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Iraq: 52 Weeks And Counting
The war that won't end: JUDITH LEWIS tests the sometimes-invisible strength of the peace movement. MATTHEW CRAFT, reporting on a case of an anti-war protester in Egypt, reveals a surprising verdict with overtones for Bush's Middle East policy. IAN WILLIAMS examines the renewed role for the U.N. HOWARD BLUME pages through the Iraqi Constitution in pursuit of liberty. And CHRISTINE PELISEK's war list: casualties, costs and the extent of Halliburton fraud.

Aces and Addicts

Today's problem gambler is likely to be a 34-year-old woman with two kids, at least two years of college... and a video-game addiction. MARC COOPER finds some comfort in that statistic — his game is low-tech blackjack — but in his exploration of modern American gambling and the rise of the machine, Cooper wonders if he has more in common with the problem gamblers he discovers in Las Vegas than he'd like to admit. Excerpted from his new book, *The Last Honest Place in America: Paradise and Perdition in the New Las Vegas*.

¡Arríba, Chalino Sánchez!

The famed Mexican/L.A. narcocorrida singer's son is moving on up. BY BEN QUIÑONES. Plus, SAM QUIÑONES on *Los Chalinitos*, the next generation of narcocorrida singers.

news

Spain Flips Off W.: The world stage is shrinking for one George Bush. BY DOUG IRELAND

Art In Jeopardy: The very existence of L.A.'s Cultural Affairs Department is threatened, and the picture is not a pretty one for Mayor Hahn. BY ROBERT GREENE

Patricia Surjue V. The World: A victim of police brutality in Inglewood is finding out just how lonely the pursuit of justice can be. BY JEFFREY ANDERSON

The Hallucinogenic Way of Dying: JUDITH LEWIS checks in on Dr. Grob and whether psilocybin can

Russian Around A tale of two countries

by Steven Leigh Morris

At parties attended by theater folk, you mention the name Anton Chekhov and the mood turns thick with piety. To lift an image from Janet Malcolm's book *Reading Chekhov*, it's as though a small deer has just come into the room.



The Antaeus Company in a re-enactment of a classic photo, Chekhov in the center (Photo by Elaina McBroom)

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Why is it most American productions of Chekhov spray-paint Chekhovian Irony onto the stage so thickly that the actors stick to the samovar? (Women sitting languidly on white wicker chairs twirling linen parasols; men in cream-colored suits gazing wistfully at the horizon — and this from a playwright who arrived at the theater from vaudeville.) The answer provides a kind of window onto who we are as Americans — the way we see shapes from abroad, feelings that we think we recognize, and how we instantly attach them to a template of our making. And because the larger, general shapes of Russian culture look so American on the surface, there's a mutual attraction.

Both cultures share emotiveness, a sometimes rabid patriotism, a distrust of strangers, affections for both authority and conformity that battle with opposing affections for independence and eccentricity. Americans and Russians also share a brand of arrogance that overcompensates for an awkwardness lurking within. It's not just us. You can always tell when an Aeroflot flight has just arrived from Moscow by the emergence of swaggering, bejeweled Russians dressed in cowboy hats and leather jackets, struttin' out of LAX's Tom Bradley Terminal and dragging their suitcases into the American wilderness.

The problem is that these superficial similarities blind us to the traits that make us opposites in just as many ways. This is where things go awry on stages both political and theatrical. Americans generally abide by written contracts whereas Russian contracts are mostly unenforceable. (The theme of debt collection is driven