

# Merrily Syndrome: a diagnosis (by way of introduction...)

by Dave Reed

It is a strange, but carefully and well-documented, occurrence that things appear very different starting at 3 o'clock in the morning. It is not a matter of people simply being tired, (though that does play an important part in the puzzle), but it is my belief that at 3 am the human mind begins to undergo certain transformations. I am now sitting in the *WheatBread* office at 11 am, fully rested, with the remainder of the staff of the 24 hour issue, who are not. One is asleep. He is the lucky one. The rest are suffering from an extreme case of "Merrily Syndrome."

I first noticed this peculiar disease some years ago while watching the animated film *Heavy Metal* while chowing down on Twizzlers and soda some time close to dawn. I thought it was the greatest movie ever. A couple years later, I had a chance to watch it at a more reasonable time, and that was when I realized that things are just not right when you're that tired.

The editor of *WheatBread* slouches in front of a computer and groans as he stares at what remains to be edited. He is deep in the throes of Merrily Syndrome. They laugh at what isn't funny and make many comments about shit. I only wish that I were making this up. Words end up missing from sentences.

As the only academic working in this particular field, I first identified Merrily Syndrome as such on Spree Day, 1996. On that day, a production of the Sondheim's *Merrily We Roll Along* was set (almost) to open in Atwood Hall. The only problem (okay, one of the problems) was that there was practically no set. So, the night before, we few brave set builders undertook the task of completing the *Merrily* set. Somewhere around 3 am, things began to look a little odd. Not that we noticed. We thought that funky paint job was the coolest thing we'd ever seen. I managed to down a few Pixie Stix (the three-foot long variety) and we just kept going, so that the paint was still wet as the audience wandered into Atwood. I had been up for 24 hours at that point, and I ended up staying for the first performance and Denny's afterwards. I thought it was pretty good. Other people just gave me strange looks.



Caption for this picture.

Reality is a subjective mass that we try desperately to order into some objective state, something that fills most of the waking hours of our day. In the early hours of the morning, any attempts at objectivity give themselves up to die, and the world becomes something only half real. I was not present at the time when this issue of *WheatBread* began to suffer the delusions of a fading reality, but the effects are only too obvious. They should be just as obvious to you, the reader. The dawning of the sun does not mark a new day, reality restored, but rather only serves to further alter the dimensions within which the Merrily-infected mind is functioning.

The exact catalysts of Merrily Syndrome have not yet been identified, though prevailing theories focus on spiritual energies, wave-harmonics, and the lunar cycle. Further research must be done to properly control this phenomenon, which can function as either a gift or a curse. The extent to which the *WheatBread* staff has been exposed to Merrily Syndrome is also unclear at this time, and that they will ultimately recover is not guaranteed. Over-exposure to the altered state of consciousness brought on by Merrily Syndrome may yet be shown to have detrimental long-term effects.