

New soda spin-offs lack fizz, classic appeal of 'real thing'

Food review

Helen Schumacher
Pulse Reporter

Long gone is the heyday of Coca-Cola's diet beverage Tab. Instead, the age of the gimmick soda is upon us. In recent months, beverage companies unleashed an abundance of new carbonated drinks on an unsuspecting public. Will any of the new flavors withstand the test of time, or are they doomed to be forgotten quicker than you can say "Crystal Pepsi"?

Hesitantly, I visited the grocery store in search of these new drinks, as a public service to our loyal readers, to find out if any of these concoctions were actually drinkable.

Using copious amounts of sugar and blue food coloring, the gang at Pepsi developed something resembling antifreeze. They call it Pepsi Blue, and it tastes like carbonated artificial fruit flavoring with a cola aftertaste. Although Pepsi Blue could work as mixer, it seems that drinking it alone would likely prompt a fit of vomiting.

In what must have been a burst of creative energy, the Dr Pepper/7UP brand made Red Fusion Dr Pepper, which tastes almost exactly like regular Dr Pepper, but less syrupy. Although Red Fusion is supposed to be a cherry-flavored Dr Pepper, it lacked any kind of distinctive quality to justify its existence.

Vanilla Coke is slightly better. Once again, it doesn't vary much from the

original. It still tastes like Coca-Cola, except with a vanilla aftertaste. Instead of adding to the refreshing classic Coke taste, the vanilla just leaves a sour taste on the tongue.

Perhaps the best thing to come out of the slew of new versions of old sodas, is Pepsi Twist. This drink keeps it simple by adding a slight lemon flavor to the beverage, giving it an extra bite. Pepsi Twist may actually be a step forward instead of back.

It seems that most of these drinks would have been better off left alone. But then again, who would have guessed Mountain Dew Code Red would have made it this long?

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Photo illustration Mark McCambridge Emerald

Pepsi recently introduced Pepsi Blue, a beverage "resembling antifreeze," and Pepsi Twist, a more promising drink with a better chance of standing the test of time.

Sarah's trust in the universe brings love, Kerensa's journal

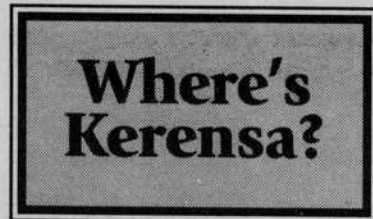
Chapter 10. Sarah's affair with Grant.

Last week, Michael relived the fire that killed Kerensa's parents.

The Emerald is printing "And the Dew is Our National Treasure" in serial form, with an installment every Tuesday in the Pulse Relax section. Earlier installments can be found at www.dailymerald.com.

From the air, Hong Kong looks like an unfinished puzzle. Somewhere amidst the 14,713 people per square mile is Monty, trying to piece together how so many live so compactly so peacefully. Maybe the secret is luck. The Chinese believe in luck, or fortune, and follow the flow of the world instead of trying to make the world conform to them.

I settle in and think of the Sarah I first met three years ago. She pos-



sessed a swallow-in-the-sky confidence that protected her in spite of her going alone to the art galleries on First Thursday with the tattooed salmon on her upper thigh visible through her translucent dress.

Her studio apartment was in the Pearl District, within walking distance of the Art Museum where she coordinated social events. Through several environmental fund raisers, she worked closely with Grant, the president of a northwest bank, whose soft voice and concern for Nature gave

struggling environmental groups hope. Meanwhile, Grant came to rely on Sarah's laugh to diffuse the anxieties of people passionate about a species endangered by development.

After one unsuccessful bid to raise money for salmon, they ended up alone in her office. "The economy's distorted," Grant fumed. "Money rushes to defend the dams — and trickles in to protect the salmon!" His emotions crossed the formal line between them, and he held her to his chest and kissed the top of her head.

During the next few weeks, Grant and Sarah were careful to meet only in the company of others, lest, as happened one night, they might be alone on the carpeted floor of the Rare Print Room, where passions might overcome good sense, and in the heat, he might utter "Love," and

a guardrail might break and they might tumble into chaos.

Sarah had always thought that a mate would come alongside, sailing a parallel course toward a common horizon, so Grant's being almost 30 years closer to port made her insecure. Her confidence waned, and she became dependent. "It's my fault," Grant said. "Ambiguity is the theme of my life. By day, I make loans to developers, and by night I raise money to protect the environment. By day I'm a bank president and husband, and by night I'm yours."

At last, Sarah concluded that Grant needed both. "I love you," she said, "and I'll be your mistress."

"Impossible," he said. "It would diminish the person I love. I'll get a divorce."

"Also impossible," said Sarah, "because it would diminish you."

Grant's wife learned of the affair and went to see Sarah. The marriage had been difficult, she said, with a retarded child and his consuming hours. Now were the good years. Please, she said, don't steal my husband.

In a few days, two lucid minds separated a united heart. Sarah quit the Museum; he bought her a house and set up an account. Eventually, she learned to laugh again. But she put on weight. And her belief that luck comes by trusting the universe became an obsession.

"And now she's found Kerensa's Journal!" I mumble. "No effort; just luck! Plain, dumb luck!"

Peter Wright is a printer living in Portland. He received his bachelor's degrees from UC Berkeley, served in the U.S. Navy, worked as a stock broker and taught at Stanford University. © Peter Wright, 2002. All rights reserved.

Bond

continued from page 5

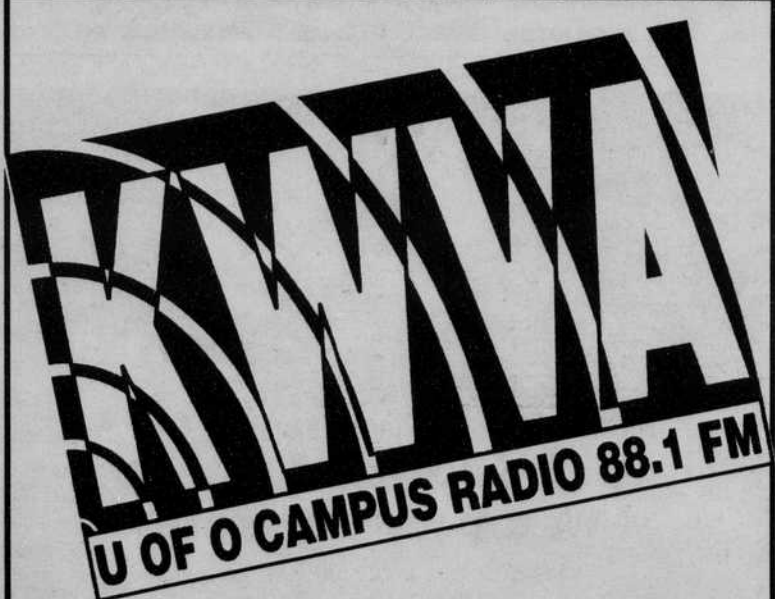
controller in hand — will tell. But I will relay a story: As I watched my friend drive James Bond's Aston Martin during one of the later levels, it made me realize that no character has become more apt for this form of video game. Each installment so seamlessly integrates the Bond archetypes — beautiful

women, villains, gadgets and guns — that before long, we might be unable to tell the difference between film and game.

"NightFire" is available for all "next-generation" platforms — meaning the PC, Microsoft Xbox, Nintendo GameCube and Sony PlayStation 2.

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