



Not your typical new magazine

Brown University's Chaise is 'printed' on a DVD disc

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PROVIDENCE -- So you've scanned some Weblogs, perused a few e-zines and leafed through a stack of online newspapers. Now get ready for the latest thing to hit the digital newsstand: the DVD-format magazine.

"As far as we can tell, it's the first," says Brown University senior Michelle Higa. "Obviously, there are a lot of online publications out there. But we think this is the first one to come out on DVD."

Higa is referring to Chaise, a new DVD-based arts "magazine" that showcases work by more than 40 artists, mostly students from Brown and Rhode Island School of Design. A kickoff party for Chaise is scheduled for tonight at 8 in Brown's List Art Center, 64 College St.

"It's going to be a great party," says Bennett Barbakow, another Brown senior who worked on the Chaise project. "A lot of the artists who are featured on the DVD will be exhibiting and performing."

Needless to say, Chaise doesn't look like your typical magazine.

Rather than paper, Chaise is "printed" on a plastic DVD disc. And rather than a traditional table of contents, Chaise sports a series of animated pop-up menus, similar to those found on commercial DVDs.

By clicking on the various titles, "readers" can access everything from still photographs to short video clips to computer animations. One entry even illustrates the flow of air over a bat's wings.

"That's one of my favorites," says Higa, referring to Visualization of Simulated Airflow Around Bat Wings During Flight, a computer-animation by Brown biology major Eduardo Hueso. The 15-second spot shows a pair of stylized wings swooshing through simulated air.

Another Higa favorite is My First Electric Dragon, a sound-and-video work

by Brown visiting professor Christopher Penrose. Set to a jagged techno-synth soundtrack, the piece features an array of glowing lines that converge and scatter like a swarm of multicolored bees.

"It's just, like, soooo cool," says Higa.

Other works range from an animated comic book (Chris Smith's First Kiss) to a throbbing blast of electronic rock (Thomas Van Buskirk's Bucky Dent) to a spooky series of photographs taken in a natural history museum (Kevin Kunststadt).

Chaise also differs from traditional magazines in another respect: it's free.

"Making sure that Chaise was free was a big thing for us," says Higa. "We felt that in order to reach the biggest possible audience, and to make sure Chaise was readily available to people in the local arts and academic communities, that it had to be a free publication."

So how did Chaise's eight editor-organizers come up with the roughly \$8,000 needed to put out the magazine's first issue?

Higa and Barbakow say the bulk of the money came from Brown's Creative Arts Council, an on-campus arts organization. Other grants came from Brown's electronic music and American civilization departments.

As for availability, Higa says copies of Chaise will be distributed early next week at Providence-area college campuses, including Brown, RISD, Providence College and Rhode Island College. Other pick-up spots include the Cable Car Cinema on South Main Street and Tazza, a new downtown restaurant at the corner of Union and Westminster Streets.

Copies can also be ordered online at www.chaisemag.com. (Note: the site also includes links to much of the artwork.)

Looking ahead, Higa says Chaise will publish one more issue before classes end in May. After that, the current staff will either continue to put out the magazine or hand responsibility over to a new group of student editors.

"It's really up in the air right now," she says. "We've been so focused on getting the first issue out that we haven't completely figured out how we're going to keep Chaise going."

Finally, why name what may be the world's first DVD-based magazine after a lounge chair? Higa says it just seemed appropriate.

"We spent a lot of time brainstorming about what to call it. Then somebody came up with the word 'chaise' and it just sounded right. After all, one of the great things about a DVD is that you can kick back and enjoy it at your leisure, just like a chaise."

Online at: http://www.projo.com/art/content/projo_20040206_chaise.17e6ff.html