connected
southland tales
Like I said in my introduction I deeply admire T.S. Eliot and have even taken the time to memorize as well as study several of his poems in my free time, so I had little difficulty recognizing "This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but with a whimper" as a reference to Eliot’s poem *The Hollow Men* right away. Although volumes could be written on the poem's influence on modern culture as a whole, its specific connection with *Southland Tales* is that they both share the same message of a progressive cultural decay.

Much like Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land* (written directly before *The Hollow Men*), this poem concerns a degradation of language and rituals, failings of both the Western man’s word and the Christian Word of God to save mankind both physically and spiritually. These hollow men are the effigies of this social decay; straw corpses damned to wander within a void of pure mind while permanently detached from any reality. They attempt to communicate with each other through "quiet and meaningless" whispers, groping together, enacting impotent and childish rituals so they can be heard by any other man or god.

However, their efforts are ultimately futile for they have nothing to say that will offer them relief from their torment. They are helpless beings isolated from nature and exiled in a "cactus land" which is devoid of any spiritual presence. Ultimately, the fact that these hollow men will never be able to reconcile without meaningful spiritual connections has doomed them all to fade into obscurity with a whimper.

Eliot believed that the emerging shallowness of Western culture was due to our inability to connect on a spiritual level with our fellow human beings and that this detachment from the world had led it face first into World War I, one of the bloodiest conflicts humanity had ever seen. Therefore Eliot rejected modern Western culture, seeing it as nothing more than a breeding ground for devastating social conflict and spiritual impotency. Instead, he looked toward the unspoiled Eastern philosophies as humanity’s only remaining savior in a cold and desolate world.

The exact same type of social decay that has consumed the hollow men of the poem is rampant throughout the world of *Southland Tales*. It is a world without resonance; full of discordant images that refuse to come together in any meaningful way. This inability for the multimedia feed to generate a logical or consequential narrative of existence creates a world that is completely isolated and composed of entirely meaningless interactions between its inhabitants.

Every character is a product of this isolation and culturally dead in their own way. Celebrities, soldiers, right wing politicians and Neo-Marxists: everyone is an emblem of humanity at its most superficial level, having been digested into this grand social network of empty messages and regurgitated back onto a screen for the prying eyes of the world.
And despite the combined omnipresence of film streaming in from handheld video cameras, YouTube, 24-hour cable news channels, surveillance cameras, and the celebrity-tracking paparazzi, no one ever creates or does anything with this heap of broken images that truly connects humanity with their existence or even each other. These hollow men of the media are thereby doomed to wander within that same desolate cactus land that Eliot had condemned society in 1925. Indeed, they may have never even left it to begin with.

As for Robert Frost’s poem *The Road Not Taken*, I am not as great a follower of Frost as I am of Eliot but I do believe that it does connect with *Southland Tales* on the basis of political polarization. The poem itself is often interpreted as an affirmation of individualism and non-conformity as the speaker resolves to take a road less traveled by those who have passed through before. By forging his own path, the narrator has gained an invaluable and unique experience that is completely his own.

Throughout *Southland Tales* the main conflict is perpetuated by the two primary political parties: The Neo-Marxists and The Ultra Conservative Right. Each one is an embodiment of the two different political paths that an individual can follow and by choosing one affirm his own views on life. However, instead of moving on and gaining new experiences like the poem implies, each group has taken what they believe is “the road not taken” and as a result the two parties have turned against each other, terminating all social progression in the process. This is the great tragedy of a divided nation; the two party system meant to promote political compromise and unity is corrupted by petty differences and destroys everything that each side hopes to improve.
ANDREW COE

“The Revelation of Pilot Abilene”

The post is called The Revelation of Pilot Abilene because he is the narrator of the film, as St. John is the narrator of the Book of Revelation. Now the most popular view of the Book of Revelation is that it is a prediction of the end of the world and that various beasts and horsemen will come and destroy us. Yet, the book is an allegory of the constant trials and tribulations of the members of the Christian faith. John wrote in "vague" terms allowing the messages to connect with people throughout history. However near the end of the book it does give an idea of the end of times. Revelation is without a doubt, the most complicated book in the entire Bible.

A possible reason for this confusion is that St. John wrote in Greek. When transliterated into English, Αποκάλυψη, the Greek word for revelation, becomes apocalupsis. The words apocalypse and revelation are synonyms. Don’t believe me? Look it up. They both mean “a revealing of information.” So I throw the idea out there that the film does follow the Book of Revelation but to the point that the events here signify the end of the persecution of the US citizens.

Despite this differing view, the symbols of "the end" remain somewhat the same. In the view I take here, the Antichrist is not necessarily the bringer of the end of the world, but the leader of the persecution, and that person is Nana Mae Frost. She clearly is the leader of USIdent and the book and the film both say it was her brainchild. She leads the "persecution" of the citizens of the United States.

Unfortunately the "whore of Babylon" is where this view and the mainstream Protestant view differ. Due to some error in translation, this character has been viewed as the whore of Babylon, as opposed to how the book actually describes her: the whore Babylon. She is not the whore OF, but in actuality is Babylon itself. In order to better explain this I’ve taken two quotes from Bishop Alexander Mileant’s analysis of the text.

First, he writes that: "the first to be subjected to punishment are those guilty people who had accepted the mark of the beast and the capital city of the antichristian empire ("Babylon")." He also explains that "the narrative regarding the fall of Babylon is given twice: at first in general terms at the end of the sixteenth chapter, and then in more detail in chapters 18-19. Babylon is depicted as a harlot sitting on the beast."

From these I say that Babylon/the whore represents the empire of the antichrist or in our situation, the domain/tool of the antichrist (Nana Mae). Babylon is USIdent. It is the capital city of Nana Mae. It is where she resides throughout almost the entire movie. USIdent is the whore Babylon.

The two witnesses are clearly Dream and Dion. No question; the parallels are direct. Two people who preach are killed for their preaching. The four horses and riders of the apocalypse, often referred to as the four
horsemen, are also addressed in the film. In Revelation, the white horse is a representation of the good in the world throughout time, and the white horse in Southland Tales represents the period before the attacks on Texas. The red horse represents the period during and immediately after the bombing. The black horse correlates with the rule of USIdent, and the pale horse is the time during the story.

But who is Jesus in this film? Who represents the second coming of Christ? Since this is not the end of the world, there is no Christ figure. Since this is the end of the persecution, and not the end of times, Jesus has not returned and no one fulfills his role. This goes along with my view of Revelation. Only during the last several chapters does the book talk about the end of days and, while the vessels (the antichrist, Babylon, the prophets) are still there, they are the closest thing to their ideal archetypes as possible. In short, this only represents the end of the persecution of the American people. Most important, no one judges the people. Christ's role is to return to rule over and judge the world. That role is unfulfilled, so there is no Christ and it is not the end of the world.

In short, Southland Tales parallels the non-end of the world part of the Book of Revelation. It is not the end of the world but merely the end of the USIdent regime.
“Thumbs for votes? Easier than kissing babies.”

Southland Tales! What a great film. One point of interest in the film is the small bit where they feature a bag of thumbs, which is never properly explained in the film. In the graphic novel, however, one can find a larger explanation of the thumbs—which still doesn't fully make sense to me. The idea is that in the future (the tangent future or the "now" but "there") thumb prints are used for identification in voting. This process seems simple enough; the idea of a free-floating voter isn't exactly new, but they complicate things when they say that each thumb can vote hundreds of times in different areas.

I would’ve thought that only one vote accompanied each person in the system no matter where they were. I suppose the technology conveyed only grabs information for that one sector? Or perhaps I don’t fully understand their voting process. Either way, this definitely reminds me of the movie Gangs of New York (and, maybe, some history class where we talked about Boss Tweed) where the Irish used all the Irish people to win an election for their own man. Each person voted multiple times, tricking the government by shaving off their hair right after they had voted so that they could vote again. Pretty silly, really... how could they ever catch them voting multiple times anyway?

In Southland Tales the bag full of thumbs fits in with the film's chaos and government vs. neo-Marxist theme. Chaos is evident in the fact that even voting isn't secure anymore; identity and privacy are long gone. The neo-Marxists use the thumbs to further their own agenda, and add to more of the conflict in the novel/movie. The thumbs are supposed to be used to vote for Proposition 69, the limiting of USIdent's power and the central idea that spurred the Marxist movement.
JOHN KEY

“Digits for Democracy”

The bag full of thumbs is one of the most straightforward parts of the film and is directly related to the election and the use of thumbprints as identification for USIdent, the overarching government control on cyberspace. The idea implied by the Neo-Marxists is that by mailing thumbs to different voting districts they will be able to use that person’s identity to cast multiple votes thus swaying the outcome of the election.

The process described is not new to the voting process in many ways. Two of the most prominent ideas are the use of ballet stuffing and the use of thumbs in voting. In regards to ballot stuffing, this was historically accomplished by physically placing more than one ballot into the vote box in order to influence the vote in one way or the other. As voting technology increased this became more difficult and required a way to beat the technology. With USIDENT in *Southland Tales* using thumbprints to track voting, the Neo-Marxists are attempting to cheat the systems by mailing thumbs to different voting districts. This is ballot stuffing for the new technological era.

The use of thumbs in voting ironically comes from the “bad guys” according to *Southland Tales*. In the 2005 Iraq elections voters dipped their thumb in indelible ink after voting to signify that they had voted and therefore could not vote again. The scanning of the thumbprint is once again simply a more high tech version of a historical voting procedure.

Why are the Neo-Marxists going through all the trouble and sacrificing their thumbs? Well it is all about getting a YES vote on Proposition 69. By implementing the proposition, government control would be severely limited.

In November 2004, California passed Proposition 69: The DNA Fingerprint Unsolved Crime and Innocence Protection Act. This is probably not a coincidence. This legislation gave law enforcement agencies and other State officials the ability to collect DNA samples from felons and other criminals.

California now has one of the largest DNA databases in the world. This is surprisingly similar to California in the world of *Southland Tales*. 
“USIdent in Southland Tales: TIA on Steroids.”

Southland Tales is an ‘iceberg’ type of film. At face value, it seems like a weird, nonsensical concept jabbing at the government and social politics - but there is so much underlying information and big clues as to how this film is meant to be interpreted. It’s one of those films you have to watch a couple times to even begin to understand the meaning, much less the hidden messages.

Yes, there are strong references to the Book of Revelation and sociopolitical undertones to even the simplest of concepts throughout the film (like extortion and pornography and ripping ATM machines out of buildings) - but I could talk about that for ages. Among the many societal parallels in the movie to real life, one of the biggest correlations would be between Southland’s USIdent program and the Total Information Awareness (TIA) program that has since been discontinued by the US government.

TIA was a government-run and owned program that proactively functioned for national security and against terrorism in the United States. Established in the early 2000s, this program endured vast amounts of public criticism for the severe privacy breach and threat to personal security in the name of full governmental control. Out of fear that this would spiral downwards into a completely unconstitutional seizure of privacy and mass surveillance, the Information Awareness Office was defunded by the government thus putting a halt to the Total Information Awareness chaos. The proposed technologies were too invasive and posed as a personal threat to Americans.

It seems absolutely ridiculous that our US Government would go as far as some completely corrupt nations and attempt to wipe out every last bit of privacy among the relatively innocent and unassuming citizens in order to have a better (but not much steadier) grip on terrorism. Ridiculous, yes. But in Southland Tales, this concept is made a reality.

USIdent is a government-funded program run by Senator Bobby Frost’s wide, Nana Mae Frost. With its governmental affiliations, USIdent is a sick and twisted mode of full population control. This program is a mass surveillance of the American people meant for keeping order, preventing crime and terrorism, and—what is deceivingly made to be the main priority—aid in identification. Cameras are placed all over, in even the most random of places. Chaos breaks out sporadically around the cities. Every single move that anybody makes is watched—even in the bathroom. This is the end of privacy, and the beginning of social and societal warfare.

The theme of governmental control is prevalent in the film, as it plays a pawn in the mechanics of the complex story as a whole. The corrupt government ultimately catalyzes the end of the world; it puts Americans against one another, it creates a social divide, it causes mass panic and revolt. There is finally a point of having too much power, and that is
when the world as they knew it bottoms out. USIdent cleverly mirrors what may have been a further-developed TIA. Even more jarring is how the ramifications are portrayed. I don’t fully agree that’s how society would have unfolded, and of course *Southland Tales* is simply an artsy, philosophical dramatization - but I certainly think that our country would have lost its identity and its promise beyond any hope.

All in all, this film was mind-blowing in the good way and in the bad way. The most amazing part is the beach scene. And the Justin Timberlake intermission.

“I got soul, but I’m not a soldier...”
STEVEN SHAVIRO
“"I got soul but I’m not a soldier: Richard Kelly’s Southland Tales”

Southland Tales (2007) is the second film by Richard Kelly, whose previous work was the cult hit Donnie Darko (2001). Southland Tales shares with its predecessor a general air of apocalyptic unease, and a plot that circles around the idea of time travel. In both films, “time is out of joint”; linear, progressive temporality has somehow come undone. But Southland Tales is a much more wide-ranging and ambitious movie than Donnie Darko; and it features a large ensemble cast, instead of being focused upon a single protagonist. The eponymous hero of Donnie Darko sacrifices himself in order to save the world. By accepting his own death, he abolishes an alternative timeline in which his teenage alienation redounds into disaster for everyone around him. Donnie’s sacrifice offers us what Gilles Deleuze describes as the cinema’s greatest gift: the restoration of our “belief in this world” (1989, 188). Southland Tales, however, is set entirely within a catastrophic alternative timeline. There is no way back to suburban normalcy. The End Times are near, as the film makes clear with its frequent quotes from the Book of Revelation. And the drama of sacrifice and redemption in Southland Tales points, not towards a restoration of “this world,” but towards its nihilistic purgation and transcendence. We are swept headlong, through the raptures of media immersion, into an entropic terminal state — and perhaps also beyond it, out the other side.

Southland Tales begins with home video footage of a family Independence Day celebration. The date is July 4, 2005. The footage, filled with random cuts and amateurish swish pans, shows folks, both old and young, just enjoying themselves. But then there’s a roar and a flash, followed by a rumbling and a jittering and the sight of a mushroom cloud in the distance. Terrorists have detonated two atomic bombs in Texas. This is the bifurcation point, the rupture in continuity, the moment when the “straight line” of time becomes a “labyrinth” (Deleuze 1989, 131). We have left the world we know, and entered an alternative timeline: one that diverges irreparably from our own. The homeliness of the film’s opening moments will never return. History has been derailed – it has gone mad – and there is no putting it back on track. Cut to computer graphics, voice-over narration, and the hallucinatory mediascape of Southland Tales.

The bulk of the movie takes place in Southern California (the “Southland”), three years after this initial attack, in the days leading up to the frenzied Independence Day celebration of July 4, 2008. The “war on terror” has blossomed into a full-fledged World War III. American troops are fighting, not just in Iraq and Afghanistan, but in Syria, Iran, and North Korea as well. The draft has been reinstated; martial law has been declared in some areas. Throughout the United States, police surveillance is ubiquitous, and there is no interstate travel without a visa. All Internet communication is monitored by a government spy facility called US-IDent. The police are authorized to shoot on sight anyone suspected of terrorism. The Republican Party is firmly in control of the country. Electoral politics has been reduced to its essence: television advertising. International oil supplies have been cut off, and the sinister Treer

[1] Gilles Deleuze uses this phrase from Hamlet to describe the Kantian revolution in philosophy, as a result of which time is freed from its classical subordination to movement (Deleuze 1994, vii). This liberation of time, the unveiling of “time itself, ‘a little time in its pure state’” (1989, 17), is the key to what Deleuze calls the cinematic time-image, in which “we enter into temporality as a state of permanent crisis” (112). Both Donnie Darko and Southland Tales are concerned with such a sense of temporality in crisis, or temporality as crisis; though I want to suggest that the latter film moves ‘beyond’ the Deleuzian time-image in order to articulate a new regime of images and sounds, and a new mode of temporality.
corporation holds a monopoly on America’s alternative energy resources. The only opposition to this state of affairs comes from a comically inept, confused, and internally fragmented “neo-Marxist” underground.

Southland Tales is, evidently, deeply concerned with the post-9/11 American security state. The conceit of an alternative timeline allows Kelly to explore, in exacerbated and hyperbolic fashion, our actual current condition of ubiquitous surveillance, restricted civil liberties, and permanent warfare. This regime of control was instituted by the second Bush administration, in the wake of the World Trade Center attacks; it largely remains in effect today. Southland Tales could be described, to a certain extent, as a dark satire in the tradition of Kubrick’s Dr. Strangelove. It pushes the logic of the security state to absurdist extremes. In the world of the film, there is no right to privacy, and almost no private space. Phone calls are routinely wiretapped, recorded, and traced. All public activity is captured on video; even the toilets are watched by surveillance cameras. A recurrent image in the film shows the creepy Homeland Security czar Nana Mae Frost (played by Miranda Richardson, channeling Angela Lansbury’s performance in The Manchurian Candidate), sitting in her command chair at US-IDent headquarters, monitoring the video feeds on multiple screens that cover a large curving wall in front of her.

In the world of Southland Tales, if you step out of line, or arouse distrust, you are likely to have your home invaded by an armed and masked SWAT team, or to be picked off on the beach by a government sniper. But most people remain oblivious to all these intrusions; they continue to drink, party, and otherwise enjoy themselves on the Venice Beach boardwalk, just as if nothing were amiss.

However, despite these currents of satire, Southland Tales is finally best described as a science fiction film. Its overall tone is earnest and urgent, even visionary – more than it is sarcastic or comic. Southland Tales, like most science fiction, is not about literally predicting the future. Rather, it is about capturing and depicting the latent futurity that already haunts us in the present. At one point in the film, the porn actress Krysta Now (Sarah Michelle Gellar) excitedly remarks that “scientists are saying the future is going to be far more futuristic than they originally predicted.” The reason this comment is ludicrous is that “futuristic” is not an objective category, but an anticipatory inflection of the present. Southland Tales is indeed futuristic, in that it shows us an otherness, an elsewhere and elsewhen, that is inextricably woven into the texture of the here and now. We usually think of hauntings as traces from the past; but the future also haunts us with its hints of hope and danger, and its promises or threats of transformation. Especially in times of great social and technological change, we feel the imminence of the future in the form of gaps and leaps in temporal progression, and shifts in the horizon of what is thinkable. Of course it is impossible to know what changes the future will bring; but the signs of this impossibility – the intimations of instability, the shifts of perspective, and the incipient breaks in continuity – are themselves altogether real. They are part of the conjuncture, part of what shapes the present. If the past persists in the present, then futurity insists in the present, defamiliarizing what we take for granted. Science fiction highlights this sense of futurity, making it visible and audible.

[2] Although Barack Obama was elected President on promises to reverse Bush administration policies, and although he has curbed some of its worse excesses, at this writing (2009) the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, surveillance remains widespread, and the White House still endorses the use of preventive detention without trial.
Southland Tales is an ironically cinematic remediation of the post-cinematic mediasphere that we actually live in. The film’s alternative timeline is defined precisely by its divergence from the world we know.\footnote{In other words, science fiction is a kind of “realism”: but it is a realism of what Deleuze calls the virtual, rather than one of the actual here and now. For Deleuze, “the virtual is fully real” on its own account; but it is a special sort of reality, “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract, and symbolic without being fictional” (1994, 208). I discuss science fiction as a realism of the virtual, which “addresses events in their potentiality,” in my book Connected (Shaviro 2003, xi and passim).}

Southland Tales is more about what I am calling the post-cinematic media regime in general, than it is about the national security apparatus in particular. Terrorism and the “war on terror” are parts of this new media regime, but they are not its basis, nor even its primary focus. At most, they are catalysts: they intensify and speed up the emergence of new media forms, and of their corresponding new modes of subjectivity. Surveillance is only one aspect of a broader process; Nana Mae Frost is not the only one monitoring multiple screens, and trying to pay attention all at once to a plethora of media feeds. In fact, all of the characters in the film are doing this, more or less; and so are most of us in the audience. Southland Tales surveys and maps – and mirrors back to us in fictive form – the excessive, overgrown post-cinematic mediasphere. The film bathes us in an incessant flow of images and sounds; it foregrounds the multimedia feed that we take so much for granted, and ponders what it feels like to live our lives within it. Video surveillance cameras are ubiquitous, of course, in the world of the film as well as in the world that we inhabit; but so are many other sorts of recording, broadcasting, and communications devices. Social space is filled to bursting with handheld videocams, mobile phones, portable screens, 24-hour cable news channels, YouTube clips, MySpace pages, automated response systems, and celebrity-tracking papparazzi. Images and sounds are continually being looped for endless replay, or composited together into new configurations. In Southland Tales, traditionally ‘cinematic’ sequences are intermixed with a sensory-overload barrage of lo-fi video footage, Internet and cable-TV news feeds, commercials, and simulated CGI environments. These often appear in windows within windows, so that the movie screen itself comes to resemble a video or computer screen.

Despite the emphasis upon surveillance and security, the mediascape explored by Southland Tales is not in the least bit hidden or secretive. It is rather a vast, open performance space, carnivalesque, participatory, and overtly self-reflexive. Not only do we see multiple, heterogeneous screens within the movie screen; we also see the characters in the movie appearing on these screens, creating content for them, and watching them – often all at the same time. If the government isn’t recording your actions with hidden cameras, then perhaps someone else is, for purposes of blackmail. But more likely, you are making and distributing videos of yourself, in a quest for publicity and profit. In any case, your mediated image is what defines you. If you aren’t already an actor or a celebrity – as most of the characters in Southland Tales are – then you probably have a business plan to become one. Every character in the movie seems to be frantically engaged in exhibitionistic display, outlandish performance, and ardent networking for the purpose of self-promotion. The world of Southland Tales has become what Jamais Cascio, inverting Foucault, calls the Participatory Panopticon: “this constant surveillance is done by the citizens themselves, and is done by choice. It’s not imposed on us by a malevolent bureaucracy or faceless corporations. The participatory panopticon will be the emergent result of myriad independent rational decisions, a bottom-
up version of the constantly watched society” (Cascio 2005). The reign of universal transparency, with its incessant circulation of sounds and images, and its “participatory” media ecology in which everyone keeps tabs on everyone else, does not need to be imposed from above. Rather, in the post-cinematic media regime, it “emerges,” or “self-organizes,” spontaneously from below. The greatest success of what Michel Foucault calls governmentality comes about, not when a certain type of behavior is forcibly imposed upon people, but when people can be “incentivized” to impose this behavior willingly upon one another, and upon themselves.

Southland Tales does not exempt itself from the frenzied media economy that it depicts. The movie is itself a post-cinematic, transmedia object. Tom Abba describes it as an “extended narrative,” in which the story is spread across several media (Abba 2009, 60). Most notably, Richard Kelly published a three-part comic book, or graphic novel, that gives the movie’s premises and backstory (Kelly and Weldele 2007). Many of the plot twists, convolutions, and digressions in Southland Tales can only be understood by reading the comic first. This is why the movie’s titles divide it into Parts IV, V, and VI; Parts I, II, and III are found in the comic. In addition, when Southland Tales was first released, a number of the film’s (fictional) characters had websites on MySpace; the movie’s (equally fictional) Treer Corporation had its own website as well. There was also a certain amount of spillover between the characters in the movie, and the pop culture celebrities who played them. Sarah Michelle Gellar actually recorded, under her own name, the song “Teen Horniness Is Not A Crime” – which in the film is written and performed (with an accompanying music video) by her character Krysta Now. The song is included on the movie’s soundtrack album, and is available for download from the iTunes Music Store.

Of course, this sort of spread among multiple platforms is not unique to Southland Tales. It is an increasingly common media strategy today. As Richard Grusin notes, film today is turning into a distributed medium: “the film is not confined to the form of its theatrical exhibition but is distributed across other media as well.” For instance, “the production, design, and distribution of DVD versions of feature films are part of the original contractual (and thus artistic) intention of these films.” Grusin adds that this sort of remediation “marks a fundamental change in the aesthetic status of the cinematic artifact” (Grusin 2007). His point is that the aesthetic experience of a film today may reside just as much in watching the DVD extras, or in exploring the associated websites, as it does in watching the film itself. For that matter, the media experience may well reside in children’s playing with toys that are modeled after figures from an animated film, and given away as part of a cross-platform promotional strategy. The aesthetics of distributed media cannot be separated from their marketing. For its part, Southland Tales not only supplements itself with a variety of intertextual materials in other media, but also folds the practice of multimedia distribution and dispersion into the narrative of the film itself. Most notably, Krysta Now seeks to leverage her semi-celebrity as a porn starlet not only by recording songs and making a music video, but also by starring in her own talk-show-cum-reality-television series, and by selling her own energy drink.

[4] Ironically, very few people have seen Southland Tales on the big screen; in its limited release to movie theaters, it was a calamitous flop. The film disappointed fans of Donnie Darko, because it was so oblique and disjointed narratively, and because it was impossible to “identify” with any of the characters in the way that so many viewers did with Darko’s eponymous protagonist. As I will argue below, Southland Tales is no less empathetic to its characters than Donnie Darko is; but this empathy no longer takes the form of traditional cinematic “identification.” Links to other reviews of the film can be found at www.mrqe.com/movies/m100064789?s=1. I can only hope that Southland Tales will find a new audience, thanks to its recent DVD and Blu-Ray releases.
What this means is that, although Southland Tales is very much a movie, it is also profoundly post-cinematic in both form and content. I say that it remains a movie, in the sense that it is big and spectacular, and that it was clearly intended to be viewed in a movie theater, on an enormous screen. However, its audiovisual flow is entirely post-cinematic, and of a piece with the video-based and digital media that play such a role within it. The compositional logic of Southland Tales is paratactic and additive, having little to do with conventional film syntax. The film is filled with inserts; it overlays, juxtaposes, and restlessly moves between multiple images and sound sources. But it does not provide us with any hierarchical organization of all these elements. Many of the film’s most arresting images just pop up, without any discernible motivation or point of view. For instance, around the five-minute mark, shortly after a title reading “Los Angeles,” there is a shot of a G. I. Joe doll, advancing on knees and elbows along a wet sidewalk, then firing a rifle. It is nighttime. We see the toy in sharp focus and in close-up, while behind it the full extent of the boulevard, lined by palm trees, stretches out-of-focus into the deep background. The sounds emitted by the toy are accompanied, on the soundtrack, by Moby’s soothing ambient music, and by a voiceover newscast reporting that celebrity-turned-soldier Pilot Abilene (Justin Timberlake) has been wounded in Fallujah by friendly fire. The film never returns to this toy figure; it has no function in the narrative. Of course, the film is filled with references to soldiers, and to wounded veterans like Pilot Abilene; but is that enough to motivate the appearance of the toy? The image of G. I. Joe is just there. It grabs our attention because it is anomalous and unexpected; it is evocative in a way that we cannot quite pin down. The film bequeaths us this moment, and then moves on to something else. G. I. Joe is just one figure in the movie’s ceaseless flow.5

1.16 G. I. Joe and the cinephiliac moment. Film still from Southland Tales (Richard Kelly, 2007).
shaviro
Even though I was confused many times as I read through Shaviro’s book *Connected*, I really enjoyed it. I feel like I needed a cultural or scientific or some kind of reference book for about every other sentence I read, but that’s what really made the book enjoyable for me. After just reading a page or two of the book, I realized how much he’s had to have read in order to know so much about.... well, everything. After reading the assigned portion, I flipped to the table of contents to see the chapter titles of something else interesting I would like only to find that there are no chapters. Just little subheadings every page or so. I loved, loved, loved the fact that there weren’t any chapters. At first I was thoroughly confused on how a book could even function without chapters until I realized that every subsection flows fairly seamlessly to the next, and yet in just a few pages, I’ve moved from reading about Singularity to beautiful robots on Jupiter.

In regards to the pages assigned to us, my favorite idea came from this quote:

> “The disciplinary archives constitute a cohesive, totalizing representation of society and of every individual within it. Each person has an eerie double, in the form of a police file dedicated specifically to him or her. The disciplinary subject is thus what Foucault calls “a strange empirico-transcendental doublet” (1970, p. 318).... These two sides correspond point by point. Yet they remain incommensurable. The map is not the territory. The dossier is not the prisoner.”

Shaviro continues on to say that this isn’t how new control society works anymore, but I still was fascinated by the idea and began to think of ways that this functions in our life. Obviously none of us as students have a prison dossier, but what empirico-transcendental doublets operate in our lives? Our resumes are our life’s “worthiness” in summary. Our transcripts are who we are as students. That piece of paper (or that screen on the computer) is us as a student. Summed up in just one screen shot. Four years of college could be explained in just one screen shot.

Even less academic forms are familiar to us. Facebook pages are an example of a “cohesive, totalizing representation ...of [an] individual.” Could we go to a stranger’s Facebook page and find out entirely about them? Maybe not entirely, but we could gather a great deal about them just from one place.

Based on this quote and these ideas, I suppose my question or perhaps request to Shaviro would be further explain how society has shifted from this form of control to one that uses constant surveillance. He says:

> “There may well be more surveillance than ever, but this surveillance no longer leads to an archive of “permanent documentation” that doubles actual existence. Instead the
results of surveillance are immediately fed back into the system. Surveillance records do not merely record past behavior, nor do they provide typological models to be applied to future behavior. Rather, the accumulated data works to manipulate behavior directly, in real time, in the immediate present. There is no longer any duality between data, on one hand, and bodies to which those data would refer, on the other... Surveillance records are no longer about anyone or anything. They are performative instead of constative; it is not what they say that matters, but what they do. It is precisely, and exclusively, under such conditions that we say everything in the world is information.”

I kind of get that. But not really. How does this accumulated data manipulate behavior directly? I suppose he could be referring to a point he makes later on that surveillance cameras aren’t there to capture crimes on camera—they’re there to prevent them from ever happening. That could be what Shaviro means by “manipulating behavior directly” but I’m not sure. Whatever his point is, I’d like to hear it expanded on because I think it’s really interesting.

Later in the book, Shaviro discusses the Singularity (pp. 120-128). He quotes Kurzweil and talks about AI, and I understand this section even less than the assigned one and yet I still enjoyed reading it. He talked about these little nanobots called foglets (which I kept reading as froglets, so I was imagining little bitty robotic tadpoles) that someday maybe we’ll be able to download our brains into and somehow they’ll make us whatever food we’ll want.... something, something. I re-read it a couple times, still loved it, but still extremely confused.

I feel like that’s the key to this book. Loving the confusion.
I found all of Shaviro’s work to be interesting in its own right and to be well explained. I am however fascinated by his idea of, to put it simply, technology taking over the world. Now Shaviro elaborates and is much more elegant and thorough than I am, but in essence the majority of his writing culminates with technology and those who wind up controlling it ruling the world and the known universe.

As Shaviro puts it, “It [the network] does not need to put us under surveillance, we belong to it, we exist for it already.” I have to admit, when I think about it, I completely agree.

As technology becomes more and more powerful, it is constantly generating new ways for individuals to control other individuals and making the old ones more efficient. Technology already allows for government officials to keep tabs on the general populace and as technology improves it is only going to become more extensive, but are we really complaining about it?

Our world has become so technology friendly that much of this monitoring goes unnoticed or ignored because it has become common place. We are accepting these new technologies that will allow for our eventual control because they make our life easier.
AARON PASSER

“What is mind? No matter.”

A few sections of Shaviro’s book that I found particularly interesting were entitled “What is Mind? No Matter” and “What is Matter? Never Mind.” Both of these sections discuss the movie *The Matrix* and delve into our perceptions of simulations and what is actually real.

Cyberspace itself consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself, but no bodies actually live there. As Internet users we are virtually free to go anywhere we choose, our physical body remains in place, but we can take our minds to worlds of complete simulation.

Our minds are set free in cyberspace. However, because there are so many simulations present in society today it is sometimes hard for us to trust appearances. As we have seen represented in the movie *Gamer*, games like *Second Life* are a way for a person to live an alternate life, and in no way does a person’s avatar have to resemble them. Deception is alive and well in cyberspace and it is extremely hard to trust people while surfing the World Wide Web.

As we become a society more and more ingrained in the cyber-world it appears that simulation will continue to advance. If and when the Singularity occurs, AI will be so advanced that it would surpass the level of simulation. No longer will these machines simulate life, but they will exist as one within society itself, and this is where *The Matrix* comes in to play.

In *The Matrix*, the simulated world is so real that our minds can’t help but be convinced that it is real. While our bodies rest in some primordial ooze our minds are taken to a world where, as Neo learns, anything is possible. The virtual world is so complete; it is a prison for the mind. The problem with this is that we are in prison, but we do not realize that we are. Is surveillance reaching a point today where we could consider it a prison? Like in the Panopticon, we could be monitored at any moment. With so many cameras, both private and public, watching 24 hours a day it seems impossible to always know when big brother is monitoring us.

Lastly, I also enjoyed the sections “Codes for the Cataclysm” and “Rhythm Warfare.” In these sections Shaviro discusses the possibility of mega corporations monopolizing the flow of information. Over the summer I worked for a company called Info USA which sells an enormous database of information from geo-coded data to the value of your house. I hate to say it, but I sold information to the government. It will be interesting to see where TIA goes in the next few years.
In *Connected*, Shaviro speaks of surveillance and its increasing reliance on the power of data. Interestingly enough, does this infer that the world will become full of nothing but data? It seems from the reading that surveillance in every form is leading the way for constant observation. The difference between surveillance and observation, to me, can be seen in the motives involved. Surveillance seems to elicit a “need” for control or power; there is always something to be collected from surveillance, to be archived and put into forms that cross-reference one another for purposes of monitoring/implementing control.

Observation, on the other hand, seems to serve the purpose of data-izing our life, which I believe Shaviro states when he speaks of Bill Gates’ house and the Microsoft House of the Future. But by putting our lives into data, transforming them into process thereof, and using them for the sole intentions of observation (having computers look into eyes, measure body temperature, all for the purpose to change the AC in your house), when can we draw a line between the surveillance and observation? To succinctly summarize, our lives are being transformed into data, some of the data is collected for surveillance (need to inflict control) and other data is collected from observation (to achieve efficient streamlined lives).

In our lifetimes, will we see a shift from surveillance to observation or vice-versa? With the emerging technologies being created by Google and Microsoft’s House of the Future (but I don’t think this ever really took off?) that promise to observe our lives, will this information eventually be used to exercise control? With that being stated, will this control be used in a manner to establish overarching power? Or will it control our lives in a way that we all become moral according to the morality of the data machine, which would eliminate the need for overarching control because we are all connected from the data source which regulates our lives?

Maybe I missed the point here, but the collection of information and data is a scary thought; many people might put power in the wrong hands, which might lead to constant surveillance by one central authority. But by the same token, surveillance is not a one-way model. So when does surveillance from central authority become surpassed in “power” by the surveillance of a mass? For example, consider the Vietnam War. Was this not the first televised war—leading to the mass surveillance which far overpowered the surveillance from authorities?

I know I asked many questions, but they all boil down to the power of surveillance and data, and who controls what. Data is collected by the prison system, but data is also collected from prisoners about the prison system itself. Do upheavals in society occur when the powers of surveillance shift? And being a History major, I’m all about the status quo; so I also wonder how surveillance (when its power is dynamic) affects the status quo of those being surveyed and what happens when the surveyed collect enough data themselves of the surveyors. In the future, will data equal power?
COLE GRAY

“To roll it toward some overwhelming question.”

Having read some of Steven Shaviro’s work I must say that I am looking forward to his lecture on Thursday. Specifically, it was Shaviro’s dissertation on the potential development of AI and the Technological Singularity that piqued my interest; this manifestation of humanity’s future self.

Indeed there seems to be an almost endless torrent of differing outlooks on what form a virtual mind would eventually take and its impact on humanity as a species. From hive minds to omnipotent observer-deities, it seems that many people believe in the transcendental nature of such technologies to liberate the mind from its fleshy limitations and transform it into an entity of pure thought.

Shaviro, however, takes a much more realistic approach to the argument by addressing the limited economic and political factors of technology as well as the limitations of the mind itself. He maintains that, even if strong AI is possible, these virtual minds will be essentially contingent entities with their own set of interests. Any differences between human minds and their virtual counterparts will be purely political or cultural. Shaviro affirms that all post-Singularity technology will be integrated into the texture of everyday life, bettering it but ultimately leaving it the same.

For the most part I agree with Shaviro’s critique of those who believe in the ‘metaphysical’ nature of the Technological Singularity. Humanity will always be restricted by both its social and physical limitations and post-Singularity technologies will be of no exception.

However, I do not think that we can rule anything out just yet. Of course I do not expect that post-Singularity technologies will elevate us to super human levels right away, but given enough time (and if it is even physically possible) we may eventually become something completely different from what we recognize as humans altogether.
Shaviro writes a lot about the future, being connected and the ways in which technology will alter our lives. As consumers of technology, we tend to think advances are beneficial and will lead us to a better, more easily organized and functional life. Shaviro, although admitting that this may be true, seems to think that all this connection and surveillance is finally going to catch up with humanity in a negative way.

If all this is true, and online connection will lead to total surveillance and the whole world exists “only to be televised,” how do we as mere citizens (I mean those not developing these technologies) fall into the trap of wanting more?

How do we see only good arising from such technological advances and not become wary of the power of this technology? In a quasi-joking manner, is Guy Kawasaki planning to take over the world with said technology? After all he attended televangelism training to get people pumped up about the Apple brand of products as the coolest way to stay connected.

I particularly liked Shaviro’s chapters “Almost Famous,” “Exposure” and “Don’t Look Now.” Our desire to become quasi-celebrities, to have our 15 minutes, is made easier thanks to the web-cam and Internet. Who hasn’t turned the cam or digital recording device on themselves or friends and uploaded a video to their blog, YouTube or Facebook page? And why do we do so? To keep our friends up to date on our goings on? Or is it because, somewhere in the American subconscious, we have become aware of the notion that being vain is not only acceptable but warranted?

The scary part is that we can become YouTube sensations overnight without even giving our consent. With public surveillance on every corner, people and their digital recording devices and the lack of privacy rights in public spaces, we can all fall victim to overnight celebrity.
Watching public access webcams is a weird concept to me. The idea that while I am walking down the street someone across the country or world may be watching me do so is a slightly uncomfortable feeling.

I chose to watch the webcam located at Times Square in New York at 7th and Broadway. The footage mostly consisted of pedestrians jaywalking and honking taxis speeding through yellow lights. However, there was the occasional thing that caught my eye and drew me away from the crowds to zoom in on one person or vehicle.

For example, the first thing that stood out to me was the white, stretch SUV limousine that pulled between two taxis and waited curb side for about 5 minutes. I did not see anyone enter or exit the limo but all of the sudden it drove away. It made me wonder, who was that limo waiting for. Why didn’t they show? Did something terrible happen? As my imagination wandered, I thought of many scenarios ranging from Kanye West not exiting because of the massive crowds to a mafia deal gone wrong. It was fun to imagine that I had just witnessed something related to a major crime bust.

A few pedestrians drew my eye as well. For example there was the person in all white who seemed to be walking unusually slow. I could not help but notice this mummy-like figure leisurely strolling through the crowd. I also noticed a person carrying what seemed to be quite a few shopping bags drop one and continue walking. This concerned me; it even crossed my mind that I was witnessing a terrorist attack. Yet, less than a minute later, the pedestrian came running back to retrieve their dropped belongings. So why is it that all I could think of was criminal activity when I saw these unusual suspects?

It must have been the readings. Reading about panopticon had gotten me thinking about surveying for criminals and behaviors that warranted disciplinary actions. Then I started to worry. Are we close to a time when everywhere we go will be under constant surveillance? Even in our own homes? And then will what happen if the panopticon proves true for us? Will constant surveillance and possible discipline eventually lead to a better-behaved society who only acts off the basis that they know they are being watched? This concerns me.

In conclusion, watching these webcams got me thinking about the negative aspects that can come from too much surveillance but I did enjoy watching the unsuspecting passersby for a while.
In today’s age, when virtually everyone I know has a Facebook account, you’ll be hard pressed to find someone with a Facebook who can honestly say they have not “creeped” on someone else. It’s easy to do; people post information that they know will be easily visible by anyone they allow to see it—whether it be their friends, their network, or just anyone with an account. I think it’s safe to say that everyone with a Facebook knows and understands that people are looking at their profile, making judgments and looking at their status updates to see what’s happening. However we do not expect a random person in a completely different country to be using a publicly accessible webcam to watch us drive in our cars along the highway.

Recently I have been watching random people I don’t know via webcams. I’ve watched a South Korean restaurant being run exactly as it would be in America. If the website didn’t tell me that this restaurant was located in South Korea, I probably would have just assumed it was somewhere nearby or familiar. I’ve watched a courtyard in front of a hotel in the Netherlands and wondered where people were going, taking note of how many of them rode bikes—something I would not typically see here in Texas, where cars are by far people’s ideal form of transportation. Both of these places, in completely different countries, contained people I sincerely doubted that I knew, in places I’d never been, going about their lives in what seemed to be in a normal way. Everything seemed to be running smoothly and people were just going about their day. Except that a college student in San Antonio was watching them.

My favorite site was a courtyard at the University of Miami where I found the most activity (time differences made it very hard to look at other countries) and the best quality. It started with a person I named “green-hoodie-guy,” who seemed to wander back and forth. He’d go off the screen then come back on, with seemingly nowhere else to go. I found myself giving my roommate a play by play of green-hoodie-guy and what he was doing. Later, I returned to see a couple walking and holding hands, with an iPod linking them as they both danced. I assume that the only reason they were dancing was because they believed nobody was around to see them. Unfortunately, they were wrong, as I was sitting there watching them and frantically wondering if I’d ever done something silly like that while walking around somewhere with a webcam nearby.

We, like the people in the panopticon, could theoretically be watched at any point. For all I know, somewhere on Trinity campus there is a webcam and somewhere there is a website with a link on it, allowing random strangers from around the world to see me walking from class, or giving a tour, or reading on a bench. And it seems as though this is just the start—seeing as how our society continues to become more and more reliant on technology. Who knows? Maybe someday these cameras will work like Google maps—all you’ll need to do is type in an address and you can get a live feed of what’s going on. It’s creepy; it’s weird; but it’s true. Where will this lead us?
I watched the New York Times Square Camera on Monday afternoon. The camera is located at 7th and Broadway, about five stories off the ground, and is pointing down so that you can see billboards, shops, and traffic lights.

There is not much traffic at this time, although there are plenty of horns honking at each other. About ten percent of the pedestrians carry shopping bags, and there are no discernible conflicts. Some people stop and look in windows, while others readjust their clothes and shopping bags on the sidewalk. After 15 minutes, the traffic light patterns become apparent. It is obviously cold, with many people wearing jackets, but there is no snow on the ground. The thermometer on the right of the EarthCam says it is 37 degrees. I’m sure that if I checked back in 3 weeks from now, the advertisements would be different.

It is very interesting to think about how these cameras can be used for surveillance. Our society could easily become a disciplinary society, if the government were to take that route. With the fear of terrorist attack always looming, it would not surprise me for the government to take that route unless it was met with fierce public outcry.

The surveillance could help promote control of society and make us feel like we are in a prison. The laws that start from birth (family laws) keep evolving throughout the lifetime (school as a factory) and they are always enforced in a closed environment. If public space becomes another closed environment because of the installation of security cameras, these rules would only be further enforced and our privacy would be taken away almost completely.

The world becomes the panopticon described by Jeremy Bentham.

CHRIS KRADLE
“Times Square on Monday afternoon”
Considering the Saints just won the Super Bowl and Mardi Gras is just around the corner, I decided to watch Bourbon Street In New Orleans. I have friends from that area, and they all bragged about the 24/7 party that would be occurring between the Super Bowl win and Mardi Gras kick off.

With all this in mind I decided I would watch the camera at 9:30 p.m. I decided on this particular time because I assumed it would give me a good mix of people just beginning their night on this notorious party street, as well as those who started their nights a little too early. I didn't really want to see a big drunken mess because all of their inhibitions had gone out the window on the fifth Bomber Drink!

Even on Bourbon Street, when sober (or presumably sober), people tended to act relatively tame as if "someone was watching." Well good for them, because someone was. In public places, people tend to act according to social and societal norms of what is and isn't appropriate because of the possibility that someone, somewhere might be watching and judging. Foucault said this is because of society's control, perpetual training and modulation. Basically, we have all become malleable pawns in a system of socialization that creates order, control and a constant, predictable lameness.

People break away from these molds from time to time—like when they are blasted or think no one is watching—but our public and private actions are dictated by these controls.

Sadly, at 9:30 p.m. on Bourbon Street this fine Monday night, only a few people were drunk or unconcerned enough to act out against these pre-established norms. One lady, decked out in a Saints jersey danced her happy ass down the entirety of Bourbon Street until she reached her destination: another bar! Two highly over-beaded gentlemen cheered each other while walking down the street and one very small man dug in a trash can located in front of a bar/restaurant when no one else was in the immediate area.

Although creeping on people via random online webcams is a little weird and potentially just plain creepy, I plan to do even more crazy, unnecessary, and random things in public spaces... and maybe, hopefully, someone, somewhere will be watching me.
ANDREW TRUELOVE

“¡Las Cámaras Fantasticas!”

Starting this assignment at 11:00 at night, I knew I would have trouble finding a webcam in a well-lit space. This ruled out pretty much all of North America and Europe. Fortunately, for me, the great nation of Russia was bound to have a camera set up somewhere that would work.

I found a camera located in the city of Tomsk. The camera appeared to be in a hallway in a university. One wall was covered in photographs, possibly of important professors or notable alumni. There was not much action other than people holding papers walking by, stopping talk to each other, or pausing to look at the wall of photos. A woman came running from behind the camera down the hall, but abruptly stopped when she noticed someone at the other end of the hall coming towards her.

Now I’m not sure exactly why there is a camera in this hallway. For all I know, it could simply be a security camera that the university installed, or it could be a webcam that was put up as part of a class project. Heck, it might not even be a university that I’m seeing through the camera, but possibly an office building or a medical center.

As the readings demonstrate, a camera in a public location like this is not the least bit unusual to us. While there are some cameras set up just for the sake of having a webcam, most are probably for security purposes. Like with the panopticon, those in charge have a means through which we can more or less be seen at any time and any place.

We don’t mind showing up on these cameras, because we understand that they are efficient in preventing, or at least deterring, a substantial level of crime. In other words, these cameras sufficiently act as a means of control in our society. This does not bother us much, since if there’s a security camera watching us; chances are we are not within our private sphere anyway, which is still practically private. We would not be doing the things we may not want caught on film. As the running woman shows, how we act when alone is not the same as how we act when other people can see us, though of course, we may not always be sure of who’s around.

What this does make one question though, is to what extent are we willing to sacrifice this privacy in favor of a greater sense of control? Though security cameras such as this one are effective, there is still a great level of crime around the world. It can be argued that we still have not gone far enough. Hypothetically, if we moved this kind of surveillance into every aspect of our lives, we would minimize the level of crime as much as possible. But what happens when we start living without the privacy we sacrificed to get to this point? And then there’s the question of who’s policing the people policing us?

It all comes down to finding a happy medium. There is a place where those governing and hopefully looking out for us can suitably survey us while we can still keep the private stuff private. It may just take us a while to find it.
I have reached a new level of creeperdom. As if Facebook stalking wasn’t enough, this strange obsessive curiosity has now led to video surveillance surfing. Why, America? Why?

I never thought it was possible to access random video surveillance videos via the web; I thought these videos were private. It turns out that anybody and everybody has you at just one click of the mouse—and there is no running nor hiding from what has proven to be the ultimate Big Brother.

While surfing around to find a decent video stream, I came across several low-lit dark areas in Norway, clogged traffic in Russia, and beautiful beaches in sandy Miami. The close-proximity videos were most interesting. You could actually see peoples’ faces and watch what they are doing and who they’re interacting with.

One of my voyeur videos was a Communication Computer Lab at Ball State University in Indiana. You can see a couple guys in the back messing around on YouTube and Facebook (which is completely hilarious) and the whole world can see it! Hopefully their parents don’t find out about this site. At one point, a bunch of the guys in the classroom huddled up behind one computer and were watching something on YouTube. It was pretty interesting - but I wonder how much more privacy could be breached had there been any audio. The up close and personal videos seem to be the most interesting to me because you can observe more detail... and that’s when I feel the creepiest.

Another interesting camera in Lugano, Switzerland shows the traffic patterns on a specific highway. You can make out the letters and numbers on the license plates! That blew my mind. People could easily find information based on where you are, and what information of yours is out in the open. People can know where you are and what you’re doing.

Voyeurism and inactively participating in other peoples’ lives is a natural human curiosity and habit, but this type of surveillance takes things a little too far. Do these people have any idea they’re being watched? Do they know who is watching? Should they have to feel scared or be careful of how they act in public? It’s kind of scary, to imagine that anybody could track you down and watch you go about your life at any time they want. It’s almost unavoidable, because you never know when you’re being taped. And even if you do, you never expect your office video surveillance tape to be all over the Internet. Nothing you do is completely safe. Whether it’s just Facebooking during class, or getting into a car accident on the highway—we can see it, and we can be the judges. This is unsettling, but I suppose it has some safety benefits as well for companies or states.

Maybe China and Sweden can have hundreds of easily accessible surveillance cameras online, but for my own country and my own state to have some is bothersome. Land of the... free? Big Brother is watching.
The fear that modern and emerging technologies will ultimately converge to effectively end our privacy is a legitimate one, and we must be wary of who has access to our newly-broadcasted lives.

Currently, the greatest threat to our privacy is likely not a government or sinister corporation; it is popular web services like Google and Facebook. These companies have constantly adapting and often shocking privacy policies that put our personal data at risk.

Take Google for example. Even if they don’t share your information with anybody, they have access to the things you search for online, the places you get directions to with Google Maps, your documents on Google Docs, your e-mail on Gmail, and more. It is a ton of private data to trust in the hands of one company.

That said, most of us don’t do our privacy any favors with the way we use the web. We put pictures of ourselves on Facebook that employers would find troubling. We check in on Foursquare to broadcast wherever we are at any given moment. We tweet about our lives and our plans.

Any motivated criminal would have no trouble robbing the home of a social media over-sharer; he could simply check her profiles to see if she is out of her house. Many of us don’t need a company or government looking over our shoulder to be under surveillance. We do it to ourselves.
I was curious about this phenomenon of self-surveillance (or “sousveillance”), and wanted to bring it to the logical extreme. For the majority of a May 1, 2010 I broadcasted a video feed of myself via Ustream on an embedded player in my blog. I promoted it to everyone I know via Facebook. I also set up a special public Twitter profile to update viewers on exactly what I was doing and where I was going.

The first thing I noticed during the broadcast was just how much of a pain streaming video of yourself really is. Things like Facebook and Twitter and even location-based networks are popular because they are easy, and video streaming clearly isn’t quite there yet. You really have to modify your behavior to an extent to facilitate always having a WiFi-connected computer facing you, or failing that, a streaming-capable phone with enough battery power to get you from place to place. I know that a few people like Justine Ezarik or Justin Kan have complicated and expensive rigs that make constant streaming a reality, but it is still horribly inefficient for the everyday person.

Also, I learned that you have to be wary of where you are using the camera. For example, I was at the Spurs practice facility streaming from the media holding room, but could not stream live from the court itself due to team regulations. Also, you have to be aware of who is around you at any given time, and make sure they know that they are on camera. Any live-streamer who fails notify others that they were being broadcast over the Internet would be contributing to the destruction of not only his own privacy, but others’ as well.
All this considered, I didn’t feel nearly as weird when I was on camera than I expected to.

I thought that I would feel very violated and vulnerable open. While sometimes I did (especially when a coworker texted me to tell me I was rubbing my nose a lot…I had a cold), for the most part I forgot the camera was there and went about my daily activities. Only when I had to really think about the camera (when I was planning to move, for example) was I totally aware that I was on video.

I think the day will soon come that this kind of life streaming is simple and cheap enough for mainstream adoption. First generation models of consumer life-logging hardware are already on sale, and future advances in the technology will likely make these devices as commonplace as smart phones are now.

From there, somebody will inevitably create a web service that will encourage us to make these life logs public, a process known as life caching. It may seem foreign to us now, but Facebook and Twitter would have been laughed at ten years ago. The demand to make our lives public will be there; it always has been. At this point it is just a matter of the technology catching up.
“Good morning, Cory,” my alarm clock sounded loudly from my computer, in the booming voice of Morgan Freeman, and repeated every three steady seconds, “Wake up, Cory.”

I power launched my pillow across my room and blindly stumbled out of bed to my desktop. My eyes cracked open a little more to a bright computer screen with Morgan Freeman’s face smiling back at me. I waved at my webcam with one hand while rubbing the sleep out of my eye with the other.

“I’m awake,” I grumbled. Morgan cracked a smile and shook his head.

“You sure? Don’t make me sound off again in fifteen minutes…”

I sighed and answered in an exasperated tone, “Yes, I’m sure.”

My alarm deactivated; he smiled and faded off my computer screen as I sat down to read the news on the window behind my daily schedule. My friends always made fun of me for choosing Morgan Freeman as my alarm clock default, but I think it’s pretty damn cool. My best friend, Dan, has his set to Megan Fox, but I think it’s totally tacky. She says really stupid, creepy things like “Wake up honey, I’ve got a surprise for you,” and I just find it unrealistic and tasteless. Globalex recently came out with 200 new alarm defaults – most of them are those young annoying Disney pop artists – and they’ve been selling like crazy. But I’m satisfied with my five dollar Morgan Freeman alarm clock – his voice is soothing and wakes me up just fine.

I clicked the coffee button at the top-right corner and peered out my bedroom door towards the kitchen in my small apartment. After a short pause, I heard my coffee percolator make a gurgling noise as it began to make a fresh brew. Looking back at my screen, the Globalex Times unfolded to today’s top stories. I yawned and stretched backwards, nearly falling out of my chair. It didn’t take me much by surprise, considering the fact that I always nearly fall out of my chair in my morning routine. My habits synced up so quickly, I barely take notice to them anymore. Globalex has been running my life for me since as far back as I can remember, so I didn’t really have to think about it. It evolved so quickly. First it was just a social networking site, and then it added on video capabilities. Soon after that, it was a news source, banking and finance site, business network database, and a command station all in one. Globalex slowly kind of became the hub of the world, and nobody really saw it coming.

Pilfering through the headlines, there was nothing that special... Vitamin supplements now substitute as food for busy people on the go; Cher becomes oldest baby boomer of all time at the age of 147, coming out with new album; Globalex finally wins battle against Microsoft, company goes under. This news had been circulating for months now, and it just
seemed like all this stuff was just beginning to surface. We've all been aware that scientists were messing around with vitamin complexes to see if they could get humans to live off of them, and of course, they succeeded. Whoever actually follows through with living off nutrients from pills, I have a lot of respect for them, although I can't imagine a life without cheese fries. And everybody knew that Cher was competing with some old rich lady from Delaware for oldest baby boomer, but that poor lady had a failed heart transplant and they couldn't bring her back. I don't see how they couldn't, considering the lady managed to live to be 147 years old… but it's only the ridiculously rich people who can afford to live that long. Like most normal middle-class folk, my parents will die at around their eighties or nineties, if they're lucky. As for me, I'm only twenty-three, so I feel like I don't have to think about that right now. I just hope that by the time I start getting old and brittle, some new world order will have taken place and everybody will have the option of living well into their two-hundreds. As comforting as that sounds, I just don't see what I could possibly do with my time for that long. There aren't enough video games in the world.

In the middle of my daydream, I was startled by my computer ringing. I looked at the screen and saw that my mom was calling. I inhaled sharply and stretched.

“Answer,” I said in a stern, monotone voice. Mom's face popped up in a square window and she was beaming a smile at me. I clearly looked like I just rolled out of bed.

“Oh, honey, it's almost three in the afternoon! Why are you just getting up?” she said with a sweet grin on her face. My little sister, Iris, was jumping around and waving in the background, and I waved back while scratching my stubble with my free hand.

“It's the weekend, mom…”

“Alright, well… your father just got back from India. You should pass him a note when you get the chance,” she squinted at me, probably noticing my hair was scruffy and going in all different directions.

“Yeah… I’ve been meaning to tell you… My Palm is kind of on off-time right now. I need to get the hard drive fixed,” I cringed as the expression on her face fell.

“What? Honey, the LexPalm we bought you is barely two months old!”

“I know, but it got overheated or something. I’ll get it fixed.”

“No, check on your doorstep in about five minutes. I’m putting in a temp order for you. It should be there no later than that.”

“…okay. Thanks.”

“Of course – we'll figure out what happened to your old one. Love you!”
she waved goodbye and logged out of our video conversation. I rolled my eyes and let out a big sigh.

I didn't really want the new LexPalm. If I had it my way, I wouldn't have a profile on the Globalex server. I have been trying to become independent of this system for about a month now. I feel like I'm the only one who feels a privacy invasion that nobody else is noticing. About two weeks ago when Dan and I were chatting over the Globalex chat domain, he asked me if I wanted to go cruising with him to Westridge Park so we could smoke a bowl. After I agreed and signed off, I went to pick him up at his apartment and we went cruising. About five minutes before we got to Westridge Park, we slowly started getting followed by some cop cars. We tried to lose them, but more cars kept showing up; we finally decided to turn back around and go back to my place. At one point, I remember telling Dan not to talk anymore because I felt like our conversation was bugged, so our car ride home was totally silent. Even though what we were going to do was illegal, it was the seediest feeling to think that maybe our conversations were starting to be hacked by the city. We were being listened to and followed… monitored by the government. I get that it's a form of control in an effort to keep things safe, but for some reason I just feel like there are some rules being broken and lines being crossed.

The same thing happened last weekend when my friend, Artie, sent out a mass invitation to his networks for his going-away party. It was at his house and the invitation promised three kegs and a bunch of other booze. The party literally got busted before it even started, and Artie got arrested for supplying alcohol to minors. We all had to drive by his house, acting like we weren't involved so we wouldn't get in trouble, too. People kept arguing afterwards about how the cops could have known about the party before it even started; there were no noise complaints, no cars lining up the street, no signs of a party whatsoever. Artie actually blamed a lot of his friends for reporting him, but everyone denied it, and rightfully so. I knew deep down that there was something happening differently in the Globalex server; there were new terms that people weren't aware of, or even worse, there were no terms at all and the server slowly became a surveillance system. Ever since Artie’s bust, I’ve been doing little tests of my own to investigate. So far, all evidence points to secret surveillance.

"Hey loser," Dan's hands clutched my shoulders hard as he abruptly showed up behind my chair. I was really startled, so I jumped up.

"Jesus! You know, there's this thing called knocking…," I turned around to him laughing under his breath.

"Yeah, well, that's not my thing. I picked this up at your porch. Did your other one break or something?" he handed me my new temporary LexPalm and I shoved it to the side.

"Thanks…"

He raised his eyebrow and patted my back, "What're you up to? You look pissed."
“Nah, I was just thinking about stuff.” I scratched the back of my neck nervously and he gave me a strange look while plopping onto my couch.

“Such as…?” he kicked back and looked up at me, still standing in my room without any real direction.

“Do you remember when Artie’s kegger got busted last weekend?”

“Yeah, it sucked. Why?”

“I’ve just really been thinking about it, and-” he cut me off and sat up straight.

“Whoa, you weren’t the one who told on him, were you?!”

“NO. No, that’s not what it is. I didn’t do that,” I assured him as he teetered back down onto my sofa, relieved.

“Alright, well, what about it?”

“You ever think the cops maybe got a hold of his invitation?” I said hesitantly as he snorted with laughter.

“Yeah, because the police have nothing better to do than go through our social networks and figure out how to rain on our parades… Sounds like ‘Facebook Stalking’ back in the 2000s. That’s hilarious, dude. But honestly? Just a little ridiculous.”

We both heard a loud beep from the kitchen, and Dan bolted upwards, “One sec. Hold that thought. Coffee.”

He then came back with two mugs of hot coffee that I had commanded off the server; they were piping hot and brewed perfectly. I took a small, careful sip and adjusted my posture.

“No, I’m serious! Look, you’re my best friend, and I trust that you’d take what I say seriously. I really think there’s something up with the Globalex server. I think lately they’ve changed something. I mean, is it not weird that now every time I talk about doing something bad, like smoking a bowl with you or getting a fake ID, the cops are somehow nearby? Or like when I asked you about the website for the free pirated movies? The minute you sent me the link, both of our computers shut off in two different locations. Do you not think that’s weird?”

Dan sat back and considered what I said very seriously. He pursed his lips and let out a big sigh while scratching his scalp, “Well, what do you want to do about it? It’s not like you can do anything. That server is pretty much our life.”

I paced around my room anxiously, “Yeah, but it doesn’t have to be. We don’t have to be dependent on the stupid server. We can go back to how things were, where our credit cards and phones and alarm clocks and

1.39 We refused to believe that playing God would have its consequences. Excerpt from Laura Schluckebier’s installation Connecting the Dots. 2010. Licensed under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.
briefcases were all separate things. It was so much better when life was like that.”

Dan propped himself up with a stern look on his face, clearly trying to level with me. He took a short sip of his coffee and cleared his throat, “Look, Cory, I don’t think things will ever go back to being that difficult. It’s just too much to keep track of, you know? The server made it easy, and it’s been this was for such a long time. You’ve got to keep your head out of those history books, dude. We can’t just go back 200 years with all that completely useless, one-dimensional stuff like Facebook and the oPhone.”

“iPhone.”

“Whatever. History is boring. What I’m saying is, it’s not going to change back. That crap is so primitive. I really don’t see how people functioned, and I’m not about to find out.” He took a larger sip of his coffee and closed his eyes, looking very pleased with the brew.

“I actually thought it was pretty efficient. The thought of people actually doing things for themselves, working at their own projects, keeping their social and business lives separate,” I exasperatedly gestured to the mug in his hand, “making their own coffee…”

“Alright, so what do you suppose we do, then?”

“Cut ourselves off. Become self-sufficient. See if we can inspire other people to break free from this. It’s a trap – that’s what people don’t see.” I spoke defiantly and saw he was genuinely listening, and I could almost see a bit of fear in his eyes of the situation. I could see the wheels spinning in his head. He took one last gulp of his coffee, and grunted from the heat slightly burning his throat.

He set his coffee mug down and looked at me confidently, “Fine. Let’s do it. Let’s delete our profiles.”

I was completely taken aback, “Really? You want to?”

“Yeah. Let’s see if we can actually do it,” he replied without missing a beat.

Within minutes, we both logged onto Globalex for the last time and deactivated our accounts. Three alert messages popped up to warn us of the ramifications of deactivating our profiles on the server, but we clicked ‘confirm’ and suddenly the computer shut off. I tried turning it back on, but it was as if the computer was dead.

“What happened? Why won’t it turn on?” Dan slightly panicked.

“I don’t know. Let’s wait,” I tried to keep my cool, but could feel my chest begin to tighten with anxiety.

Dan reached for his LexPalm and saw it shut down in his very own hands, and it stayed off during his many attempts at restarting the device. He
began to breathe heavily and pace around the room.

“It’s not even turning on, Cory!”

“That’s what’s supposed to happen! Just give it a while! You’re the one who said we needed to see if we could do it!”

He threw himself onto my couch and stared at the ceiling, trying to calm himself down. I reached for my old cell phone and turned it on, only to see there was no service. Without my LexPalm and my computer, I had no way of contacting anyone. Dan stayed on the couch while I grabbed my keys and ran out to my car. I pressed the unlock button, and the car successfully unlocked, but the ignition key was deactivated along with my user profile. I had no car at this point. I ran back inside and sat on my bed, trying to get a hold of my nerves.

“My car won’t start. And my cell phone doesn’t work. And I can’t access my bank account, or anything.”

I could hear Dan whimper under his breath, “Then what now? We have to reactivate our accounts. We have to.” I got a large lump in my throat and threw my LexPalm across the room.

“We can’t.”

“What do you mean we can’t? That’s technology! We can go back and fix it!”

“Remember those three warning alerts before we deactivated? Did you even read them?” I yelled.

“No! That was your job! What the hell did it say?!” he yelled back at me.

“We are eligible to reapply for membership to the server in six months. Our profiles are being deconstructed. Our bank accounts, personal information, documents, contacts – everything is being taken apart.”

“WHY did you click ‘okay’?!” he stood up and frantically yelled. I buried my head in my hands and just sat on my bed, completely quiet. I think I might have stayed that way for hours.

That was the day that started my six months without reading the news, without commanding coffee, without contacting a single soul on this earth, or accessing my money. These were the six months that my mom had to bring me food and drive me around town to do things both trivial and important – I had nothing to my name. These were the six months where I couldn’t watch movies, or television, or any form of entertainment. These were the six months where I didn’t qualify for any medical or dental checkups, because I didn’t have an ‘identity profile.’ These were the six months where I didn’t have an identity at all.
Ekaterina Sedia’s work “Mind of A Pig” made me want to write a fiction piece about what the world might face in the future if all these technologies that we have been discussing in class become reality. She does such a good job weaving words together to believe that her societies exist.

In class, we talked about the Singularity and the idea both frightened and excited me. While I do not believe there will be a single moment where the Singularity would become a reality. I do believe there could be a gradual process where we start incorporating ourselves into machines. I wanted to look at a society where the Singularity was about happen. How would society take it? In stride? As something that needed to be combatted?

Annalee Newitz asked if we should be worried about the government taking over our lives with all these technologies that can track our movements. I decided to take that idea one step further. What would happen if companies own the government? Not only could they track our movements, but they could create laws calling rivals’ works illegal so that the population would only be able to buy the company who controls the government’s property.

The character narrating the story is a blogger who is well respected in the gaming community. The world comes down to two products: Microsoft’s Life and MacSony’s Living. This is the final showdown. This is beginning of the Singularity. Who will own the world? MacSony or Microsoft?

**FEBRUARY 27TH 2029 1:30 PM**

The big news today is the merger of the supposedly-failing Nintendo and MacSony to combat the new game put out by Microsoft. Supposedly, Microsoft is putting out a new game “to end all games.” Not sure what that means, but hey the government is behind this so what can be the harm? Many of you remember the merger of Sony and Macintosh back in 2025 and we thought that was big news, but now MacSony seems to have the synergy that has made Microsoft so profitable the last few years.

On channel MacSony (sorry if you don’t have Direct TV just believe me when I tell you this) the announcement was made and a 5% increase in stock was reported, but on Microsoft 2 (sorry if you don’t have DishTV, you’ll have to believe me on this too) they’re saying there was a decrease of 5% in stock today? Well, I have no clue what the hell that means, but I’m sure the government will figure it out. At the very least, it’s a win for us gamers. Let the showdown begin!

**MARCH 1ST 2029 2:31 PM**

Microsoft is getting rolling, announcing *Life* today. Supposedly this is ultimate game, where you can plug into the game itself. Not sure how
they want us to do that, but sounds freaking AWESOME. Yahoo, a MacSony website, called it “the worst game ever.” Whatever. It sounds like you’re just jealous. I’m going to be kicking some ass on Life as soon as that comes out. The government is promoting these games by calling them revolutionary. Who cares? The whole world knows that you’re just puppets of the corporations. I just know that this game is going to be freaking sweet.

**MARCH 6TH 2029 6:14 PM**

Well that was quick, MacSony put out an announcement today about their new game Living. Ok, so it’s not original, but who the heck cares? It is now official: the war of Macsony’s Living vs. Microsoft’s Life. Bring on the advertisements!

**MARCH 10TH 2029 5:15 PM**

Bad news, gamers. It sounds like Life is going to be more expensive than we originally thought it would be, but on the plus side, it sounds like this is going to be the last game you will ever need to buy. Just like Microsoft’s EGG (Extracurricular Gaming Guru), it looks like the system will be full body and will be able to read your thoughts. The new application? You can be plugged in for more than the four hours that the EGG allows you to be plugged in. Awesome. MacSony better step their game up. Release date for Life: April 30th. Countdown: 51 days.

The new numbers that came out from the government, as funded by MacSony and Microsoft (the only thing they work on together in the government) estimated that 49% of American households have a Microsoft EGG and 48% have a MacSony FILE (Formatted In-Living Experience). So, ladies and gentlemen, this may be the final showdown between the two companies if MacSony can get together a system to compete against Life.

**MARCH 16TH 2029 1:22 AM**

Not sure why I’m up, but Yahoo released an announcement saying that Living will come out on April 30th too. Guess that merger with Nintendo made sense after all. Wow, this is getting intense.

**MARCH 30TH 2029 5:13 PM**

Well sounds like the war has begun and Microsoft has taken the first shot. Google today (controlled by Microsoft if you noobs didn’t know that already) explained that the system will fail miserably because of a bug already planted into it by a rogue MacSony employee. The government is fighting because the Microsoft side and the MacSony side are throwing allegations at each other that there has been tampering of equipment. Telling you folks, this is getting good.

Countdown to Life and Living – 31 days
March 31st 2029 4:55 PM

Well sounds like both sides have FINALLY quieted down about this stupid quarrel. Of course Microsoft was lying about the bug, but at least it slowed MacSony down. My people on the inside predict they are 5 days behind Microsoft.

April 1st 2029 1:11 PM

Breaking news only found on this website! Sounds like both *Life* and *Living* have been cancelled, sorry guys.

P.S. April Fool’s

April 3rd 2029 6:57 PM

The MacSony vs. Microsoft war is official: casualties have been suffered. A news report today from California reported that servers recorded that 56 people were killed today over an argument about the new gaming systems of MacSony and Microsoft. On the hugely popular *MMORPG* *Battlefield: Virtual Reality*, a MacSony supporter hacked the game on the Micro-FILE server (the EGG server for Microsoft) and put the MacSony-EGG servers users in the realm of the Micro-FILE’s servers where the MacSony-EGG users slaughtered the characters of the Micro-FILE users. The president, elected from the Microsoft party, called this “an act of cyber-terrorism that is an attack on American freedom. We Americans should not have to worry about our lives being hacked by others.” Bummer dude, because it totally happened. You cannot and will not find the guy who did it.

April 3rd 2029 8:05 PM

Microsoft announced they will not be fixing the servers and instead be focusing on *Life*. Interesting move on their part, hope the loyal followers don’t get mad at the company for making them wait to buy *Life*.

April 5th 2029 8:57 AM

Congress passed a bill demanding MacSony’s records so they can find the cyber-terrorist who hacked Microsoft’s servers. Unfortunately, that will not happen since MacSony’s main servers are located in Japan. The U.S. is just trying to protect their own interest in Microsoft. Since the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, you will remember that corporations have basically “bought” their legislators. That trend unfolded in other democracies and now the two companies, MacSony and Microsoft, now run the world’s governments. Obviously, Microsoft has the majority in America and MacSony has the majority in Japan. This is the first time that MacSony and Microsoft have attacked each other at an international level. The Microsoft minority in Japan tried to pass the same bill, but of course was struck down by the MacSony majority. This means that MacSony is untouchable by U.S. law. Like I said, no one will know the mystery behind the Virtual Reality hacker.
April 6th 2029 5:12 PM

Both sides are quieting down as the final push is being made with a media blitz happening on all forms of media: TV, Internet, you name it, it’s being pimped out by MacSony or Microsoft’s media outlets (e.g. MacSony’s DirectTV/Yahoo and Microsoft’s DishTV/Google). Also, the bashing of the opponents’ machines is quite prevalent with both having catchy slogans about the other’s faults. MacSony’s tag is “Why get unplugged in Life? Stay Living.” Microsoft’s tag is “We can give you Life, others can’t.” The human race has not seen this kind of competition. Whoever wins this battle affects the control of information, and thusly, the world.

April 7th 2029 5:16 PM

My inside man at Microsoft claimed there was a major failure with the machines today. A test run with a subject went wrong. The power went out in the section where the test was happening and the subject passed away. What does this mean? When our power plants stop working, we die? This is what everyone is worried about since the first plugged in game came to home. Yes, there have been deaths, especially the famed assassination of President Riley in 2018, but there is no risk when everyone is plugged into the system. Will this curtail the sales? Yeah, a little bit, but people will come… they will come.

Nothing new from my MacSony inside man. Sounds like they are still going through all the information still given to them from Nintendo. MacSony needs the information from Nintendo because it sounded like they were working on their big comeback project, which has now been transferred into MacSony’s Life.

Countdown to Life and Living: 23 days

April 10th 2029 3:05 PM

One generous reader seems to have an inside in the gaming community that I lack, but thanks to whoever he/she is! I have received tickets to go to E3 and witness the awesomeness of Life and Living for myself. I will report back to my loyal readers.

Countdown to Life and Living: 20 days

April 14th 2029 12:00 PM

I’m here at E3 and hopefully we get to see the future today. Both booths are set up and the media is waiting for the official reveal of Life and Living. Supposedly this will decide the winner between Microsoft and MacSony.

April 14th 2029 12:17 PM

Life is the future. The new, sleeker version of EGG has me sold on

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1.46 “Nothing can stop exponential growth!” Cartoon drawn by Douglas Hofstadter (Director of Center for Research on Concepts and Cognition at Indiana University) and presented to the Singularity Summit at Stanford University in 2006.
the idea. People were allowed to step inside and look around for a few minutes in the new world. At the very least I call this utopia. Microsoft was completely right, Life does in fact read your brainwaves and sets up Life how you want it. People have been wondering how you can stay inside of Life for the rest of your life. Simply put, you will be “plugged in” and instead of vitamins running through your veins, pure energy will be circulating your body making YOU the battery. This means that you can be turned on FOREVER if you aren’t unplugged. If you are, a sensor will go off in the Microsoft offices and someone will be there to plug you back in within a few minutes. Your body, when used as a battery, can last up to 3 years.

APRIL 14TH 2029 2:30
I have been around the Microsoft booth for now over 2 hours and the machine is functioning properly. Just gorgeous all around. The possible of worry about the unplugging of the machine (or hacking by MacSony) is still there, but that didn’t decrease the turnout at E3, it was just announced that they broke records and 1.3 billion people are here today. This obviously is the life-changing experience everyone has been expecting.

APRIL 14TH 2029 2:45
Went to the MacSony booth, but unfortunately they said they were having problems with the machine and no one could go inside. Well, bummer. So far I would chalk this round up to Microsoft, but the war isn’t over yet. MacSony did have the Living program set up in a FILE where the program for Living was uploaded, but without the necessary tools like Microsoft has for Life that keeps you alive in the real world while you are playing the game, MacSony has no chance to beat Microsoft.

APRIL 14TH 2029 3:42 PM
Wow, well the preview was great, just have to see if the machine functions properly now.

Countdown to Life and Living: 16 days

APRIL 20TH 2029 9:23 PM
One of my readers just e-mailed me a question with an ancient question: is this the Singularity? Well, after finding out what that meant I have come to the conclusion: no this is not the Singularity. This may be the start of the Singularity but by no means will this be the end. We still will have to wait for a long time for others to join us in the virtual world. The “Singularity” happens when man and machine will become one, or the machines simply become better than humans and we start relying on them. When we step into the virtual world, we will be leaving many
people behind. Think about all the people in the poorer countries, it will take them decades until they have the wealth and technology to join us. Until everyone joins us in the new world, it’s not the Singularity.

Countdown to Life and Living: 10 days

APRIL 27TH 2029 3:21 PM
First shipments of Life were shown leaving Microsoft headquarters. One of them is mine. Be jealous.

Countdown to Life and Living: 3 days

APRIL 28TH 2029 6:55 AM
No stores have Living yet leaving fans wondering what the hell is going on? Did MacSony not get the message?

Countdown to Life and maybe Living: 2 days

APRIL 29TH 2029 5:55 PM
BREAKING NEWS! It sounds like this entire thing was a bluff by MacSony! They didn’t even have a freaking machine in the works! The whole buying Nintendo thing was a red herring to worry Microsoft into putting out a bad product. Not only did MacSony take on the debt of the failing Nintendo, but Nintendo suckered MacSony into the deal because Nintendo supposedly had the technology copied from Microsoft HQ and told MacSony they had it! Of course this means that MacSony will declare bankruptcy and Microsoft will win the battle of the corporations. Can’t wait to get Life tomorrow. As the commercial goes: “You can only live Life.”

Countdown to Life: 1 day

APRIL 30TH 2029 11:50 AM
It’s here. My God. And it’s beautiful. Setup should take about 5-10 minutes.

APRIL 30TH 2029 12:00 PM
For everyone who has followed me on my blog and the Life vs. Living contest, thank you very much. This will be my last post before I go into Life. I plan on being plugged into Life as long as I am able. Microsoft’s world will become my world. Someone once said, “Saying goodbye isn’t the hard part, it’s what we leave behind that’s tough.” What you are leaving behind is nothing compared to Life. To my future brothers and sisters, I will see you on the inside.