

Issue 2

September 2007

**Music
Blogs
Words**

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Introduction

Recently, you may have noticed a few changes to the Scribo Ergo Sum website. Aside from the simply cosmetic change from rose and cream to black and green, we've (or rather, Ali has) also added a few new features for you all to enjoy.

First off, we've found a new host for our video podcasts in Veoh (www.veoh.com/channels/videoergosum1). This, I'm told, will make the site run a little faster as we haven't got all those videos (well, two) taking up space on there.

Perhaps more noticeably, we've also introduced a forum element to the site at www.scriboergosum.org.uk/forum. Hopefully, this'll help make getting feedback a little easier for us – aside, of course, from giving everyone somewhere to discuss whatever they want. Before, it did get a touch difficult keeping track of people's thoughts, sprawled out over my inbox, but this should at least give us somewhere central to find out what people are interested in – as well as letting the feedback be a little more organic in nature. We're still delighted to get e-mails, of course, as feedback in any form is a precious thing to us, but the forum's there too now, if people prefer that. You might also want to keep an eye out for our podcasts again now that everyone's got back from the summer, and I've actually got someone to film with. Actually, I know you should keep an eye out for a podcast, as we filmed one last week. I should know. I was, after all, being filmed. As usual, it was fairly rambling in nature – but given that I've only had limited feedback on the podcasts, and that wasn't mentioned, I shall presume that's okay.

As a closing note, Ali's finally got the new e-mail software for the site working – which means new e-mail addresses. Thus, if people now need to contact me as editor, the address is doug@scriboergosum.org.uk.

Enjoy!

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Editor-in-chief.

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Published online at: <http://www.scriboergosum.org.uk>

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An Objective View of Insanity

The other day upon the stair,
I met a man who wasn't there,
He wasn't there again today,
I wish that he would go away.

I saw that man again today,
The one that wouldn't go away,
Sitting still upon the stair,
No one else can see him there.

He sits there with a knife in hand,
Making sure his post is manned,
He smiles as I pass him by,
I look him boldly in the eye.

He tells me where to buy a gun,
That this is going to be fun,
I trust him; he's my only friend,
But he drives me round the bend.

He tells me who I have to kill,
I climb up to their windowsill,
Then aim my gun towards their head,
And shoot them 'till I'm sure they're dead.

I take the body home with me,
And bury it beneath a tree,
Then wonder back towards the stair,
The man is waiting for me there.

The postman is the next to die,
I shove a biro through his eye,
Then drag him in and close the door,
And watch his blood soak through the floor.

I hear a ringing on the bell,
The sound of boots; its hard to tell,
The men in blue have come to call,
I run swiftly down the hall.

I hear a crash; the door's kicked in,
Men with faces looking grim,
They grab me by my flailing arm,
To take me where I can't do harm.

But as they drag me past the stair,
I see the man who isn't there,
He looks at me and then I know,
That Prison's not the final blow.

I will get out and get back home,
And as I sit and wait alone,
I know that man upon the stair,
Is always waiting for me there.

Ali Gledhill

I Want a Referendum. Am I...

...stupid?

A new cross-party campaign to give British voters the chance to reject the new European Reform Treaty has been launched. IWantaReferendum.com is the latest in a list of campaigns purporting to be in favour of a referendum, but in reality campaigning against the Treaty. The Conservative Party, scared of appearing anti-Europe, have opted instead to look as if they support democracy in demanding a referendum.

There are three simple reasons why Her Majesty's Government should propose the Reform Treaty to the Houses of Parliament. Firstly, that in the UK, parliament makes decisions in the UK, not the electorate. MPs have the right to vote in favour or against a motion to adopt the Treaty onto UK statute books, and they should be given that right. There is no precedence for circumventing Parliament over the adoption of a mere Treaty. MPs are welcome to reject the Treaty if they see fit, but they are elected to make such a decision and are accountable to the electorate. The electorate, on the other hand, have no expertise in government and their votes are accountable to no-one.

Secondly, the Reform Treaty is a necessary chapter in the story of the European Union. It aims to further unify the UK with its continental neighbours, another small step towards more complete integration with the European body. If Europe is to be secure, it needs an FBI-style special investigative service to combat high-level crime across borders. If the economic benefits of the Union are to be fully utilised, the open-border policy will need to be enforced. Large-scale sharing of resources makes much sense, and clarifying these in law to ensure a fair deal is to be welcomed. The Reform Treaty is designed to replace a hotchpotch of old agreements with one clear document that will ensure every member of the EU stands on an equal footing. The future of the EU depends on it.

.....
**the UK's place in the EU
depends upon this Treaty**
.....

Lastly, the United Kingdom's place in the EU depends upon this Treaty. Already the less Anglo-friendly heads of state have criticised the UK for behaving far more independently than themselves. The Reform Treaty is the UK's last chance to assert its belief in Europe. Such issues of international diplomacy cannot be fully understood by the electorate, and such a decision cannot be placed at the mercy of a referendum.

...justified?

Gordon Brown has categorically promised the British people a referendum on the European Constitution. Given that foreign heads of state have said that the Reform Treaty is upwards of 90% identical to the old Constitution, Gordon Brown promised the British people a referendum on the Treaty. He has

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referenda cannot be held willy-nilly, but the case for a vote on a vast swathe of European integration is convincing
.....

now backtracked, saying that the United Kingdom is a parliamentary democracy, and as such MPs are elected to make these kinds of decisions in the Commons.

A new campaign recently launched, aiming to hold Brown and his government to account. IWantaReferendum.com is a cross-party group demanding Brown keeps his word and gives the British electorate a choice on the role of their nation within Europe. Europe is one crucial issue of political consensus where the electorate has little choice between candidates at a general election – there is only superficial legitimacy in Parliament's expected decision to back this Treaty.

Brown and his recycled Cabinet propose giving parliament, not the electorate, the right to sign away an enormous amount of power to the EU. Let's not forget, this is the same Constitution that was rejected

by Arch-Integrationists France. More moderate Middle England is set against the UK signing the Constitution, so Brown is denying them the right to declare their distaste for it.

This raises a great question about what referenda should be used for. In Gordon Brown's world, promises of referenda win elections, but the votes themselves are simply inconvenient. Because the government looks set to bulldoze the Constitution into UK law, supporters of the Constitution largely reject the idea of legitimising the inevitable. Supporters of democracy, therefore, are almost universally opponents to the Constitution itself. This is a vile distortion of the utility of a referendum – the debate is being held simply to allow a debate to be held!

Brown needs to announce a referendum. For the sake of democracy in the UK, Brown has to acknowledge that a parliamentary majority of 60+ does not give you the right to force through legislation that is deeply unpopular in the wider world. Politics no longer allows benign establishment figures to set the agenda on their terms; the British public know what he is up to, and know that he has both lied to them and proven he is uninterested in their opinion. If the electorate sees this kind of behaviour as typical of a politician, where will democracy go?

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Referenda cannot be held willy-nilly, but the case for a vote on a vast swathe of European integration is convincing. EU integration is of great importance to the political make-up of the United Kingdom. Theoretically, Parliamentary sovereignty remains strong in the UK. Practically, it has been weak for several decades and the Constitution would see the end of direct representa-

tive democracy for UK citizens. UK citizens are about to lose a huge amount of power: if they choose to give it away, they are welcome, but they should be given the right to retain their own power. Gordon Brown has gravely misjudged this situation, and he will pay a heavy political price for it. He will be the first victim; we must ensure that the second casualty isn't the liberal democracy of the United Kingdom.

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Ali Gledhill is Scribo Ergo Sum's Assistant Editor with responsibility for website and media productions. He also runs the online blog-based campaign group The Fifth Way (TheFifthWay.net).

“They Said It”, a publication from IWantAReferendum.com:

“If we secure a treaty that is acceptable for Britain, then I believe we can also put it successfully to the British people.”
Gordon Brown, 12 May 2004

“It's not as though this is being imposed on the country. People will have the chance to put their views.”
Gordon Brown, 26 Jan 2005

“I will listen and I will learn. I want to lead a government humble enough to know its place, where I will always strive to be - and that's on people's side.”
Gordon Brown, 11 May 2007

“The manifesto is what we put to the public. We've got to honour that manifesto. That is an issue of trust for me with the electorate.”
Gordon Brown, 24 June 2007

“The new Constitutional Treaty ensures the new Europe can work effectively... We will put it to the British people in a referendum.”
2005 Labour Party manifesto

Fred Angles

A Letter to America

Comrades,

Upon reading this, a few of you may wonder why I'm bothering to write to you. I am, after all, a communist - and there's nothing a decent, god-fearing American hates more than a darn red, is there? No, you don't want to listen to me; I'm a no-good, seditious krypto-fascist who'll stop at nothing to cripple good ol' Uncle Sam, aren't I? And you should never listen to me, because that would just be *wrong*, right?

Or at least, that's what they told you at Grade School.

Actually, that's exactly why I'm writing to you. You are, without a doubt, prejudiced against Communism. You can hardly help it - it's all that you've ever been allowed to think. If you're a student, an intellectual, a thinker, it will have become immediately obvious that anyone who ever professed allegiance to communism in the US has been ignored - and that's not what you want. If you're a worker, a professional, a hard-working family-member, you've probably got better things to do with your time than actually think about an apparently discredited ideology - surviving the mess your rulers have created, no doubt. And if you're one of those rulers, then you probably appreciate full well what Communism means for bloodsucking capitalists like you - and are scared witless by it.

Ultimately, it's one of the few issues you're likely to find any sort of overwhelming public consensus on in the US - that Communism is bad. The media says it, the intelligentsia says it, and the politicians simply scream it. From cradle to grave, it's all that you're likely to hear. Ever since the Cold War - and even before that, Communism hasn't stood a chance. It's taught dishonestly in schools. It's improperly represented in books, in films - in everything - as a scarcely concealed successor to fascism, a slaving wolf in sheep's clothing opposed to all forms of freedom. It's presented as if the (thoroughly anti-communistic) regimes of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot were representative of *true* communism (they're not).

But, why? Why is Communism so reviled?

The basic answer has already been given in this letter. Your rulers - the politicians, the businessmen,

the capitalists (put simply, the people who *own* the country; in land, in wealth, and in the power that grants) - are scared of communism. And with good reason. If the communists had their way, those owners would be expropriated. Their wealth, their power, everything, would be taken away and given to its true owners - you. Under the current constitution, America is owned by the bourgeoisie - or rather, the very top section of it. The very rich are given total freedom to oppress, to steal, to exploit - all in the name of freedom. Capitalism sits enshrined on a throne of dollar bills, upon which the famed constitution is virtually written. It allows the super-rich to buy, sell, own, employ, bribe, exploit, steal - essentially, do anything they want, so long as they can make it look above board

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.....

(they can, if nothing else, usually manage this by bribing a few more people). You can do this too, in theory. There is no legal block to stop you becoming just as rich as them. But really, what chance do you stand? They have all the power, and they don't want to give any of it away. So they weight everything against you, the little man - taxes, education, business - in an attempt to stop you from climbing the greasy pole. You have rights, certainly - but they have all the power.

Communism would change that. Under communism, you would have the rights and the power. You would have health, food and shelter because you deserve it as a human being, born as equal as us all, not because of some accident of birth that landed you on the right side of the street. Resources would go to those who needed them, not those brutish, selfish or lucky enough to seize them regardless of need. Thus, the sick would be treated, the starving fed and the weak protected as fellow men and women. Wouldn't that be better for us all?

However, this would require some rather drastic changes. As we've already explored, American society is incredibly selfish. It's obsessed with making more

money - particularly those that already have lots of it. This would have to change. If communism is ever to succeed, it needs people to stop hoarding and start sharing. This, inevitably, would mean a temporary dip in living standard for the owners of this world - which is as bad as death to them. Having known luxury, they make the fatal assumption that there can be nothing better - so swear never to lose it. As such, they set themselves against communism to defend their shallow, padded world. And, since they control virtually everything, from law, to education, to media, they can set those against it too. This is why primary schools, priests and politicians in America (and much, much more) all say Communism is bad - because they have power, and don't want to lose it.

But, what do they say? You'd think they'd at least pretend to have decent reasons for thinking Communism is bad?

Well, actually, that's not always true. Quite often, they don't even bother with even that; they just sit there in their offices, screaming down at you through megaphones that, "COMMUNISM IS EVIL" without even a hint of justification. They know that nobody else with money, power or influence is going to disagree with them, so can spew as much half-baked crap as they like, and no-one will hear any complaints. And because you perceptions of the wider world on what they're taught as a child, what they read in the newspaper and what they see in films, you end up thinking that Communism is bad without ever really questioning it - you've no true choice, it's all you've ever know. So the people in power don't really feel the need to justify themselves too often.

When they do though, it's fairly predictable. You can tell when a capitalist is lying about communism. They'll probably start by blabbering on about communists being the enemies of all freedom; at this point, they'll refer to Mao, Stalin and every other bloody-minded murderer from the past century they can think of. Ignore them at this point; none of the, "communist," dictators of the twentieth century were really communists, whatever labels they gave themselves. True Communism is a fundamentally co-operative ideology - one where the people are ultimately allowed to govern themselves at all levels, with no higher-leadership, no owners and no exploitation. It trusts people. The dictators governed their people; they forcibly led them, they effectively owned them and exploited them in every sense of the word possible. They trusted nobody, not even their relatives. Communism is not authoritarianism.

Once they've got past simply lying, they'll get onto

the core of their argument. The American Dream. We're trying to destroy the American Dream, they'll say; the very foundations of your not-so-utopian-society, under threat! They say we will tear up every single thing that the Founding Fathers held dear and throw it back in your faces. They say we will bring down your long-held sacred freedoms in the name of mere words. They say we are the enemies of everything America was - and of the American Dream.

But what is the American Dream?

Ultimately, when a rich person talks about the American Dream, what they mean is freedom of enterprise (or theft, as it's sometimes known). There's a lot more to it than that - but we're not talking about those bits, as we're not proposing to get rid of them, whatever the capitalists say. As for what freedom of enterprise is - well, it means different things to different people, really. For those that have, it does mean freedom; it's that freedom to buy, sell, own, employ, bribe, exploit

you can tell when a capitalist is lying about communism

and steal whatever they want that we've already discussed. For the rest of us though, that don't have, it's different. For us, it's nothing more than the freedom to pay our way for whatever the rich want us to. In a sense, that is freedom; we get to choose what we're paying for, at least. But, is that freedom? Should we really be directly paying for everything? Even when we need it to live, but really can't afford it - and others could help us?

I think we need to have a look at paying your way in action; don't you?

Imagine yourself in someone else's house. It's nothing particularly special - detached, two floors, suburban - a typically comfortable middle class pad somewhere on the edges of a typical small town, somewhere typically American. It could be anywhere near you; a family home, full of the joy and laughter of a contented, safe family on the verge of going up in the world. But it's not. It's empty. Where's the family? Where's the smiling, besuited father coming home from a day's hard work in the office to his grinning children, tearing up the drive to meet him? Where's the laughter gone?

I'll tell you where. They're living out of a suitcase, in a friend's living room. They aren't smiling anymore. The children aren't laughing anymore. The wife is crying. They have literally nothing but the clothes on their back, and then only just. Why, though? What happened to this success-story in the making? Why are they homeless? The answer is free enterprise. You

see, good old father didn't read the small print carefully enough when taking out his mortgage to buy that house. The *enterprising* bankers had been particularly careful to make sure all the nasty, complicated percentages, all the sudden changes of dates - all the bits you really need to read - in the fiddly small print that no one ever does read. So he missed it. And then the market changed, and he got behind on his payments - and then it got so bad he ended up defaulting on his mortgage. So, the family lost their house. There was no relief fund, no safety net and definitely no sympathy. They were lucky even to find a friend to put them up - no one wants to know a loser, after all. And this all because of the sort of mistake that anyone would make. Do you think that's right? The capitalists do. They'll cluck, and they'll sigh, and say that it's tragic, just tragic - but they won't do anything. It was, after all, his fault, they'll say. He should have read the small print - and the bankers were well within their rights to put all the important details there. Their rights to freedom of enterprise. The family will just have to carry on paying their way in society, and hope things look up again for them. The capitalists think that's right. We don't. We don't think it's right, to destroy someone and then look away, saying it's his fault. We don't think it's right to punish someone for assuming that someone in a position of responsibility will have the human decency to treat them as that, another human being. Do you?

Let's have another look at paying your way.

Imagine yourself in another house. This one isn't anywhere as nice as the first one. It's a dingy, sub-urban flat. It's grey, smelly and old. It could do with a clean. But it's all Dorothy can afford the rent for. Dorothy is eighty-three; her husband Walter died three years ago, and they never had any kids. She lived through the Depression, through three wars as an army nurse - through hard times. She did her bit for America, keeping her boys alive as they fought for freedom (or so she thought). But now she's old, and alone. Worse than that though, she's dying. Dorothy has cancer, and it's not going away. Is she getting any treatment? Is she being given the help in her old age that she really deserves at the end of her hard life? Indeed, is she being given the help she deserves as a human being, to keep her alive? No. Why not? Because she can't pay her way. In America, everything costs money, even life. An army nurse's pension isn't very much - not enough for her health insurance. No doctor's bill, no treatment, no life. Dorothy is going to die very soon, and she's suffering all the way - and no one's going to try and stop that. Because she can't pay them for it. Do you think that's right? We don't. We don't think

it's fair to betray someone like that. We don't think it's fair to let someone (or anyone, actually) who's given the best years of their life to their country and their fellow humans waste away and die for the sake of a few selfish dollar bills. Do you?

Let's take one final look at paying your way in action.

Manuel is forty-two. He is a second generation immigrant of Mexican origin, an American citizen, and proud of it. He is one of the most loyal, patriotic citizens you could ever find, who believes every word of the Oath of Allegiance, who loves his country and who is simply grateful to be able to live there. He would do anything for it. As it is, he isn't able to do much. He works as a porter for a big import/export firm in San Francisco, ten hours a day, every day of the week. It is all hard, physical work - cleaning, shifting boxes to and fro, carrying the goods on which the firm is built. It is essential work; without men like him, companies like the one he works for simply wouldn't function. It is not especially glorious, perhaps - but it is undeniably necessary. And yet, he's only paid \$5 an hour for this priceless work. He works and he works and he works, in the hope that some day, he may save enough from his work for him and his family to move up in the world. He wants to send his children to a good school, so they have a chance in life (what parent wouldn't?). He wants his ageing mother, who lives with them in her old age, to have a decent end (what son wouldn't?).

..... this, then, is the American Dream

He wants to own his house, so that he'll never risk missing the rent and being kicked out again (what person wouldn't?). But it's all useless.

After tax, after rent, after food, his \$5 an hour are almost all used up - as are the \$5 an hour his wife makes off cleaning jobs when she gets them. Worse than this, because he works such long, hard shifts - all in an attempt to make some cash and get out of this - he comes home exhausted, unable to do anything but eat and sleep. He has no time for the kids - he needs the energy for the next day's work. Through trying to do his best for them in making as best a living he can, a good parent has been made a bad one. Add to this the fact that Manuel could lose his job at any moment, unless he's lucky - his employer is free to employ and fire whoever he wants, remember - and it's easy to see how he might fall into the crushing cycle of debt, depression and downward mobility that so characterises low-pay America. He can't pay his bills, so he borrows money (not from the banks though - they won't accept

him, as he has no credit rating. He has to go to the loan sharks - who charge far greater rates of interest and are far more violent than the banks when people can't pay back) - but, just like he couldn't pay those bills, he can't make enough money to pay those debts in time. So he borrows more money, to pay them off. He goes down in the world, until he has nothing left. He has no chance of getting back up, short of a miracle - he doesn't have the capital to go to the banks, or quit his job to look for a better one, or do anything but just get by. That's the truth of low-pay America.

Barry is also forty-two. He runs the company Manuel works for. He is a white, well-off American who can't actually remember how long ago his family came to America, it was so long ago. And yet, he's not particularly proud of it. Oh, he does what he has to - sings the songs, honours the flag, and all of that - but only because he has to if he's to stay ahead in the world. If loyalty is anything to go by, he's a far worse American than Manuel. And yet, he sits as far up in the world as Manuel is far down. He makes at least \$50 every hour to Manuel's \$5. He went to a renowned private school, followed by Harvard, where his superb education helped him get a top level degree. He could afford a car, house and health insurance even before he inherited control of the firm from his father at thirty-five. If he goes down in the world, it will be his fault; he has the money to get ahead, and won't lose it unless he puts it in the wrong place (unlike our family man from earlier, though, he can hardly claim ignorance if he does. The family man didn't have a top-class degree in finance, after all; Barry does). And unless he makes that mistake, his children will be able to follow in his footsteps. He can give them a good home, a good education, a good life. He just has to be careful.

This is all the result of freedom of enterprise. This is why America has at the same time got one of the highest employment rates and worst poverty rates in the developed world. This is why capitalism just doesn't work. Instead of creating the massive social mobility that it does on paper, where people are free to move up or down as their ability dictates, it really creates two fixed spirals, one going up, one going down. Subjected to the blind force of the market, people are hurled up or down these spirals with immense force. The rich can control these spirals; they have enough money to ride out the market, to employ the right people, to go in the right direction. They can go up. The poor, though, can only go down. They have nothing to fight the callous fist of the market with - no savings, no security, nothing. They can only get poorer.

This, then, is the American Dream. For the rich, it is

indeed a dream; they will get richer. Theirs is a virtuous circle. For the poor though, it is nothing but a nightmare. They cannot get richer. In theory, they are just as free as everyone else; they can sell whatever they want, buy whatever they want, set up whatever company they want - do anything, practically. But, in reality, they can't. Regardless of whatever true need they have to, they can't. Stuck in low-pay jobs which they need to survive in the work-or-die ethic that characterises capitalism, they can't afford to advance. They can't afford the costs of setting up a company - they're too busy surviving. They can't afford the benefits of good healthcare, good education and good food - they're too busy surviving. They can't buy anything that they don't need - they're too busy surviving, and no one will pay or lend them enough for anything else. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. That's the American Dream.

We don't think that's right. We don't think it's right that people should be punished for being born poor. We don't think it's right that society is so unfair. We are all born equal - and yet, under capitalism, it is as if we are not. The poor, the needy and the oppressed are often poor, needy and oppressed through no fault of their own. Even if they are, is it so wrong to try and help them? We don't think so. We don't blame people for their birth - we just treat them as what they are, people. At present, society is based around selfishness; people take as much as they can, and don't give anything to those that really need it - even if they don't need it themselves. All we want is to change that. All we want is a society where people give as much as they can, and take what they need as a reward - as each to his ability, each to his need. All we want is there for to be some humanity in the world again. *That's the Communist Dream.*

I'm not going to tell you what to think; as far as I can see, you've had enough of that from the capitalists already. All I'm going to say is this; you've seen two dreams today. One is the Communist Dream. The other claims to be the American Dream.

Which do you really think is a dream?

Regards,

Fredrick Angles

Fred Angles is a new columnist for Scribo Ergo Sum. He also writes a blog for the Fifth Way at:

<http://www.thefifthway.net/mu/redrealism>

Douglas Johnson

The Editor Speaks

My Assistant Editor, Ali Gledhill, puts great hope in the blogosphere. He sees it as the great democratiser of politics; a free, anarchic forum for opinion where age, class and sex are all irrelevant. Only argument matters.

I'm slightly less convinced. The internet does have great potential for giving the masses a voice, yes. But at the moment, it has no potential. It is inherently right-wing. It cannot help but be so. Only sad, middle aged, middle class men with paunches have the time, money or patience to blog regularly. By an unfortunate coincidence, it's the sad, middle aged, middle class men with paunches that tend to be the most staunchly right-wing group in the country. They're that bizarrely selfish demographic that have more than enough money to be getting on with, but want far more. They've had the education, the luck and the wealthy background to actually stand a chance of getting pig-rich in our broken economy - though given that they haven't got there by middle age, I suspect they simply don't have the ability to either. They feel that their best chance of moving up in the world is through selfish, Thatcherite money grubbing. So they're invariably right-wing. And since they dominate the blogosphere as a demographic, so is it.

Frankly, I don't see this changing soon. In general, the only, "left-wing," bloggers around are either champagne-socialists as hopelessly middle-class as the Tories, or New-Labourites who aren't really left-wing. No-one else has the time, the energy or the inclination. To them, the political blogosphere is a closed world, dominated by fat old Tories whose common sense runs inversely proportional to their soaring bank balance. They fear they won't make an impact, won't have time and simply won't be heard - as, indeed, they probably won't be, because everyone thinks like that too. So, for the moment, the blogosphere most definitely is a closed world.

Can it be broken open though? To be honest, I don't know. Like Ali, I'd like to think that it could be, at some point; the internet could be a wonderful tool for equality, in due course. But, can it be done? It's not exactly rosy at the moment, after all. The rightist dominance looks

complete; even embittered old lefties like me can see that. Even assuming it is possible, *how* can it be done? We haven't really got a blueprint of a certain group trying to establish itself *en masse* on the internet before, even outside of the political sphere. As with any society largely left to operate on its own, without any interference from above, the internet has a tendency to just amble along aimlessly. Things happen, yes, but nobody really knows who starts them. The web is so vast that by the time a trend has really spread, whoever started it has (with a few notable exceptions, such as YouTube and MySpace, both of which started with very few competitors, creatively) long sunk into anonymity - evolution, not revolution, is the word of the day. Even Conservative Home (<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/>), the Tories' internet-based Mecca - and by far the biggest British political blogging site - only really took off after the genre was established. So we on the left have no concrete example to follow. What we can do, though, is look at how political blogging did evolve in Britain, and see if we can learn anything from that.

Political blogs have always existed on the internet. After all, it only takes a keyboard, a computer and an opinion to start blogging - and none of those are exactly rare these days, are they? It may not have been very prolific at first, but it happened. A subculture of bloggers began to emerge, split down the middle into left and right (or rather, into Labour-supporters and Conservatives; political blogging has always been more partisan than you might expect on the internet, where people can by and large say what they like). Even then, the right was slightly stronger. There might not have been the hardcore, professional bloggers such as Iain Dale that exist today, but there were the sad, middle aged, middle class men with paunches who scare people off from the comment threads by filling them with ill-informed reactionary trash.

What really kick-started the conservative dominance of the blogosphere was the advent of the professional blogger. People like Iain Dale, Tim Montgomerie and Sam Coates who've given up the day job and taken to full time political commentary on the internet for a living. With the coming of round

the clock, incessant coverage on sites like Conservative Home and 18 Doughty St, the blogosphere took a big step in another direction. Not a revolution, as it clearly continued the tradition of what there'd been previously, but very definitely a massive step away from the petty scribbling of the past. Ever since, Labour and Lib Dem supporters have been playing catch-up. Copycat sites like Labour Home (<http://labourhome.org>) have sprung up recently, but they've never really been able to compete. How can they? When your most prominent opponents are available almost every hour of the day to sit down and write, and you've only got a couple of hours during and after work, you can't hope to keep up with them.

So the Tories have been able to increase the right-wing saturation of comment threads to a right-wing saturation of the blogosphere, and the left has in turn been able to do nothing. Why? It's that old formula of time, money and inclination again. It's worth noting that most of the original professional bloggers had other, fairly reliable incomes which wouldn't lapse even if they gave up handling them on a day to day basis; Iain Dale had the money from *Politicos*, for example. They had the safety net of savings to catch them if it all blew over – so could afford to make the jump from one professional life to another. It's not that there aren't people like that on the left. There are. It's just that most of them don't write on the web at all – or at least, don't blog. That seems to be left to a less wealthy group, just as committed as their conservative counterparts, but less time and money rich. Which all means that, since the advent of blogging as a mass activity, it's been increasingly dominated by the political right – until we've reached the point where there's practically nothing but the right this side of the dot.

So what can we learn from this? Precious little, it seems at first sight. Conservatives came to dominate the net because they have more money. What's new? Well, nothing – you just need to look a little deeper. Conservatives came to dominate the net because they have the money to saturate it. The Tories don't run the blogosphere because they have anything decent to say (they don't, as a rule), or because they're more intelligent than anyone else (they're not, as a rule), or because they're brilliant writers (they're

not, as a rule), but because there are so many of them. The only people who read right-wing blogs are other right-wingers. Everyone else is either intimidated into silence by the manic speed at which the comment threads fill, or are disgusted into not posting by the sheer effluence of ignorance in those comment threads. They see the poorly written right-wing blogs, they see the even more poorly written comments in the right-wing blogs and they disappear as fast as their internet connection runs.

There are lots of conservative bloggers. They aren't going to go away. Would you, if you controlled what you thought was a microphone to the masses so totally? Of course not. Left-wing bloggers need to accept this, and move on from trying to compete with the right on numbers. There's a reason projects like Labour Home have, by and large, failed; they require a dedicated, rapid response team of regular bloggers to function as well as Conservative Home – which they don't have. No, the way to defeat the Tory monopoly on political blogging isn't to challenge it on its own speciality of net-saturation; it's to say something intelligent. Quality, not quantity, is what will bring people over. There are left-wingers out there who can write, there are left-wingers out there with things to say, and there are definitely left-wingers out there who can do a better job of political commentary than most conservatives. And what they need to do is show that. If socialists, anti-capitalists and other leftists can get their respective acts together, write something worth writing and publicise the fact that they are providing better political coverage than the other side, then they'll begin to do better. If they can get a few well-known, popular left-wing writers aboard, then even better. If they can prove that they write more intelligently, more perceptively and more cuttingly than the average right-winger, then they can get people to start reading political blogs again. Because it's only then that people will see that the blogosphere isn't necessarily a closed world that they'll try to break into the comment threads, to read political blogs and maybe even start their own. It's only then that they'll be able to challenge the Tories on numbers. And it's only then that they'll be able to take the power back.

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Gerry Fenby

Fear and Loathing in Middle England

She didn't *look* a bigot. Not at first. They all seem to look the same in the mass media. You know, the usual stuff. Leather-clad skinheads stuck full of swastikas, fat cigar-sucking bastards who could be union bosses but for the demi-fascism, thin faced harridans so wrinkled you'd think they were dead if it wasn't for the shrieking. But no, nothing so...simple here. Not with her, anyway. She looked perfectly ordinary, at first sight; a dowdy, soberly dressed woman of middling years, standing there at the bus-stop like any other normal person waiting for the bus. Going a little grey at the edges maybe, but nothing really out of the ordinary. I'd come across her as I lurched up the hill to catch the bus to the shops, standing there in a tatty, slightly frayed overcoat with a bag on the one hand, and umbrella on the other and a bland frown upon her face. My first impression was that she looked almost spinsterly; no doubt indicative of some deep, inborn chauvinism of mine which exists simply because I am a man and which I'm not even conscious of, let alone able to deal with, according to the feminazis at least. There really was nothing out of the ordinary about her. She wasn't particularly tall, particularly short, particularly fat, particularly thin, particularly pretty, particularly ugly, particularly young, particularly old, particularly tatty, particularly neat, particularly cheerful or even particularly gloomy. Or particularly *anything*, for that matter. She was just dull. Perhaps the only remotely unusual detail was her teeth. She wore braces on them – or were they retainers? Whatever they were, they looked distinctly odd on what must have been a forty or fifty-something year old woman, tiny metal squares branching out wonkily over gradually yellowing squares of dirty enamel. It looked like a bizarre cross between the limp maw of a youngish teenager and a city-banker's aging jawline. Apart from that one, tiny detail though, she seemed perfectly normal. Nothing missing, nothing over-the-top, nothing unusual – just an ordinary person at the bus stop.

Oh how misleading appearances can be!

For some time, we stood in utter silence, ignoring each other as any two strangers might these

days. Why wouldn't we? We didn't know each other – and still don't, for that matter, but there you go. We barely had any reason to pay attention to each other, let alone talk. After all, would you just start babbling at a random stranger twenty to thirty years older than you, with no prior connection and no real need? No, of course not. So why should I have done?

Then a bus came. Not my bus, and evidently not hers as she didn't move to flag it down. Nevertheless, it shuddered to a halt at the top of the hill, disgorging a pair of giggling schoolgirls and a gangly, dark haired individual out into the gloomy morning. Shabbily dressed, the dark-haired young man had a cheap pair of earphones plugged in, which clearly obliterated the outside world, as far as his ears were concerned at any rate. Above the gentle roar of the bus as it trundled away, I could hear the faint rat-a-tat-a-tat of drums clattering out from the poorly designed mini-speakers. I didn't mind too much. I never have; it's only a temporary discomfort, and as long as it's not one of those awful phones which actually play stuff like a radio – which I loathe as possibly the most anti-social invention since the poll tax – I'm happy to live with it.

Clearly, though, this woman was not. As the man swayed down the road on his over-long, lanky legs, her face twisted suddenly from its plain emptiness into a hateful sneer. From the back of her throat, a muffled croak bled out. Something about how, "they," were filling up the country. Something about it being a disgrace, something about this country, and something about an amorphous, as yet unknown, "them."

Puzzled, I turned about to face her, cocking an eyebrow. After all, it was a rather strange thing for this dull-faced old woman to come out with suddenly in the middle of the street, when we'd spent the last ten minutes or so pointedly ignoring each other. I didn't even know if she was talking to me. Certainly, the almost inaudible volume of it gave the impression that she hadn't actually meant to say it – that it was almost more of a bitter, resentful outburst than anything else. Even so, the question just had to be asked.

“Who are, “they?”

The woman’s head jerked around abruptly, a sharp movement which seemed to betray more nervousness than was really appropriate. I was right – she hadn’t meant to say anything! No matter now, though, she was bound to answer my question. And so she did. Glancing around conspiratorially, almost melodramatically, she turned back to glare at me intensely through the narrowed slits of her eyes. Another dry rasping croak ripped itself disturbingly from her mouth, quiet enough to count as a whisper.

“*Immigrants.*”

There was a ridiculous urgency to the whisper that almost made me want to laugh. What was this? Why had she summarily declared that man an immigrant? Why had she said it as if his soul was damned to hell as a result of it? It was clear that she felt the man was inherently dangerous as an immigrant, and didn’t deserve anything but the sneering contempt she gave him. Such a self-evidently ludicrous sentiment, that you can judge a person not on who they are, but where they come from, is calculated either to infuriate any right-minded, intelligent person through its sheer ignorant idiocy, or send them into paroxysms of laughter through its sheer absurdity. It was already clear from that simple phrase of hers that she was, at best, Daily Mail reader – and I’m ashamed to say that, at first, the latter was true of my response.

But, I controlled myself. Meeting her strangely intense gaze, I replied with another question. How, exactly, did she know that the man was an immigrant? I tried to keep the boiling incredulity at the back of my mind out of my voice, for I feared (rightly) that it would simply set her off on some xenophobic rant. Unfortunately, I suspect I failed – and unfortunately, she did indeed set off on such a xenophobic rant. Couldn’t I see, he looked like an immigrant? (I couldn’t). All I had to do was look at the face, apparently. I had to look at the nose, the face, the eyes – and there it was, staring back at me (apparently. Again, I hadn’t noticed anything). He wasn’t English – he was a *Slav*! And it was *Slavs*, coming in from Poland because the E.U, taking all our jobs, ruining our

country’s morals who were going to...

At this point, I could control myself no longer. Out came the shock, out came the anger, out came the sheer outraged incredulity that someone could express such opinions in what is meant to be the world’s most, “tolerant,” age. Seething, I blurted out some furious question. Something like...

“What the hell are you, some sort of fucking Nazi?”

The woman stopped dead in her tracks, stunned into silence by my outburst. Slowly, quietly, as if this happened a thousand times every day, she drew herself up, reddening in the face. Then, all at once, a shout:

“THE BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY ARE NOT NAZIS!”

Oh Christ, I thought. She was. She really was a member of the BNP. I hadn’t thought they existed round where I lived, but I was wrong. Clearly, I was wrong, as one of them stood right there in front of me, spewing her hate like a broken record. Immigrants this, and immigrants this, and no we’re not racists but we still want to kick the fucking niggers don’t we lads? I’d worked out that she was a rightist bigot fairly early on, the sort of fodder that licks up every line of the Daily Mail like its god’s only truth, but this was like listening to Nick Griffin dressed in a house-coat and set to repeat the same old stereotypical crap like he always does. I couldn’t stand for that. I may have changed my views over time, and I may not always have been constant in all of my principles, and I may, by and large, be a moral coward – but I have always hated the BNP, and everything they stand for. Their hateful irrationality, their shameless exploitation of the directionless discontent of poverty, their sheer murderous inhumanity; I have always hated it. And I will fight it wherever I go. So we got into an argument. It was fairly pointless stuff, really. She was screeching out the same ignorant amoralisms that you can hear at a BNP rally, that you heard at every NF rally and that you could have heard at Nuremburg, Berlin and Bergen-Belsen. At first, she tried to adopt the vaguely protectionistic line that the BNP higher-ups occasionally do – British jobs for British workers, and all that outdated crap that went out when British workers stopped doing those jobs – but in the end, she just lapsed to the same, hateful filth that lies at the core of all ultra-nationalist

ideology. It is an inherently negative creed, exploiting the fears of the ignorant in return for their votes, and it deserves every piece of criticism it gets. And it deserved everything I threw at it then. I appealed to her through reason, through compassion for her fellow humans, through common sense – but none of it seemed to work. All of my pleas fell on deaf ears, soldered shut no doubt by the lying leadership. In the end, the bus came and broke up our argument. She stomped onto the vehicle, fuming, while I tramped back home in disgust, determining that I could do the shopping another day.

It's quite often held out by the mainstream press that the BNP is purely a working class party – presumably, along with the extreme shades of bigotry that accompany it. The impression given is that the BNP's brand of die-hard, ignorant xenophobia is largely confined to crumbling urban ghettos filled with fat white bastards in the towns of the old industrial north that became home to increasing numbers of immigrants over the last half century. You know the stereotypes I'm talking about – the very ones I mentioned at the beginning of this article. Bernard Manning's a good example of this. When Manning died, the media – and in particular, the BBC (as much as it could, given its dedication to objective phrasing) – held him up as the outdated racist anachronism that he undoubtedly was. But who was Bernard Manning? As Trevor McDonald so nearly got into trouble for pointing out, a fat white bastard from a white working class family in Manchester, a bastion of the old industrial north. The clear implication of much of the coverage was that only fat white bastards could be members of the BNP, or enjoy the sweeping jingoism of Manning's act. The Guardian's obituary was a particularly striking example of this. Lampooning (quite rightly) Manning, his racism and all the bigotry he stood for all through the article, it is nonetheless quick to remind us of the fact that he was born a, "socially deprived northerner." It's also quick to remind us that most often, Manning's audience at the Embassy Club were largely born socially deprived northerners. The implication is clear; that only socially deprived northerners enjoyed Manning's racism – and, by extension, that only they would ascribe to the BNP's racism, which despite his protestations to the contrary bears a startling resemblance to his.

Frankly, that's bullshit. Undoubtedly, the BNP draws support from elements of the white working class – and undoubtedly, the greatest mass of the BNP's physical, voting support is drawn from those same elements of the white working class. But that doesn't mean it doesn't have sympathisers elsewhere, in spirit if not in name. Let's have a look at the facts. In the last general election, the BNP won 1227 votes in my constituency – up on previous elections there. This is in my dull, suburban-esque constituency on the edge of the Home Counties. My overwhelmingly middle class constituency on the edge of the Home Counties. And, d'you know what? I think they could have got more votes there – hundreds, if not thousands of extra votes. They could have got all those votes, if it wasn't for one thing; the hard-right of the Tory party. I have no doubt in my mind that if it wasn't for the anti-immigration, anti-Europe, anti-people policies of the right of the Conservative party, the BNP would attract a lot more support than it currently does in the Home Counties – along with UKIP, the English Democrats and other – more esoteric rightist parties. Middle England is incredibly right-wing. If you go to the station in the morning, the commuters will be reading the Mail almost without exception. (I tried this out once, during rush-hour; some six or seven

.....
this, then, is the American Dream. For the rich, it is indeed a dream; they will get richer. Theirs is a virtuous circle. For the poor though, it is nothing but a nightmare. They cannot get richer
.....

in ten were reading the Mail or the Express). If you pick up one of the local newspapers, you will invariably find it to be a reactionary rag full of wailing rants about jobs, tax and nanny statism. If you stop someone on the street and ask them what the country's greatest problem is, they may well say unchecked immigration. There are a lot of people in the Home Counties with what might be described as strongly conservative views, distinctly patriotic and with a firm grasp of what they feel it is to be British. And within that group, there is a hardcore of racists with what might be described as strongly bigoted

views, distinctly xenophobic and with a firmly racist grasp of what they feel it is to be British. They might not be a very large group – on the contrary, they are almost certainly in the minority, as not even the stereotypical, toffee nosed Middle Englander can be *that* narrow-minded. But they exist, they are middle-class and there are more of them than we think. They might run a million miles from the label of nationalism – but only because of its historic connotations, not because they actually disagree with the broad sweep of their policies. In elections, I'm willing to bet a number of them will see that hard-right Tory candidate in their constituency, note their invariably anti-immigration stance and think, "Well, I might not agree with them exactly, but they have some of the same ideas as me, just weaker – and they're pretty much bound to win anyway. So why not vote for them?" They have someone that represents their views – or so they think, at least. The Tory candidate may not be as extreme as some of them would like, but he's better than nothing. Better than *Labour*, certainly, as far as they're concerned. So most of them vote Conservative, and no one ever knows the difference. And the media thinks that nationalism doesn't really exist in Middle England.

But what about places outside safely Conservative Middle England? What about uncertain seats, where the election hangs in the balance? Even more importantly, as far as we're concerned here, what about Labour safe-seats that the Tories haven't a chance in hell of winning? You've probably guessed the seats I'm talking about already, if you're following my drift at all – the ones in the old industrial north, in Manchester, in Sheffield, in Bradford. The combination of idiocy, ignorance and ingrained xenophobia that leads to nationalism seems to be a constant across the social classes, reliant more on upbringing than class-culture, so we could guess no matter what that there might be some nationalists there. More than that, we know that the hard-right racist movement has a following there, because the BNP does pick up votes. But why does the BNP pick up votes there, when elsewhere the Tories seem to pick up the middle class krypto-nationalist votes? The answer, I suspect, lies in Labour dominance. Everyone there knows the Conservatives aren't going to win, even if everyone to the right of the most regressive centrist voted for them. They just don't have the support. So the nationalists don't bother

in the first place. They just go straight to the BNP, recognising that they more accurately represent their views anyway. Why wouldn't they? Nationalists in Labour heartland haven't got the same pragmatic reason to go with the majority that they have in the Home Counties. Nor do anti-immigration right wingers have the same ingrained culture of supporting the Tory right; instead, with no realistic alternate to the Labour party, their views become radicalised until they too think of supporting the BNP. Class has bugger all to do with support for the BNP, beyond the way it contributes to the party-political demographic that has led to the radicalisation of nationalism already described. And that's what it's all about. Party-political demographics.

The BNP will never achieve mass-support in the UK, at least in its current form. It scares too many people off with its reputation for demi-Nazism. But it would be a mistake to name nationalism being a spent force as a reason for its lack of success. Nationalism is alive and well in Britain. I think my experiences have proved that well enough. It's just hidden, is all. Look past the names, past the figures, past the election results, and at what people are actually saying – and then you'll see what I mean.

Gerry Fenby is Scribo Ergo Sum's latest columnist. He welcomes any feedback on any of his work, to be directed through the editor.

Ben May

Follow the Leader: A Review

Follow the Leader was Korn's third release and to date the band's most successful album. It's not too difficult to see why the album proved so successful. On Follow the Leader Korn make use of their unique sound that defined their previous two albums; while at the same time undergoing something of a departure from their previous style. Ultimately although the album is made up of the same lurching, hip-hop metal fusion Follow the Leader cements the musical hip-hop ties while featuring a number of guest vocalists, including Ice Cube and Fred Durst. The band gets that much more adventurous on this release, experimenting with song structure and their own skills as musicians. Although the band's sound may not be quite as fresh as it was on their debut, both guitarists Welch and Shaffer are able to create enough variation, along with the funky combination of David Silvera and Fieldy to last the album. Jonathan Davis matches them, drawing on his wide ranging talents as a vocalist (though not always a singer), with his trademark demented gibberish, scat vocals, growling (slightly down tuned compared to previous releases) and wailing. The final result is an album full of intense adventurous energy, even if it lacks the same degree of boiling aggression present on the first two releases.

Although the album may sound like a pretty large departure from earlier releases on tracks such as "Children of the Korn", "All in the Family" and "Cameltosis", given the presence of rappers as guest vocalists, it is worth recalling tracks such as "Wicked" from Life is Peachy. Whether or not these tracks appeal will be down to personal taste, but given the popularity of rap and hip-hop, and the undeniable links between Korn's sound and these genres, it would be difficult to argue the band is unsuited to, or foolish to undergo such an approach. The album mixes these tracks with undeniably solid and easily accessible tracks such as "Freak On a Leash" and "Got the Life", padded out by powerful aggressive tracks that demand the right to be played at the highest of volumes, such as "It's On" (an intense album opener), "Dead Bodies Everywhere" and "Reclaim My Place". The themes of the album lyrically remain much the same and are predominately aimed at disillusioned teenagers and other similar individuals, as you might expect. Tracks such as "Children of the

Korn" and "Dead Bodies Everywhere" highlight the war between parents and children, while the band's sick, slightly childish sense of humour remains apparent on the amusing "All in the Family". The album has its darker moments when the band addresses more serious issues, "Pretty" is chilling for it's recollection of the rape of a 1 year old girl, while "My Gift To You" is yet another example of a deeply emotional closing to an album, with Davis sounding quite literally as if he losing control, becoming utterly demented as the murky guitars lurch onwards towards the album's end. Tracks such as "Freak on a Leash", "Got the Life" and "Reclaim My Place" address the issue of fame, though lyrically they remain accessible enough to the listener that they can be applied to oneself rather than just Davis, which manages to prevent the feeling that listeners are being saddled with problems that are not theirs.

Follow the Leader finds Korn at their most adventurous and energetic and the end result is undeniable catchy and appealing. Ultimately even if individual tracks, other than the singles, are not particularly impressive leaving at first, what becomes more important is undeniable grind of the band's sound that defines them. That sound is as strong on Follow the Leader as it ever has been, supported by a newfound energy at the expense of some aggression. The individuals own opinion of the album is more likely to be affected by one's opinion of the band's decision to include guest vocalists and move closer towards their hip hop influences than it is the individual songs on the album, but no Korn fan will be able to resist the band's metallic lurching sound.



Ben May

Issues: A Review

Despite the change in style this is undeniably a Korn album. The band's sound is still recognisable, recalling some of the darker elements of *Life Is Peachy*. The entire album sounds like it is rising up from a murky subterranean pit, surging forward with volume, power and aggression in equal measures. Perhaps more so than on any other release Korn master their sense of mood here; the entire album sounds grim, gloomy and altogether miserable, a sense only compounded by the lyrical themes of the album. This is particularly important because Korn's strength as a band has always been their ability to convey mood and showcase their raw power. On *Issues* they achieve this with great consistency; there are no examples of childish humour here, nor are there any lighter moments. This most likely comes from the album's own nature; it was written by Davis focusing on his feelings of depression, isolation and his fears for his own sanity during the Family Values Tour conducted after the release of *Follow the Leader*. Lyrically the themes are quite personal and they focus on Davis' own feelings of loneliness, self-loathing, depression and his inability to deal with his own fame. The album as a result is something of concept album. It is undeniably aptly named. Arguably this would appear to be in danger of becoming self-indulgent, but Davis seems well aware of the secret to making successful music lyrically; the lyrics are kept accessible enough that individuals can interpret them for themselves and thus indulge themselves in the album's dark tone.

Throughout the album the band work together; while there are no particularly obvious hooks or riffs each band member contributes to the overall dank sound, with front man Jonathan Davis using his voice as an instrument perhaps better than ever before to humanly convey the misery suggested by the murky sound created by the constantly improving Head, Munky, David and Fieldy. The vocals on *Issues* are actually far more restrained than on earlier releases, Davis avoids the use of his demented scat vocals and tends to focus on a combination between his trademark wail and death metal-esque growl. While purists may balk at the omission of Davis' trademark gibberish it arguably would have been out of place on an album as serious as this. What becomes apparent is an increased sense of melody from every member of the band. While cas-

ual listeners might mistake the low tuning and murky sounds as a sign that the entire album is ultimately the same thing repeated over and over, the reverse is actually true. Those familiar with the band will be able to recognise that this actually showcases one of the band's greatest skills and the album's greatest asset; the ability to find continued subtle variations on the same core sound while still achieving consistency. It is the fact that the tracks bleed almost seamlessly into each other, with nothing appearing out of place, that makes *Issues* something of an experience to listen to; it exists purely as an album that showcases a dank sound and manages to avoid falling out of step.

Despite this naturally a number of tracks can be pulled out and viewed in isolation. What becomes particularly obvious throughout the album is the use of contrast between softer moments, often provided by interlude tracks, and moments of intense loud energy (particularly apparent on guaranteed mosh tracks such as "Falling Away From Me", "Beg For Me" and "Wake Up"). The album demands volume and its more furious moments were clearly designed for head banging. Whereas the verse of each song tends to focus on depression the chorus is often an angry outburst, but the band manages to avoid becoming too predictable by not relying on structure too much, the album is kept short and varied enough to avoid wearing thin. Tracks like "Falling Away From Me" "Trash" and "Hey Daddy" have the same slightly spooky edge that was apparent on earlier releases and a handful of interlude tracks scattered throughout the album serve to sustain the album's mood until the very end of the last track "Dirty", with its unrestrained cry of "I wanna' blow my head off".

Issues is without doubt the single most consistent and depressing album Korn has produced to date. The sense of mood is stronger here than ever before; and although the album may not be a collection of all the greatest songs the band has ever produced none clash with the feel of the album. The result is something of a cathartic experience and an album that really should be listened to whole. *Issues* may not showcase the band's nu-metal skill or adventurous nature as *Follow the Leader* did, or contain a track as shocking and emotionally disturbing as *Daddy*, but the band's skill, power and grasp of emotion (as depressing as it may be) shines through the sonic murk of *Issues* brighter than ever before.

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Issue 2

September 2007

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Published online at: <http://www.scriboergosum.org.uk>

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