

## Ripped

In *Ripped*, Greg Kot tells “how the big music companies committed capitalist suicide,” writes Dana Jennings in a *New York Times* book review (8/15/09).

The book “ranges from the days when the record companies gnashed their teeth over the growth of home taping, to music publishers’ blunt attacks on sampling in hip-hop, to the life, death and canonization of Napster, to the iPod and beyond.”

Greg “writes about how established artists like Prince, Radiohead and Wilco thrived in the digital age because they didn’t sit around and whine like emo punks while musical civilization as we know it crumbled.”

All the while, music industry “executives couldn’t get their analog heads around the digital future. If industry leaders had always followed their mistrust of technology, we’d still be listening to music on 78-r.p.m. shellac, or maybe even wax cylinders.”

They instead reserved their innovative energies to create “payola... shady contracts” and accounting practices to deny royalties... to the vast majority of its artists.” The irony, as Greg writes, is “the moral posturing” about file sharing.

Even Edgar Bronfman Jr., ceo of Warner Music Group, kind of had to agree: “By standing still or moving at a glacial pace, we inadvertently went to war with consumers by denying them what they wanted and could otherwise find. And, as a result, of course, consumers won.”

## The Beckham Experiment

David Beckham “longed to conquer mythic America in the way the Beatles had in the 1960s,” but ultimately “brought a patronizing attitude to American soccer,” writes Michael MacCambridge in a *Wall Street Journal* review of *The Beckham Experiment*, by Grant Wahl.

Two years ago, when Beckham signed a five-year contract with the Los Angeles galaxy, he and his wife, Posh Spice, “were greeted by hundreds of paparazzi and nearly as many A-list friends upon their arrival in Beverly Hills.”

Some “700 media credentials were issued for his introductory press conference” and “his mere presence led to sell-out crowds throughout Major

League Soccer.” But the idea that David Beckham could “carry soccer to the center of the American sporting consciousness ... ran into problems almost instantly.”

First, he “was injured for much of the 2007 season, and ... Nielsen ratings for MLS matches returned to microscopic levels, losing out to softball games and Scrabble tournaments.”

A “culture clash” within the club compounded problems. While Beckham was pulling down \$50 million a year, his teammates were “making \$30,000 or less.”

Basically, Beckham’s version of a British invasion “has been a cautionary tale of hubris and mismanagement, cultural miscommunication, and the ineluctable truth that, in true sports, there is no script.”

## Losing the News

Alex S. Jones “swiftly demolishes the notion that news is defined only by the hour of the day,” in *Losing the News*, reviewed by Sir Harold Evans in *The New York Times* (8/23/09).

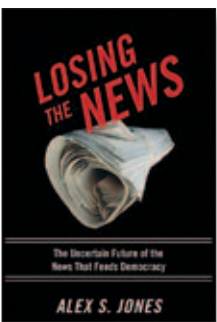
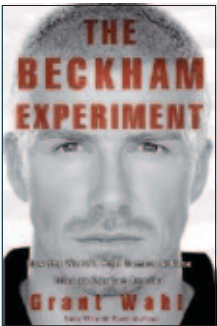
“The most valuable element in journalism,” he continues, “is often enough not an episode that occurred today, yesterday, or, horrors, the day before. It’s the creation of a new awareness provided in either months of investigative or relentlessly regular coverage.”

When that kind of awareness is left hanging, when “embryonic news doesn’t get enough attention,” the result can be disastrous — “the insufficiently monitored housing bubble, leading to the financial meltdown... the formation of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, leading to 9/11,” for example.

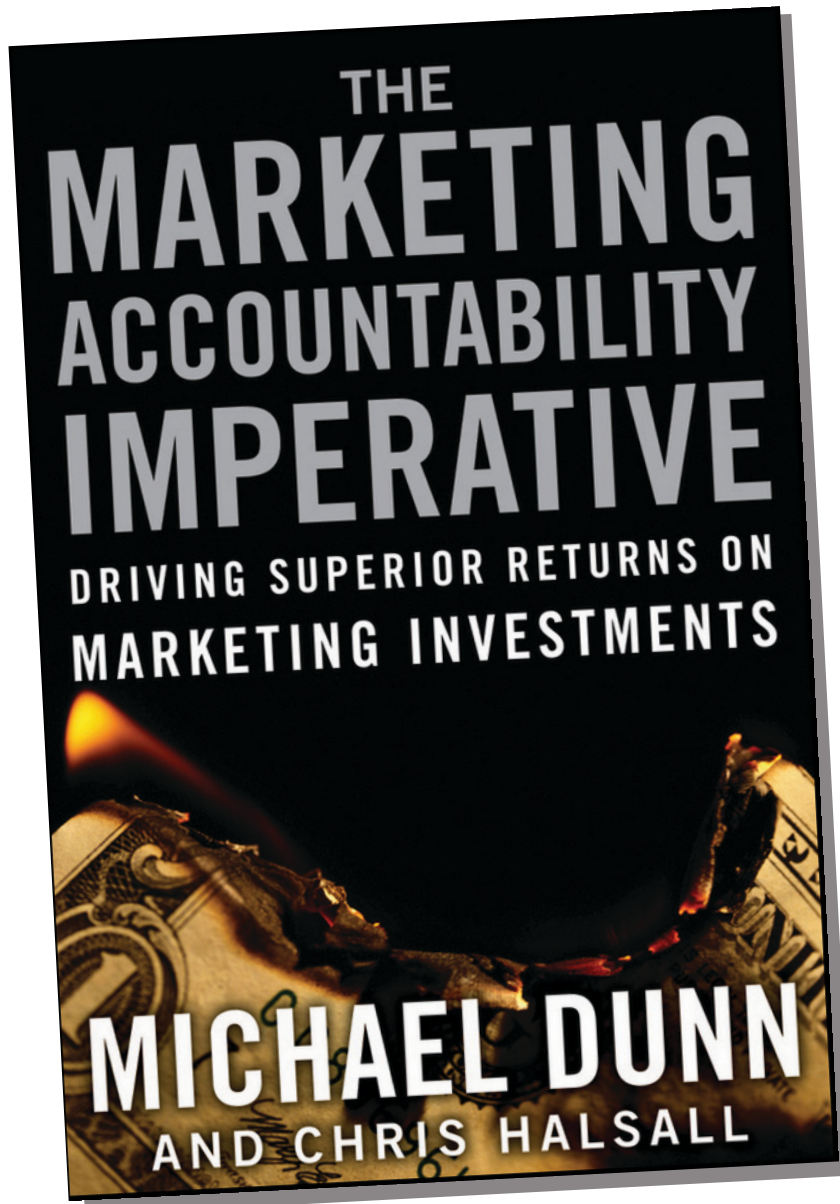
Alex Jones also estimates that “85 percent of fact-based news currently originates in a newspaper attempting to record, explain and investigate. Television — network, local, cable — he dismisses as derivative media, doing less and less original reporting.”

Alex does recognize the web as “dazzling in its breadth and innovation,” but “does not believe websites will ever ... sustain foreign bureaus, science and cultural staffs, and investigative teams.”

The solution, he hopes, is that quality newspapers will develop separate online and print enterprises, and between the two earn profits while also creating the awareness essential to a democracy.



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