

NEW THINK

THE **AMAZING!** IDEAS THAT SHAPE OUR WORLD • EDITED BY JASON CHEN

ON LANGUAGE

GLOSSARY

Definitions by **Ammon Shea**
Illustrations by **Bendik Kaltenborn**



An unflappable, equanimous woman who is soon to be married.

“Bridechilla” is a combination of “bride” (from the Old English “bryd,” meaning just what it sounds like), “Godzilla” (which comes from a blend of the Japanese words for gorilla and whale) and a modern sense of “chill” (which comes from “ciele,” another Old English word). Its forerunner and antithesis, “bridezilla,” has been in use since the mid-1990s, but the “-chilla” variation is of considerably newer vintage.



A sense of malaise resulting from a high degree of consumerism.

Curiously, while almost no one uses the full form of “influenza” to describe the disease, when combining the name of the ailment with “affluent,” no one is inclined to use the word “afflu.” “Affluenza” has already been the title of a PBS show, at least four separate books and innumerable screeds on the Internet (many of which have doubtlessly been composed on expensive computers bought in an irony-free zone).



Entering a rehabilitation facility in a prophylactic fashion. Also, warm-up exercises done before engaging in athletic activity.

The diminutive form of “pre-rehabilitation” splits its meaning between those who use it in an athletic sense and those who decidedly do not. The word proves that Humpty Dumpty was one of our greatest commentators on language: “When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”



A pejorative term for a person wearing Google Glass.

The particular word that forms the basis of this epithet has been used punningly for quite some time, with its first known written use found on the back cover of an anti-Prohibition magazine from 1921. Prior to its denotation for a person misusing Google Glass, this vulgar suffix was commonly found in the form “Masshole,” to describe a person of questionable worth who happened to be from the state of Massachusetts.



A form of cybersquatting that utilizes a domain name that is a common misspelling of a well-known site.

Death and taxes are not the only things certain in life—typists with fat fingers are just as certain. Typosquatting capitalizes on those unfortunates who can believe that nytmes.com and wshingtonpst.com look like they should lead to real news sites. Unsurprisingly, the domain name typosquatting.com has already been purchased (but is available for sale!).

EAU DE WAR ZONE

AIR TACTICS

Scent marketing may be known for getting consumers to buy sweaters and sunglasses, but it also serves a life-and-death purpose—training soldiers for the battlefield. **BY MARK ELLWOOD**

In civilian life today, it isn't hard to sniff out the influence of scent marketing, the subliminal commercial application of fragrance: This is why every Le Méridien hotel lobby worldwide smells the same, or how museums simulate the experience of being on the moon (astronauts liken the scent of the air there to the explosive cordite). But it isn't limited to civilian life—one such marketing firm, ScentAir, counts the U.S. military as a regular customer on its roster.

The reason is surprising but simple: Simulating war zones stateside might seem straightforward enough—build a few run-down shacks, stash some snipers with laser guns around the encampment, then unleash the raw recruits. The problem is the absence of one battlefield staple: the smell. As any combat vet knows, war has its own stench, a visceral mishmash of bodily fluids, scorched flesh and burning buildings; it's equal parts stress inducing and stomach churning. So to help better prepare recruits

for real-life battle, the U.S. military has turned to ScentAir to replicate that odor. Think of the resulting gut-wrenching blend as Eau de War Zone.

In the last decade, ScentAir has worked with almost every wing of the military, whether the Marine Corps, the Navy or the Air Force. Many of its simulations are held at Combined Arms Collective Training Facilities, or CACTFs; better known as “shoot houses,” there's one such facility on most major army bases, including forts Bragg, Campbell

and Lewis. Akin to the *X-Men's* Danger Room, each CACTF can be quickly configured to replicate any real-world setup, albeit one rigged with audio- and video-recording equipment. ScentAir simply installs its Ethernet-controlled fragrance machines alongside the AV system. After each run-through, maneuvers are replayed and troops are coached on how to better perform in what's known as an After Action Review.

Fragrancing such an ersatz battlefield might seem frivolous,

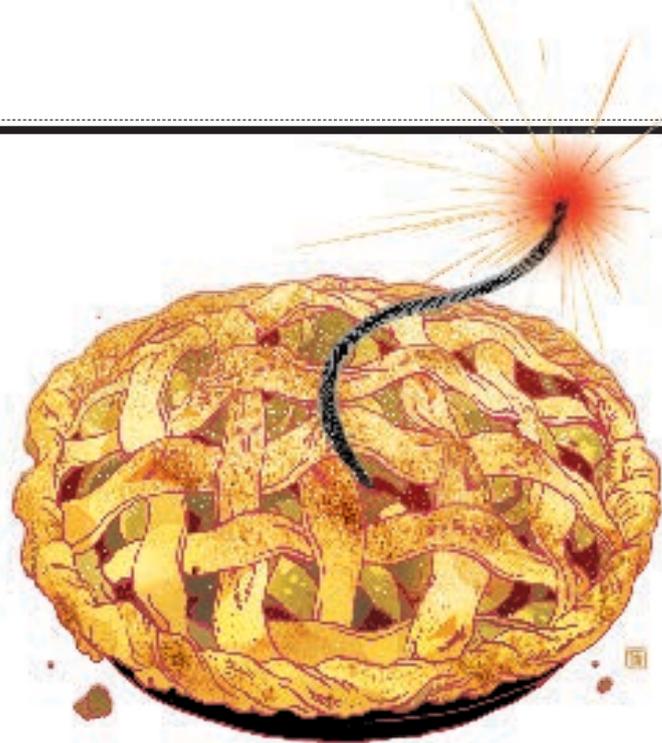


FACT!

We recall scents with up to 65% accuracy after a year but recall visual cues with less than 50% accuracy after a few months.

but veterans are passionate advocates of the procedure. Take John Madigan, a retired infantry colonel who now handles logistics for such simulations on behalf of the military. He explains that scenting a CACTF adds just a few thousand dollars to each multimillion-dollar facility—that’s less than 1 percent of the total cost—but the return on investment is priceless. Imagine one of the most common scenarios: Soldiers are tasked with sweeping among burning buildings for enemy combatants while also hunting for a hostage they must rescue alive. “Anything you can add to increase the stress conditions of the task better prepares the soldiers,” he says. In an unscented simulation, trainees who reengage after the first review perform 30 percent to 40 percent better on average; add a spritz of ScentAir’s blend to the setup, though, and that number more than doubles, to 85 percent. It’s high enough to be a potential lifesaving margin around live ammunition.

Such impact isn’t surprising given how humans process scent. Unlike the other four senses, smells are analyzed by the limbic system, the guttural heart of the brain that controls basic fight-or-flight responses. And the task of creating a custom blend to trigger such visceral responses falls to Mark Signorin, ScentAir’s director of fragrance development. He’ll start with a baseline, background notes that are the first unspoken hint that a landscape is no longer American: a slight hit of raw sewage, perhaps, and a bazaar-like blend of cumin, pepper and spices to suggest alfresco cooking. The aim then is to layer various featured



Another scent that’s an unlikely staple of training for battle:
APPLE PIE.
 An unexpected whiff amid burning buildings can prepare soldiers for surprise.

smells over this base, perhaps “burning building,” a nose-searing fusion of wood, wires and plastic, or “burning car,” a similar recipe that more heavily features rubber. The one that helps troops the most, he says, is—and it’s difficult to dance around this—the smell of a corpse. “The first time you have that experience with an actual person is quite a shock to the system. And burned human flesh is kind of tough, because you’re working some of those burned notes into a fragrance that’s trying to be a dead body,” he says. “That took a few rounds of modifications.” Indeed, familiarity with such a smell is the cause of the so-called barbecue effect that some soldiers experience after returning home from war, whereby smells from a cookout too closely replicate those of the battlefield

and make grilling too grueling to endure. Another scent that’s an unlikely staple of these ersatz battlefields: apple pie. Madigan has found that an unexpected whiff of homey baked goods amid whirring bullets and burning buildings can stimulate soldiers in a different way. The smell of death might turn their stomachs, but pie whets their appetites. It takes them from combat to kitchen apron in an instant, the ideal distraction from the task at hand and a surefire way to train troops for the unexpected. “Fresh-baked apple pie and cinnamon?” says Madigan. “It brings these guys back to Mom cooking in the kitchen and will get a guy’s head to swivel and wonder, ‘Wow, where is that coming from?’” It’s being prepared for that kind of shock to the system that can save a soldier’s life. ♦

FACE-OFF

GOOGLE SEARCH VS. SIRI

Recently, the Google Search app updated Voice Search for conversational queries. We tested it against iPhone’s Siri using one simple statement.

“I FEEL LIKE JAPANESE.”



GOOGLE SEARCH



SIRI

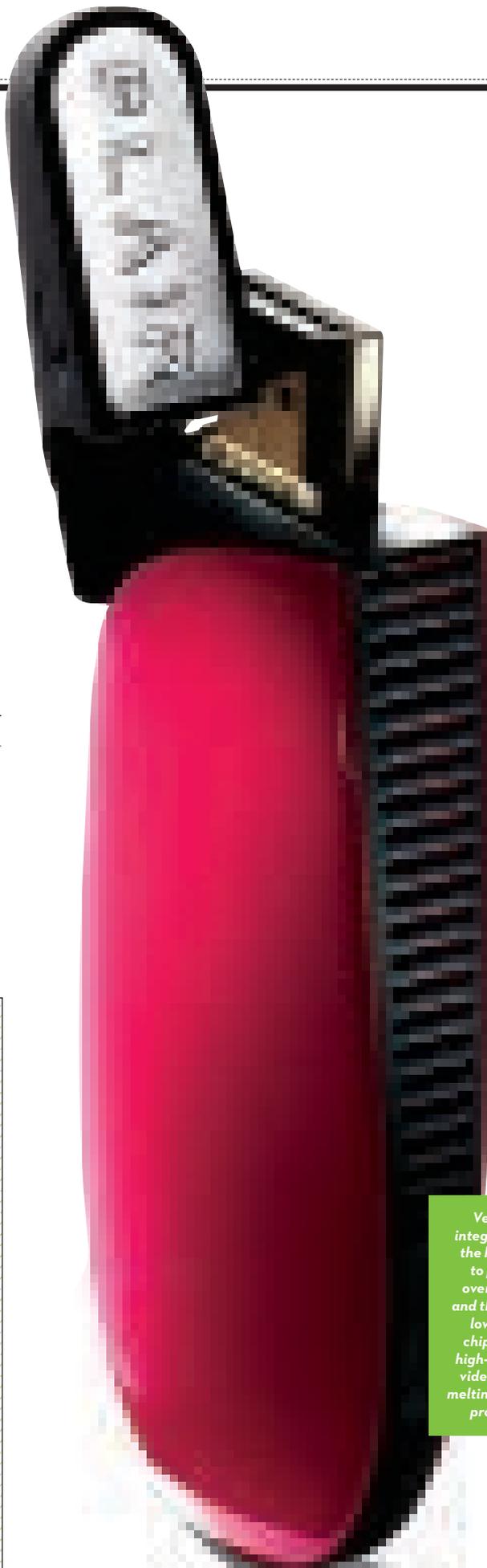
TECHNOFILES

AIR STREAMER

A simple, portable solution for playing Internet video on your television. Plus, the latest tech finds that make life better.

BY STEVEN LECKART

The big screen in your living room is capable of displaying the best content the web has to offer, but running a long cable from the PC or crowding the entertainment center with set-top boxes is both cumbersome and unsightly. The solution comes in the form of **PLAiR**, a pocket-sized streaming device that plugs into the HDMI port on any TV. In 30 seconds the onboard microcomputer connects to a laptop or smartphone, then begins delivering virtually whatever content you click on—YouTube, Amazon Instant and online channels like NBC.com and Comedy Central. Beyond pleasure, PLAiR (pronounced “player”) is also business savvy: A smartphone app lets you stream PowerPoint presentations from Dropbox or Google Drive. “This device doesn’t just hide behind your TV,” says PLAiR CEO Saad Hussain, “so we really wanted to create something beautiful.” Its good looks are no accident. Tasked with bringing the product’s elegant form to life was NewDeal, the industrial design team responsible for stylish products like the Lytro camera and Fitbit activity tracker. \$100; plair.com.



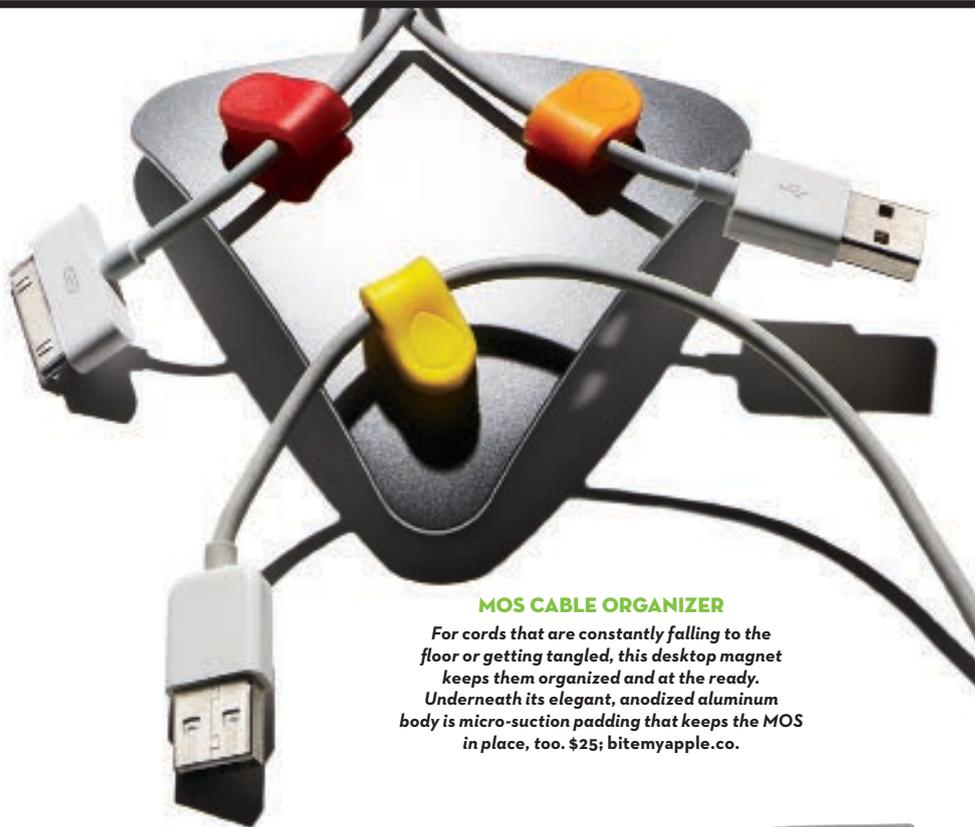
Vents are integrated into the hardware to prevent overheating, and the device's low-power chip renders high-definition video without melting the 1 GHz processor.



AUGUST SMART LOCK
 This sleek, minimalist electronic lock designed by Yves Béhar doesn't just look futuristic—it's keyless. Your smartphone acts as a virtual key that unlocks the door (for deliveries, guests or yourself) via an encrypted app that takes advantage of Bluetooth. \$200; august.com.

A CONNECTED CHINA

In this excerpt from *Smarter Than You Think* (The Penguin Press), out in September, **Clive Thompson** reveals how technology can help give a voice to those who need it most.



MOS CABLE ORGANIZER

For cords that are constantly falling to the floor or getting tangled, this desktop magnet keeps them organized and at the ready. Underneath its elegant, anodized aluminum body is micro-suction padding that keeps the MOS in place, too. \$25; bitemyapple.co.

AIROCID

Instead of a conventional filter, this lustrous air purifier utilizes technology developed by NASA. Inside, a 254-nanometer light creates a photocatalytic reaction on titanium-dioxide-coated glass rings. In other words, the Airoid creates a carbon bond that attracts and then destroys allergens. \$800; airoid.com.



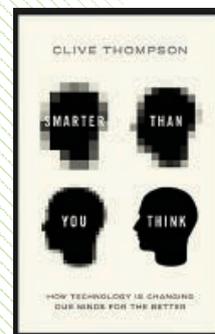
STEELCASE GESTURE

It may look like an ordinary chair, but the Gesture revolutionizes sitting with a design that's customized for how we work today—not just on computers but on smartphones and tablets. The Gesture eases stress and strain by delivering doses of custom support: The seat and backrest move in tandem; the backrest hinges as you recline; and the armrests pivot for busy texters. \$980; steelcase.com.



In China, they're known as the "post-'90s," and they don't have a very good reputation. They're youth who were born in the 1990s, and in the eyes of Chinese liberals and intellectuals, they're regarded as quintessential slackers—feckless and materialist, interested only in video games and wasting time online. If you were a liberal in China who longed for democracy, you looked at this generation and sighed: the death of politics.

Until the summer of 2012, when that myth came crashing down—as the post-'90s youth of Shifang staged one of the most successful environmental protests ever. Shifang is a city in southwestern China. In late June 2012, local party officials announced they would begin building a \$1.6 billion plant to process molybdenum-copper alloy. The plan was slated to create thousands of construction jobs, but many locals worried about toxic side effects. Copper plants often produce slag filled with noxious chemicals, including arsenic; many such areas have seen cancer rates soar. Still, the plant looked inevitable; a kickoff ceremony was set for June 29. Locals might grumble, but it was rare for party officials to back down. This



time, though, Shifang's students struck back. In the days leading up to June 29, they began networking online. They met on QQ, a popular instant-messaging service, as well as on discussion boards hosted by Baidu, the country's main search engine. Meanwhile, they began seeding Sina Weibo—

China's enormous social network, roughly comparable to Twitter—with doubts about the copper plant. The students decided they would hold a protest in Shifang's streets on July 1, since, in a nice bit of irony, this was the birthday of the Chinese Communist Party. When the day arrived, the protest started small, with the early crowd in the dozens. But it soon ballooned. Students and interested locals posted pictures on Weibo, where they

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAMES T. MURRAY; THE PENGUIN PRESS; STEELCASE PHOTOGRAPHY; AIROID

were quickly recirculated. Meanwhile, the students began mass texting other townspeople: "People of Shifang, be united and together protect our home!" By the end of the first day, the crowd had grown to 5,000.

The next day it was even larger—and it wasn't just students anymore but citizens from across Shifang. Via Weibo, the entire country was learning of the protest; "Shifang" was the top searched-for term. Local officials panicked. They ordered riot police to break it up, firing tear-gas canisters and striking demonstrators.

This action backfired badly. Not only did it fail to break up the protest, but students and Shifang citizens instantly uploaded pictures and video of the crackdown, flooding the country

After three days of nationwide ONLINE PROTEST, local officials admitted defeat.

with ghastly, bloody images. A study by the China Media Project found that in four days there were a stunning 5.25 million postings about the protest on Weibo. On the third day, local officials admitted defeat. They publicly announced they were canceling the copper plant. "The information and pictures shared through Weibo aroused national attention," Ma Jun, founder of the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, told *Businessweek*. Or as one Weibo user noted: "Before, no one knew what the real situation was, or the people's discontent couldn't make it onto the nightly news. But now, it's different. With the Internet, the government's job just gets harder and harder."

While the idea that technology can help liberate the oppressed isn't *simply* true, the sea of online chatter has accompanied a striking increase in traditional, offline protest, and the increasingly networked nature of Chinese society is likely a big part of the shift, as the students of Shifang showed. ♦



THE CONVERSATION

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Twitter has transformed communication and spawned global copycats like Weibo (see "A Connected China"). **MICHAEL SIPPETY** makes it both functional and fun.

Twitter launched in 2006 with a simple premise—allow users to send 140-character messages via the web or SMS. Since then, the service has reached half a billion registered users, among them Bill Gates and Oprah. In 2013, Twitter launched Vine, a video-sharing platform that signifies the next generation of social media. Here, Michael Sippey, vice president of consumer product, tells us what's surprising about Vine, how Twitter has evolved and why the best designs are the simplest. —J.C.

FACT! Vine got 13 million users in four months; Instagram, 10 million after nearly a year.

sharing their crazy lives to incredible stop-motion-animation videos, it's been staggering. Even David Lynch is using Vine now.

And of course the video by the *Game of Thrones* actress that went viral.

Wasn't that awesome? That crystallizes what's so great about Vine—the actress Maisie Williams is 16, she's a TV star and she's using it in a fun, lighthearted and creative way.

Speaking of mobile apps, is the shift toward mobile how Twitter's going as well?

Definitely. Mobile phones up and down the price spectrum have become fantastic content-creation tools and consumption devices, and if you look at Internet trends, that's where people are moving.

What has that meant for Twitter?

The platform is happening much more in real time. It's where people turn when events occur in the world, not only to find out what's going on but also to talk about it. It means that Twitter really is the global town square.

Where did the idea for the new Twitter #music service come from?

Music is one of Twitter's most popular topics, so we wanted to help people discover what's emerging through the data we had. Twitter #music highlights the hottest artists in real time and shows what your friends are listening to.

And musicians have embraced it?

Totally. The music business has changed so much that musicians need that connection to fans. The band Muse did a Q&A on Twitter, and it drove them to number one on the #music chart that day.

Where's Twitter going in the future?

We just want to make it simpler. It's always easy to add another option, but the best thing we can do is streamline. ♦

Twitter and Vine are available as iOS and Android apps.