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STYLE WHERE FASHION AND OCEANOGRAPHY MEET, BY REBECCA WILLIS

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## LONDON'S GEEKY, BLACKBERRY-WIELDING PROTESTERS

Normally anyone can peek through the windows of the Ritz in London for a glimpse of its chandeliered interiors. But on March 27th, in a move reminiscent of the Palace of Versailles hunkering down to protect itself from an angry mob, the gilded landmark was barricaded at its every porthole with navy wooden panels.



"They're for the protesters," declared a burly doorman, guarding the hotel's entrance. He was referring to the excitement surrounding the G20 summit, taking place in London next week. The city expects big demonstrations against capitalism, globalisation, war, greed and global warming, and is spending over £7m (\$10m) to manage the crowds.

Curious about these rabble-rousers, I called the number listed on the website for G20 Meltdown, one of the city's biggest protest groups. "Welcome to the revolution," answered someone on the other end. The voice, that of Mark Barrett, explained the group's agenda: "We're in favour of nationalising everything", he said, "and then decentralising it".

The group was busy organising various "revolts" around London in the coming days, including a giant Monopoly game in front of the Stock Exchange and four carnival parades, each led by one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, set to converge on the Bank of England (the "belly of the beast") on April Fool's Day.

"This country is a big mess," Barrett continued, "and it's all thanks to the people who are our leaders."

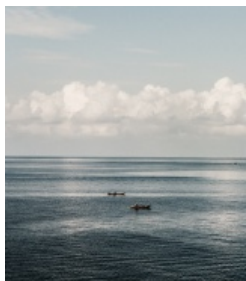
As I wandered south of the Thames, I came across what looked like a typical newspaper delivery van. Inside, sitting on piles of pink broadsheets, was a man wearing a balaclava.

"Spoof of the *Financial Times*?" asked Raoul Djukanovic (a pseudonym to protect his identity and his job). Djukanovic invested thousands of pounds to print tens of thousands of copies of this fake paper. "I want to try and get journalists to think about the fact that they make reality; they don't just report on it," he explained.



A former journalist, Djukanovic complained that the media spends too much time covering the rich and powerful, and not enough on the people who are affected by the whims of these decision-makers. His 12-page replica of the *FT* was distributed around London in two vans by a handful of volunteers.

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"We need to work for a more sustainable society," Djukanovic said. "If the science is correct and the planet is screwed in the next decades, someone better try to do something about it."

I asked him if he had received any responses to his gambit so far. Djukanovic smiled and pulled out an e-mail from George Monbiot, an author and columnist for the *Guardian*: "Total fucking genius. I've never seen such a brilliant spoof."

The e-mail was on Djukanovic's Blackberry, that symbol of corporate power, now wielded by bankers and anarchists alike.

~ JULIA BELLUZ

**Picture credit:** Loz Flowers (via Flickr, top), Julia Belluz

Long, long road  
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