



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

TRUTH IN HUMOR

THE ONION'S WEBSITE TAKES SARCASTIC LOOK AT THE NEWS

If you find the never-ending torrent of bad news depressing, there's a website you can visit that puts a humorous and irreverent twist on it all. At www.theonion.com, all the stories and events covered by the more traditional news services are mercilessly ridiculed.

Using humor, the site manages to reveal the absurd truths that those in power so often try to clumsily conceal. It plays no favorites — politicians of all stripes, religion, popular culture — they're all fair game for the writers at The Onion.

The humor is adult-oriented, nothing obscene or pornographic, but with some language and themes not appropriate for minors (not that they'd be interested in a lot of it). For instance, the lead story on the home page as I write this bears the headline "Mexico Killed in Drug Deal," accompanied by a photo of corpses piled around pools of blood. The story goes on to tell how all 111 million Mexican citizens were caught in the crossfire of a drug deal gone bad.

Fake news played straight

The articles are written like straight news stories, which only amplifies the ridiculousness of the copy. Some examples from the Mexican drug story:

"We just heard some shouting at first and then a bunch of gunshots," said Allan Curtis, who was on vacation with four friends. "It probably only lasted for a few minutes, but when we came out there were like 8 million bodies in the streets."

At press time, U.S. drug dealers said they were not sure how or when the vast supplies of marijuana left behind by the Mexican cartels would reach their intended consumers, but they wished to assure the American public that they are doing all they can.

There are tabs for a dozen different categories at the top of the home page, including Sports, Politics, World, Economy and Entertainment. Each of the sections has a collection of satirical articles, photos with humorous captions, videos and sound clips from Onion Radio. There's also a feature called "American Voices" that has fake man-in-the-street opinions on stories or facts from the section.

The Onion's opinion

The Opinion section has The Onion's very own "columnists" sharing their wisdom on the events of the day, as well as random nonsense. Editorial cartoons are also included in this section.

The sports section is a parody of ESPN called Onion Sports Network. It has a different logo and color scheme than the rest of the Onion site, but it has the same type of content and humor aimed at sports.

The Onion Store has lots of merchandise, and various subscription options, available for purchase. There's clothing, mugs, glasses, calendars, golf balls and almost anything else you can think of adorned with the Onion logo, humorous headlines or phrases. There are Onion-themed books, maps and gift sets. You can also buy framed reprints of "classic" Onion front pages from their print edition and magazines. Subscriptions to their print products and apps for digital devices are also sold in the store.

Some Onion headlines

- Pope Vows To Get Church Pedophilia Down To Acceptable Levels
- Classic Movie 'Avatar' Updated For Today's Audiences
- 6,000 Runners Fail To Discover Cure For Breast Cancer
- Hollywood Rangers To Manage Overpopulation Problem By Killing Off 1,200 Celebrities
- CVS Now Selling Cheaper, CVS-Brand 'People' Magazine
- Heroic Pit Bull Journeys 2,000 Miles to Attack Owner
- Denny's Introduces 'Just A Humongous Bucket of Eggs and Meat'
- Dog Breeders Issue Massive Recall of '07 Pugs
- US Vows To Defeat Whoever It Is We're At War With
- Homeless Drifters Of Santa Barbara Feverishly Await Women's Beach Volleyball Tournament

The site is set up to look like a traditional newspaper website. There's a featured story with a large headline and photo near the top of the first column, and smaller pictures and headlines below it and in the adjacent columns. Headlines with short introductions link you to more in-depth stories.

It's a fun site to visit regularly for a few quick laughs and to remind us how ridiculous the mainstream media can sometimes be. Lingering too long on the site however starts to have the same effect as watching or reading too much news — the subject matter starts to get depressing and the sarcasm starts to wear a little thin.

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