

Author: Way to discuss religion, God

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tion of any given day. I wanted this book to be an entrance way for people to discuss religion, or God, or at least act as some sort of starting point."

Recent events (such as 9/11 and the Columbine massacre) have provoked discussion about what constitutes an "appropriate" target for humor. Was this something you felt constrained by?

"... if you think that *Hey N!* is in any way an attempt to be funny or humorous, then you are deeply, and profoundly wrong. ... If you thought the book was trying to be funny or humorous, I suggest we go no further here, and that you go back and read the book again. And if that doesn't work, go back and read it again once more. I am stunned that you could think that the book was some sort of vehicle for humor. Utterly stunned. I almost don't know what to say."

(Later, Coupland e-mails back apologizing for his reaction, saying he had shown the email to a friend.)

"She told me I'd been thin skinned, and that you were asking a broader, Michael Moore/*Bowling* etc. kind of question (Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* documentary touched on many issues, including the massacre). (She said) 'Don't take it so personally, Doug. It was a normal question. Grow up.' And she was right. She also said that I'd bent over backwards to deal with the subject both intelligently and with respect, and that anyone who'd read it would know that ...

"I think I've come away from *Hey N!* haunted. It forced me to figure out what counts and what doesn't. It forced me to reassess the way we use time on earth, and how free will makes us different from all other

Grief: Tenderness mixes with the profound

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attempts to get at the truth. One day he is cast as a hero, the next day he is held to blame as the need to find answers fueled frantic speculation.

In the midst of all these weighty issues, Coupland's insights into the strangeness of human emotion — the sort that often make his writing humorous — are also in evidence. He has the ability to take life in his hands, shake it like a snow globe and show us what absurd and luminous complexities are hidden within.

His last novel, *All Families Are Psychotic*, sends readers reeling through a family gathering that is hardly an average reunion; just as one begins to think no subject is sacred, he pulls back to the essential human moment and grounds the chaos in compassion. As a writer, he stretches life to its limits, not to tear it to pieces, but to show readers every dark and beautiful inch.

Hey Nostradamus! is at no point hilarious, but even the opening sentence mixes a quirky tenderness in with the profound:

creatures on Earth.

"My earlier books lightly touched on themes that are resonant in this new book. Some of my earlier books are out-and-out roller coaster rides, and as such, are fine, but this is the one I'd take with me to the grave. Making it changed me."

Do you have any comments you'd like to make to a Colorado audience reading

"I believe that what separates humanity from everything else in this world — spaghetti, binder paper, deep sea creatures, edelweiss and Mount McKinley — is that humanity alone has the capacity at any given moment to commit all possible sins."

In the end, the novel doesn't attempt to offer answers or explanations. It raises questions, and with Coupland's trademark blend of blunt immediacy and tender compassion, helps us to imagine the emotional world of those affected by the shooting.

At times, the plot veers off in unexpected directions that can lend a disjointed feel to the proceedings. But those detours also breathe life into the story and add dimension to his characters.

Now, after the media glare has faded from Columbine, the story has entered the domain of fiction and we see the potential of an earth-shattering experience to both haunt and redeem.

Jessica Slater is the technology editor at the Rocky Mountain News.

your book?

"That they read every word of the above interview, and that they rest assured that most people on the planet outside of Colorado have spent the years in between examining their souls as a result of what happened there."

Jessica Slater

TiVo: Loss of privacy debated

Continued from 23D

that information to send targeted advertising their way. In the case of TiVo, the system recommends programs based on its users' viewing habits. Watch *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*, for example, and the system might automatically record the movie *This Is Spinal Tap* on your machine.

TiVo's competitors include ReplayTV, and EchoStar's DishPVR; all promise to protect the anonymity of their users and say they will not share personal information with third parties without customers' consent. But some privacy groups have expressed concern.

Hard-core TiVo users seem to find the privacy debate tedious.

"I could (not) care less whether people know what I'm watching or not," said Loehnen's brother, Ben, 25, an editorial assistant in Manhattan with his own TiVo. Loehnen said that TiVo's power to recommend shows was part of the product's charm.

Like the telephone and the television before it, TiVo and similar gadgets seem certain to alter established domestic routines. Randall Rothenberg, a columnist for *Advertising Age* and an executive at the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, said having TiVo has changed the television hour debates with his wife.

"The spousal arguments are no longer about 'I want to watch this on TV' or 'I want to watch that,'" he said. "It's 'you've had this thing TiVoed for six months and you haven't watched it yet. Can we delete it now?'"

Rothenberg said that subscribing to TiVo had an unintended effect. By skipping ads and filling his viewing time with documentaries

and shows about gardening rather than the regularly scheduled fare, he took himself "outside of culture," he said. When friends joked about the ubiquitous Budweiser "Wazzup?" advertising campaign a couple of years back, Rothenberg said, he had no idea what they were talking about.

So why do TiVo owners feel the need to tell everyone about it? Clay Shirky, an adjunct professor at New York University's interactive telecommunications program, said it might have to do with the nature of the medium. "People watch a lot of TV, so anything that has an even slightly positive effect on it is disproportionately important to peoples' lives," he said.

There's another theory — that there is something thrilling about being unshackled, at least partly, from a device that for years has had people at its mercy. Skipping ads and thumbing your nose at the scheduling imposed by corporate broadcasters feels titillating.

"There seems to be something slightly illicit about it," said Michael Crowley, an associate editor at *The New Republic* who has written about his relationship with his TiVo. "You feel like you're working the system. You're in on a racket, and a racket is something you like to brag about."

But how successful a racket is it, considering that TiVo owners watch more TV, spend more money and give up more details of their private lives to companies than those without TiVo? It's not a question TiVo users are quick to posit themselves, but in the brief blips between reruns of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, at least some can spot the paradox.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

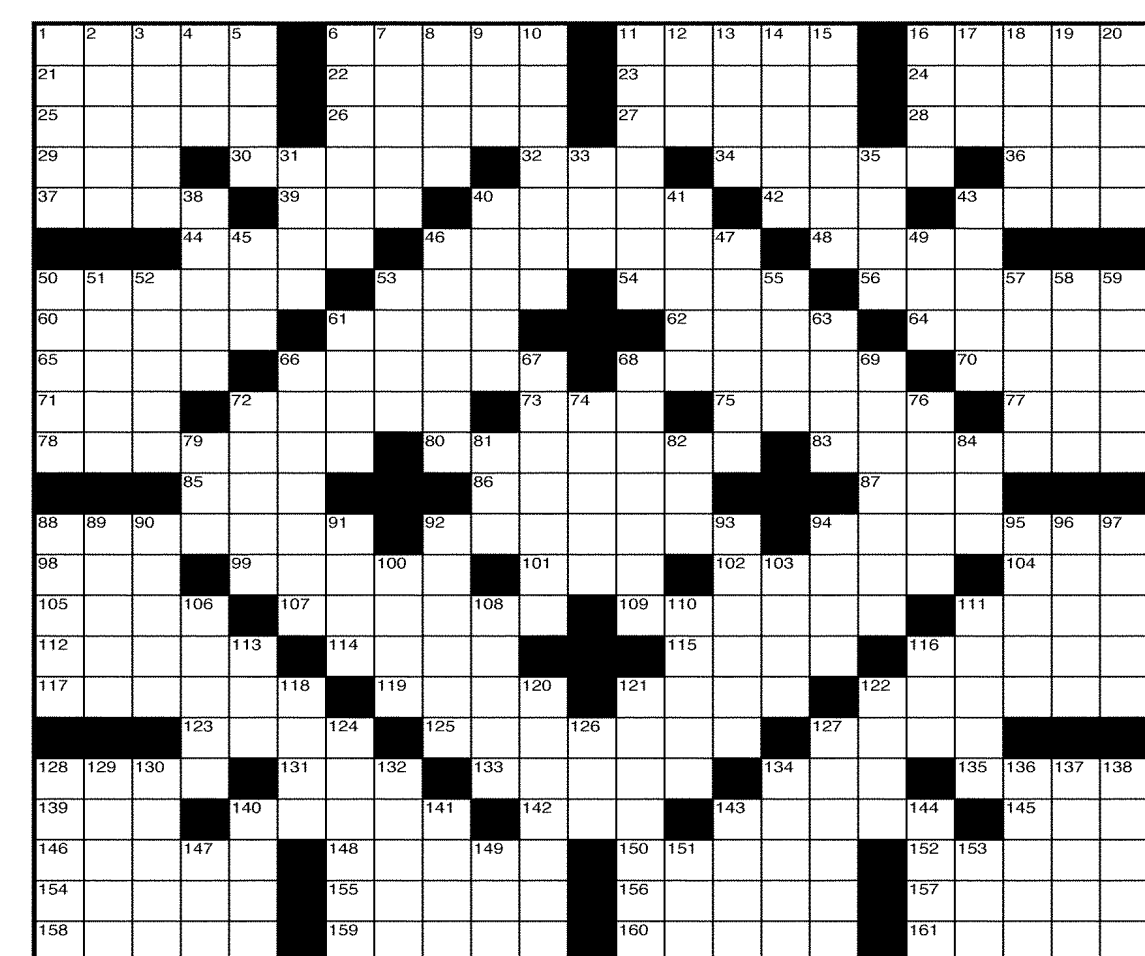
■ Answers on Page 28D

ACROSS

- 1 Implied
- 6 Competes in a rodeo
- 11 Fries and slaw
- 16 Speckled fish
- 21 Residence
- 22 Separate
- 23 Derrick or crane
- 24 Energy
- 111 Nee
- 25 Polite address
- 26 Vice —
- 27 Champing at the bit
- 28 Web-footed birds
- 29 Summer in France
- 30 Docks
- 32 Little child
- 34 Tortilla dip
- 36 Ring thing
- 37 Overhaul
- 39 — roll (lucky)
- 40 Ruling group
- 42 Nope opposite
- 43 Spouse
- 44 Wildebeests
- 46 Mind the pub
- 48 Exotic wrap
- 50 Clearings
- 53 Compete at Indy
- 54 Sudden foray
- 56 Rainier's kingdom
- 60 Tore down
- 61 Candle part
- 62 A Karamazov
- 64 "— the Barbarian"
- 65 Envelope abbr.
- 66 Meal
- 68 Isis' husband
- 70 Fourth dimension
- 71 Last letter
- 72 Cuba's — Castro
- 73 Basketball hoop
- 75 Shirt parts
- 77 Popular beverage
- 78 Is greater than
- 80 Preference
- 83 Examine closely
- 85 Fem. saint
- 86 Tonto's Scout
- 87 Aloha token
- 88 Light reading

- 92 Easel partner
- 94 Flowering trees
- 98 Conceit
- 99 Cute
- 101 Before, in melodrama
- 102 Demeanors
- 104 High note
- 105 Sen. — Cranston
- 107 Struggled
- 109 Putter with
- 112 Cheap heat
- 114 Wade through
- 115 Clark's "Daily Planet" cohort
- 116 Valentine figure
- 117 Flipped a coin
- 119 Deep black
- 121 Jokes with
- 122 Thick soups
- 123 1917 abdicator
- 125 Elastic
- 127 Golfer — Norman
- 128 Like horror flicks
- 131 John — Passos
- 133 Hawk's gripper
- 134 Caesar's 52
- 135 A little bit
- 139 Hurry along
- 140 Jeer at
- 142 Still
- 143 Like a foal
- 145 "C'mon, — — pall!"
- 146 Dragon of puppetry
- 148 — Arabia
- 150 Beach sandal
- 152 Regions
- 154 Chars
- 155 Magnate
- 156 AOL message (hyph.)
- 157 Puckster — Gretzky
- 158 Secret rendezvous
- 159 Hurdled
- 160 Metaphysical poet
- 161 Cozy dwellings

- 6 Crow cousins
- 7 "Lohengrin", e.g.
- 8 Averages
- 9 Um's cousins
- 10 Reputation
- 11 Break
- 12 Charged particle
- 13 Morse signals
- 14 English assignment
- 15 Fads and crazes
- 16 Senate garb
- 17 Canape topper
- 18 Greek alphabet ender
- 19 Surprise win
- 20 Topic
- 31 Chits
- 33 Ottawa's prov.
- 35 Cyberspace junk mail
- 38 Limerick writer — Nash
- 40 Garage gadgets
- 41 Writer — Nin
- 43 North Dakota city
- 45 Rorem or Beatty
- 46 "Key Largo" actress
- 47 Scuba sport
- 49 Sinbad's bird
- 50 Browse
- 51 Raw rubber
- 52 Montezuma's empire
- 53 Ready to pick
- 55 Venture
- 57 Hill or Loos
- 58 Humped animal
- 59 Laker Shaquille —
- 61 Takes vows
- 63 Pleasant
- 66 Survive a storm (2 wds.)
- 67 Was behind
- 68 Skipped
- 69 Horizon
- 72 Foul-smelling
- 74 Deeply felt
- 76 Looks as if
- 79 DC zone
- 81 Clean air org.
- 82 Ripley's last word
- 84 Library sect.
- 88 Celebration
- 89 Ice hut
- 90 Embers
- 91 Pvt.'s superiors
- 92 Traffic cones



- 93 Personify
- 94 Gibson and Torme
- 95 Range or extent
- 96 Condor's lair
- 97 Mails out
- 100 About 2.2 pounds
- 103 Egret cousin
- 106 Bad-tempered
- 108 Sphinx locale
- 110 Adjust the wheels
- 111 Villages
- 113 Thing in law
- 116 Actor's prompt
- 118 Modern art form
- 120 Radiologist's job (hyph.)
- 121 Tiedd
- 122 Strait-laced one
- 124 Disturbs
- 126 Notre Dame sight
- 127 Laugh
- 128 Phantom
- 129 OPEC vessel
- 130 Pass along
- 132 Animal with a shell
- 134 Soviet founder
- 136 Does as told
- 137 Signified
- 138 Facilitates
- 140 Audition
- 141 Ballet costume
- 143 Amount borrowed
- 144 Open wide
- 147 CPA employer
- 149 Marino or Rather
- 151 RN employer
- 153 Funny Charlotte —