



Spring is in the air—wonderfully early—and with spring comes change. I want to bid a final, fond farewell to Manny Machado and Ricky Boudreau. It was such a pleasure to have them on board and I wish them all the best for the future. With their departure comes new writers and new columns. I'm thrilled to welcome Jaime Woo, who will cover all things nerdy and geeky in "Hyper-Culture" and Jesse Trautmann, who becomes your new host for Toronto's "In the City." We also make space in "Community Cornerstones" to shine a light on the businesses and people that form the bricks and mortar of our diverse LGBTQ communities—can you believe we have three separate neighbourhoods now? And finally, I welcome Melissa Benner in taking over "Our Opinion" and showing T.T. Bloomquist the ropes.

Visiting the Maya exhibit at the ROM with Antoine really got me thinking. Here was a civilization that prospered for over 3,000 years; they endured economic and social collapse, war and conquest that drove them nearly to extinction, and yet their culture continues to thrive to this day.

Over the last five years I've found the world we live in to be increasingly devoid of soul as we rape our planet in our never ending frenzy to consume ever more. At first I wrote it all off as me growing up from my party boy life-style and gaining the slightly jaded view of a 40-year-old who's seen and done it all. It's been a great ride, but at what cost?

Now don't get me wrong—I love a good bit of nihilism! The fluffy special effects extravaganzas of the spate of recent natural disaster movies are great for an evening's entertainment. Increasingly of late I find myself asking, what would *really* happen if the tenuous balance of our life on this planet we take for granted was suddenly disrupted on a massive scale? It wouldn't be pretty, that's for sure. Suddenly these disaster movies didn't seem so farfetched.

Mother Nature is not very happy with us of late and she's begun to show her displeasure at our wanton destruction.

When the balance is upset, it often needs to snap back in the opposite direction before it can settle into some semblance of normality. Take an elastic band and stretch as far as you can, then let it go—hurts huh?

Yet, for every blind consumer stuffing the hole in their soul, there seems to be an ever-growing community of people concerned for the welfare of this hunk of rock and water we call home. Those of us increasingly in the know realize that Mother Earth doesn't need us to be happy, but we most certainly need her for our continued well-being. The earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis and radical shifts in global climate patterns have woken us up to the fact that change is coming, change on a large scale. Everyone seems obsessed with the idea that because the Mayan Long Calendar comes to an end, it'll be the end of the world.

I agree. It will be the end of the world. It must be the end of the world—as *we know it*—because to continue along the path we've been on for the last 500 some odd years is to invite it. We've been living out of balance for so long, like teenagers on a never-ending party streak. It's fun while it lasts—trust me, I've been there and it was phenomenal! But what do you do after the party is over?

If you're smart, you plan a well thought out recovery. You discover your limits without going too far and you learn how to find that balance, that give and take that allows you to find harmony between the fun and the responsibility. If you destroy yourself or the place you've been enjoying, how is anyone else going to be able to join in the celebration?

The Earth has amazing regenerative powers—I think the big question is, do we? Can we shift our destructive habits and change for the better? I believe we can. In fact, if you read on, you'll see how we already are.

See you in the summer!

Jeff Harrison