves on fat-filled foods, mall trinkets and empty conversation. We inundate the post with holiday greetings: Hallmark cards with briefly scribbled hellos and photos of Mom, Dad and kids in matching festive sweatshirts.

While these cards are usually as worthless as the superficial sentiments behind them, they remind me of one of the few Christmas thrills I wish lasted all year round: receiving mail. The Internet initiated the slow death of the hand-written letter. Bills and junk mail now fill mailboxes. It is a rare occasion when my mailbox is graced with a letter. As silly as it may seem, these infrequent occasions are exciting.

In honor of the long-lost letter, two friends and I began a snail-mail correspondence last year. Once roommates and neighbors, we are now scattered along the West Coast. E-mail proved unsatisfying. Its intangibility and ease produced boring updates when we were used to the intimate details of each other's lives.

Letters, on the other hand, are treasured. They are touched, smelled, saved and reread. That permanence elicits an effort from the writer that most Internet communications lack. I love knowing that someone took the time to write me a letter when they could have spat out an e-mail. A letter involves forethought and effort, and it has a personal element that is nonexistent on a sterile screen. Letters breed richness. Good correspondence holds long, juicy words and intimate details. E-mails excrete decapitated words like "u" instead of "you" and criminal misspellings like "boi" instead of "boy."

As a writer, I value the technical depth of a letter. As a sensory being, I value the physical quality of hand-written mail. Letters carry more than words. They bring a bit of the writer as well. You can sense authors' personalities in their handwriting, their choice of stationery, their scratched-out mistakes and the occasional smear of breakfast that dropped onto the page.

I wanted my friends to have this sense of me when they read my words. Stationery in my price range, however, failed to convey my personality. My solution was as always: Make it myself.


I dare not advise you to actually make the paper yourself. I took the modern Martha way out — I went to Kinko's.

Step one was to find some interesting images. For my first attempt, I clipped a few pictures out of an arty magazine. While I do not recommend you send stationery decorated with a photo of a meat cleaver to Grandma, I

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Nika Carlson  
D.I.Y. living



## 007

# License to thrill

### Game review

**Aaron Shakra**  
Pulse Reporter

While the James Bond film series has reached its 40th anniversary and creator Ian Fleming's novels have been around even longer, the mingling of James Bond and video games has had a sparse history.

Research reveals long-forgotten 007 adventures from the 1990s — such as "The Stealth Affair" for the disk operating system (DOS) and "The Duel," for Sega Genesis — but it wasn't until 1997, when the Rare-developed "GoldenEye 007," was released for the Nintendo 64 console, that things started heating up for the Bond license.

"GoldenEye" worked in so many ways. Here was a game that was so good, it set benchmarks not only for the world of Bond, but for the first-person shooter genre as a whole. Not to mention that it was based on a movie license (the 1995 Pierce Brosnan film of the same name), which has the tendency to result in some of the most atrocious titles in the history of gaming ("Braveheart" the game, anyone?).

"GoldenEye" became immensely successful and left other game developers scrambling to capitalize on its success. Yet, while the other Bond releases — spin-offs of the subsequent "Tomorrow Never Dies" and "The World Is Not Enough" films — were more technologically advanced (in terms of both

visuals and game play), they have been unable to match the "GoldenEye" quality level. This is quite a statement, considering the game is now more than five years old — in video game time, a near eternity.

"James Bond 007: NightFire," from EA Games, is the most recent title. It was obviously released to coincide with the media flurry surrounding "Die Another Day," the latest Bond big screen adventure (which, in its third week of release, looks to become the highest grossing film in the series). However, it sets itself apart because it isn't based on the film — it's a standalone adventure.

It's the second in a series, actually. "NightFire" is a follow-up to EA's "007: Agent Under Fire," an altogether acceptable first-person shooter that extended to driving cars and performing Bond-ian stunts.

Whereas "Agent Under Fire" often seems like it was created simply as an exercise in the use of modern graphics technology, "NightFire" improves by taking everything that was good from the first game — using the same characters to create continuity and the same (albeit upgraded) graphics engine — and improves upon it. Even Pierce Brosnan's likeness has been added to the character this time around (in "Agent Under Fire," Bond was merely a generic face).

The result is a game that is more finely tuned and intuitive than its predecessor. In other words, it's downright fun to play. But does "NightFire" top "GoldenEye?" Only time — that is, more hours staring at the television screen with a video game

Turn to **Bond**, page 7

## 'Journals' allows inside view of Cobain's life

### Book review

Helen Schumacher  
Pulse Reporter

With its glossy, red cover, "Journals" is a collection of excerpts from Kurt Cobain's diaries that makes for an attractive coffee table read. Although it seems sad that Cobain's personal thoughts were published just in time for the holiday shopping season, "Journals" does provide an interesting glimpse into the mind of the Northwest's most notable rock star, as long as you can get past the gimmicky-ness of the publication.

Most of the material in the book is about Nirvana and Cobain's love of music, such as his retelling of seeing the band Air Supply perform in the parking lot behind a Thriftway.

"They played faster than I had ever imagined music could be played and with more energy than my Iron Maiden records could provide, this is what I was looking for. Ah, punk rock," Cobain wrote, describing his musical baptism. "I came to the promise(d) land of a grocery store. I found my special purpose."

The story continues, describing how Cobain gave himself a mullet.

"The next day I spiked the upper part of my head but couldn't quite part with my stoner roots and the long hair in back, thus developing the first bi-level haircut in Montesano history," he wrote. "I walked around for a week looking like Rod Stewart."

The lyrics to early Nirvana songs are

scrawled on spiral notebook paper: "Downer," "Paper Cuts" and "Aneurysm." Cobain also included music video treatment ideas for "Come as You Are" and "Heart-Shaped Box" and sketches of possible album covers and T-shirts.

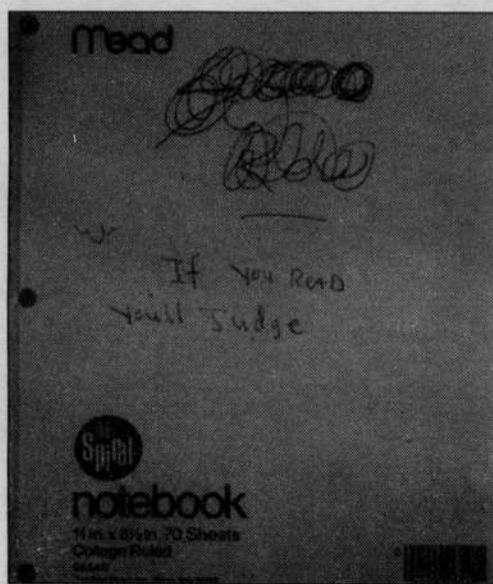
There are several letters to friends and other musicians, starting with a note to Dale Crover, drummer for the Melvins, a band Cobain had an affinity for. In it, he discusses Nirvana's first recognition by Seattle record label Sub Pop Records. Also included are letters Cobain wrote to members of Bikini Kill and Screaming Trees, his father, high school friends and former bandmates.

Seeing all these brings Cobain back to earth. Despite the persona built around him by the media, Cobain comes across as someone who is passionate about music and his band — not fame and fortune.

Part of what makes "Journals" worthwhile are the drawings, observations and other random artifacts that have been preserved to the page — a study guide for a driver's test, a list of songs for a mix tape and guitar illustrations. There are also quotes that reassure fans Cobain was planning to take corporate music down from the inside.

"I like to infiltrate the mechanics of a system by posing as one of them, then slowly start the rot from the inside of the empire," he wrote, adding, "I like the comfort in knowing that women are the only future in rock and roll."

The book also shows Cobain's darker side. He writes about trying to kill himself, shortly after



dropping out of high school, by lying on train tracks — and about his addiction to heroin.

Reading another person's diary has always held a certain temptation because it offers the possibility of getting an intimate peek into the inner world of the writer. "Journals" is no different, except that the reader is getting an intimate peek at Kurt Cobain. However, it's no substitute for the music itself.

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