

**I Love a Good Mess**  
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I hate filth as much as anyone does—though perhaps I put up with it a bit too much—but I love a good mess. I speak specifically of the sort of contained, practical and much-used mess that indicates a person deeply immersed in their work; the sort created by the protagonists of films like *Blowup* and *Blow Out*, showing that their lives are guided by their occupations and that they have neither a reason nor the time to keep things neat.

For me, books and CDs tend to pile up rather quickly. I love to think a random stranger coming over to my house would see my room and immediately have a favorable impression of me. I would be the young man with impeccable taste who listens to music too often to put it away and who constantly needs his favorite novels at his fingertips. Actually, I try to keep my things in neat order, but I feel warm inside when I come home and find my dresser loaded with piles of CDs, clothes, books, college applications, and so on. It looks so lived in, and there is such a perfect representation of me in that one area. One day, my things will expand beyond my little bedroom and I will be like the record store owner from *High Fidelity* whose walls are covered in stacks of vinyl. When I need to rearrange, it will be an apartment-wide operation, and there will be a fleeting messy beauty in every room.

That sort of mess springs from my personal interests, however. I need to find a job that can bring out my inner pack rat. I am reminded of the London photographer in *Blowup* marching through his flat in a late-night reverie, with so much focus in the project at hand. He leaves items in every room, always knowing where he can find them

again, and plasters his walls with photos as he attempts to get to the bottom of a mystery. He clearly knows what he is doing, and I greatly respect a man who is completely in control of his craft; this is the appeal more than anything. A mess seems to indicate that the artist is in control, that order is not necessary to get the task completed.

The movie soundman in *Blow Out* is of a similar character. In the days before computers, he has shelves full of tapes with specific sounds, and he knows exactly where to go when he needs one. Such specialized knowledge is very exciting to me. When he ransacks his apartment looking for a certain tape, it is so much more interesting than searching through sound files on a computer. Normally during movies when a character destroys a room, I cringe as I watch everything smashed, knowing it could all go to better use; but when the destruction has a legitimate end, such as finding that precious tape, then the purpose makes it beautiful.

Against all logic, a man who fails to clean up after himself is often a person who truly cares. His passion is too extreme for neatness. Putting things away is useless, because he will need them again too quickly. That person is probably smart, resourceful, creative, skillful and very active: qualities everyone would love to have. Home design shows would have you believe that “cleanliness is Godliness”, that only furniture and paintings and knick-knacks should be displayed for people who come over to visit. But I would rather see piles of papers everywhere, indicating some sort of noble purpose.