

# Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

## Report from Week 956

in which we asked for ways to know that you know it's a bad [any of five things we supplied]:

THE  
WINNER  
OF THE  
INKER

You know it's going to be a bad speech when it's a little too obvious that the speaker is using the "imagine the audience naked" trick.  
(Noah Meyerson, Washington)

## Nixed signals: Honorable mentions

### YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE A BAD CRUISE . . .

When the captain is heard shouting, "But there MUST be a reverse gear!" (Alasdair Campbell, Austin, a First Offender)

If the kitchen's motto is "So good you'll think it's airline food." (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge)

When the background music is a loop of "My Heart Will Go On." (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

### YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE A BAD HOTEL . . .

When it advertises that the rooms

**2** Winner of the genuine livestock-altering tool: You know it's going to be a bad hotel when it accepts frequent-passenger miles from Greyhound. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

**3** You know it's going to be a bad hotel when there's a "do not disturb" sign at the front desk. (Matt Monitto, Elon, N.C.)

**4** You know your kid's going to have a bad day at school when the bully's mom texts you to ask if your son will be there today or should she pack a lunch. (Ward Kay, Vienna, Va.)

aren't just clean, they're "forensically clean." (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

When the pillowcases are imprinted, "This side out Mon-Wed-Fri." (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

When the bellhop meets you with a shopping cart. (Shoba Nayar, North Bethesda, a First Offender)

When the emergency evacuation instructions are pay-per-view. (David Genser, Poway, Calif.)

When the mattress tag says "Buy War Bonds." (Rick Haynes, Boynton Beach, Fla.)

When the strip across the toilet seat is police tape. (Bonnie Speary Devore, Gaithersburg; David Genser)

When the chocolate on your pillow

has bite marks. (John Shea, Philadelphia)

When you learn your accommodations are in, not on, McPherson Square. (Peter Siegwald, Arlington)

### YOU KNOW YOUR KID'S GOING TO HAVE A BAD DAY AT SCHOOL. . .

When he says, "Mom, I'm supposed to bring in some protection money, whatever that is." (Rob Cohen, Potomac)

When the new school's lavatories are labeled "Crips" and "Bloods." (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

When he's an airplane buff and tells you that today his field trip will be to see Blue Plains. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel; Jeff Contompasis)

When school bully mails him a pair of underpants with a handle sewn to the back. (Jerry Birchmore, Springfield)

When he forgets to change out of his Dora the Explorer PJs AND he has an algebra test. (Steve Langer, Chevy Chase)

### YOU KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE A BAD SPEECH . . .

When it begins with "Webster's defines . . ." (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village; Mike Gips, Bethesda)

When the speaker's first slide is titled "Background, Part 1 of 12: My Decision to Use PowerPoint." (David Genser)

When the sign-language interpreter starts leading the audience in "YMCA." (Rick Haynes)

When it's Nuremberg, and it's 1938. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg)

**Next week: Fearful Symmetry, or Droller Coasters**

**STYLE INVITATIONAL ONLINE** Some more honorable mentions next week, including "You know it's going to be a bad marriage," and more online this week at [washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational).



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

# Week 960: Raving reviews

" . . . Sip gently, slowly, or one is in danger of not only missing the subtleties of the milk's texture and its terroir. . . . Tuscan is best drunk young — I recommend pairing with freshly baked macadamia nut scones. Milk Expectorator gives this one a 92."

The paean above to a jug of Tuscan-brand whole milk, by Philip Tone, is an excerpt from one of more than 1,300 joke reviews of this particular product on Amazon.com, which lets just about any store advertise on its Web pages. (See the whole thing at [amzn.to/invmilk](http://amzn.to/invmilk).) And there are similarly hilarious "reviews" for many other everyday products. **This week: Send us a creative "review" for any of the items below that are listed on Amazon.** The reviews must not be unfair to the manufacturer and seller. Do NOT post the reviews directly to Amazon until we post the results online March 23 — if we see them there before then, we'll disqualify them. While the ones on Amazon often run several hundred words, we're looking for much shorter reviews; 75 words would be lengthy for us. Search on Amazon.com with the exact words below to find the product to "review."

**"World's best dish cloths"**

**"Revlon compact emery boards"**

**"Dual Duty Plus All-Purpose Thread 400 Yards-White"**

**"Clipper-mate pocket comb 5" all fine teeth"**

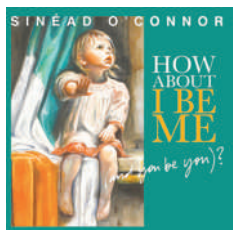
**"Morton Iodized Salt 26 oz"**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives an excellent pair of owl-vomit boluses, donated by prize-donor extraordinaire Cheryl Davis. Owls swallow their prey without chewing it up (having no teeth) and so they spit out big balls of stuff from which you can extract all kinds of mouse and bird parts. Doing that is exactly like discovering diamonds in the ground.

**Other runners-up** win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 5; results published March 25 (March 23 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 960" in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at [washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational). The revised title for next week is by Brad Alexander; the subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Tom Witte. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev).

## POP CD REVIEW

### Sinead O'Connor HOW ABOUT I BE ME (AND YOU BE YOU?)



You might have heard: In the past few months, Sinead O'Connor, the owner of one indelible Prince cover and two decades' worth of tabloid baggage, got married, separated and reunited with her husband, and often appeared on the verge of a very public breakdown, all documented in a steady stream of scandalous tweets.

Add to that one breathtakingly good, incredibly awkward new album. "How

About I Be Me (And You Be You)?" O'Connor's ninth full-length and probably her best since her 1990 breakthrough, "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," is a wide-ranging folk album that's as open as a wound.

It's a big, brave, brazen release that does its job: It drapes a bare skeleton of music — Celtic-inspired mid-tempo ballads, mostly — over the singer's confessional compositions. It's painful to listen to, and beautiful.

O'Connor knows neither self-censorship nor the virtues of allegory, so "I Had a Baby" is pretty much a song about how she had a baby with a guy she barely knew, and the baby looks kind of mean like his absent father, and she wishes things weren't so nuts, but what can she do? "I was crazy,"

she half-whispers, in her Kate-Bush-met-Marilyn voice. "I was always crazy."

"How About" contains a handful of great Going to the Chapel tracks, including the exuberant opener, "4th and Vine," in which O'Connor sings about putting on eyeliner and a dress as if she were discussing visiting a distant planet.

But to know O'Connor's history is to expect disaster around every corner, and every giddy bridal ballad has its solemn counterpart: The disc concludes with the too-long "V.I.P.," an almost a cappella scold about the dangers of materialism (don't think your Manolos will get you into heaven, O'Connor warns, because Jesus is not having it). It almost, but not quite, ruins the mood.

—Allison Stewart



JOHN SCIULLI/GETTY IMAGES FOR RECA GROUP

**NINTH ALBUM: Sinead O'Connor turns confessional in this full-length release.**