Report from Week 923

In which we asked for new chemical terms: By far the most frequent submission was for “palinium”; we include two. Also, the terms “honoring” presidential candidates are all for Republicans; there just weren’t any good Obama-themed entries.

2 Winner of the football made entirely of Bubble Wrap:
Platitudinium: A metal that becomes more dull each time it is used, yet somehow is never discarded. (Beth Baniszewski, Cambridge, Mass.)

3 Marionbarium: Highly reactive with alcohol and other substances. Difficult to purge from the system long after peak effectiveness. (Marcy Avo, Annaudiale)

4 Madoffium: Catalyst capable of turning liquid substance, overnight, into absolutely nothin’. (Lawrence McGuire, Walsdorf)

Byproducts & residue: Honorable mentions
Palinium: Its magnetic properties decrease by half every year, but never entirely dissipate. (Eden Carnahan, Lauree)
Palinium: A rigid, polarizing substance that appears to glow brightly when examined from the right side but appears to be a black hole when viewed from the left. (Bill Nielsen, Arlington, a First Offender)
Greecum: A substance unable to stabilize because of its weak bonds. (Lawrence McGuire)
Tachygiftcardium: What symbiotic organisms give off in late December. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)
Nordegreinium: Reacts violently with iron. (Mark Eckenerwiler, Washington)
Led: A heavy metal. (Doon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

Pop CD Review
MellowHype BlackenedWhite

Hip-hop duo MellowHype is an offshoot of Odd Future, the Los Angeles-based collective that birthed blog darling/sourgrape Tyler, the Creator. MellowHype’s latest album, “BlackenedWhite,” adheres to a Tyler-like mission statement: lots of impressive rapping and beats, and even more carefully calibrated controversy (starting with the cover, an upside-down cross), although, unlike Tyler’s latest, it’s more concerned with violence than sex. “BlackenedWhite” was initially released as a free download last Halloween, and this physical, re-mastered version, which seems to have subtracted more songs than it has added, is casually ghoulish (creepy single “69”), depressingly literal (“Gun sounds” has lots of gunshots) and occasionally great (“Rico,” with OF’s Frank Ocean).

But mostly, it’s a gangsta-rap album made by kids who grew up absorbing the genre’s surface lessons but not its terrible urgency. Spacey and self-absorbed (one track is titled “[Expletive] the Police”), it’s history’s most languid gangsta-rap album.

— Allison Stewart

THIS WEEK’S CONTEST: WEEK 927

Drive-by shoutings

The Empress was beseeched recently to give another go to a contest we last did 12 years ago: It’s for mini-poems written in the style of the old Burma-Shave ads, which used to appear on interstate roadsides as a series of six little signs, a few words at a time, either promoting the shaving cream or serving as a PSA to drivers, as in “Big mistake / Many make: / Rely on horn / Instead of / brake / Burma-Shave.” Last time we asked for welcome signs to states or towns; this week we’ll stay closer to the original purpose: Write a very short four-line poem promoting a product or company, or offering advice to drivers; the poem must rhyme, in ABAB or ABCB rhyme scheme. A fifth, non-rhyming line may state the product name or a conclusion. Don’t make the lines more than three or four words each unless they’re very short. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a coveted Style Invitational Sanitary Services Portable Toilet Rentals of Middle of Nowhere, Va. (a.k.a. Danville); the embroidered slogan on the back says, “You dump — it, we pump — it.” Donated by Loser Dave Komornik of Danville, who brought it up on a visit to Washington.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lust-eyed-off Loser magnet. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” (Fir Stink) for their first ink. E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 11; results published Aug. 7 (Aug. 5 online). Include “Week 927” 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. The revised title for next week’s results is by Tom Witte; this week’s honorable-mentions subhead is by chemical engineer Jeff Contompasis.

Style Conversational
Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Cultural Tourism offers jaunts in D.C.

Ever wondered what geologic structures compose the swamps that Washington was built upon? Get ready to inflate your bicycle tires and get a new pair of socks for your walking shoes, as Cultural Tourism’s Walking Town DC and Biking Town DC present 150 guided tours in 10 days through all eight of Washington’s wards. The free tours will run the gamut from community heritage to the environment and will begin Sept. 23 and run through Oct. 2.

— Erin Williams