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Site Specific
Big Joe Goes Down
 Tactical media collective's counter-marketing device fights Starbucks with decent panini

by Julian Dibbell
 April 8th, 2005 5:52 PM

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If, like most of urban-hipster America, you're so weary of reviling Starbucks that the very thought of helping someone else revile it makes you thirsty for a venti® soy latte with an extra shot and a Norah Jones Artist's Choice™ compilation, then [delocator.net](#) may not be your cup of chai.



Joe Mama's so big it fell in love and broke it. photo: [delocator.net](#)

Launched last week by San Francisco "tactical media" collective Finishing School, Delocator is a user-driven counter-marketing device aimed squarely, explain the authors, at the "unchecked aggression and power" of an institution "hostile to the historical culture of the café" and "dangerous, ultimately, to democratic principles." So how does this site strike its blow against the corporate-coffee Death Star? It lets users type in names and details of independent joe joints, so that just by entering a zip code, you can find nearby pockets of resistance and determine whether they have free WiFi and decent panini. Boo-yah!

A nice idea, but before Delocator even went live, Big Java landed a crippling counter-blow. Originally called Starbucks Delocator, the site lost its S-word when the art gallery hosting it demanded the name change, for fear of the Green Mermaid's legal department. This, of course, rendered the site effectively invisible to the one demographic that could make it matter: people Googling "Starbucks." But here's where the story gets heartwarming. For though anti-corporate protest may be so five years ago, bloggers still love a good huff over abuses of intellectual-property law. And sure enough, free-culture freaks soon launched a campaign to pepper the Web with links to Starbucks Delocator, properly identified to boost its rank in just the right searches. As of this writing, the count stands at 60 links and rising. With luck, the site that dares not speak its name will soon be synonymous, to Googlers, anyway, with the coffee you love to hate.

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