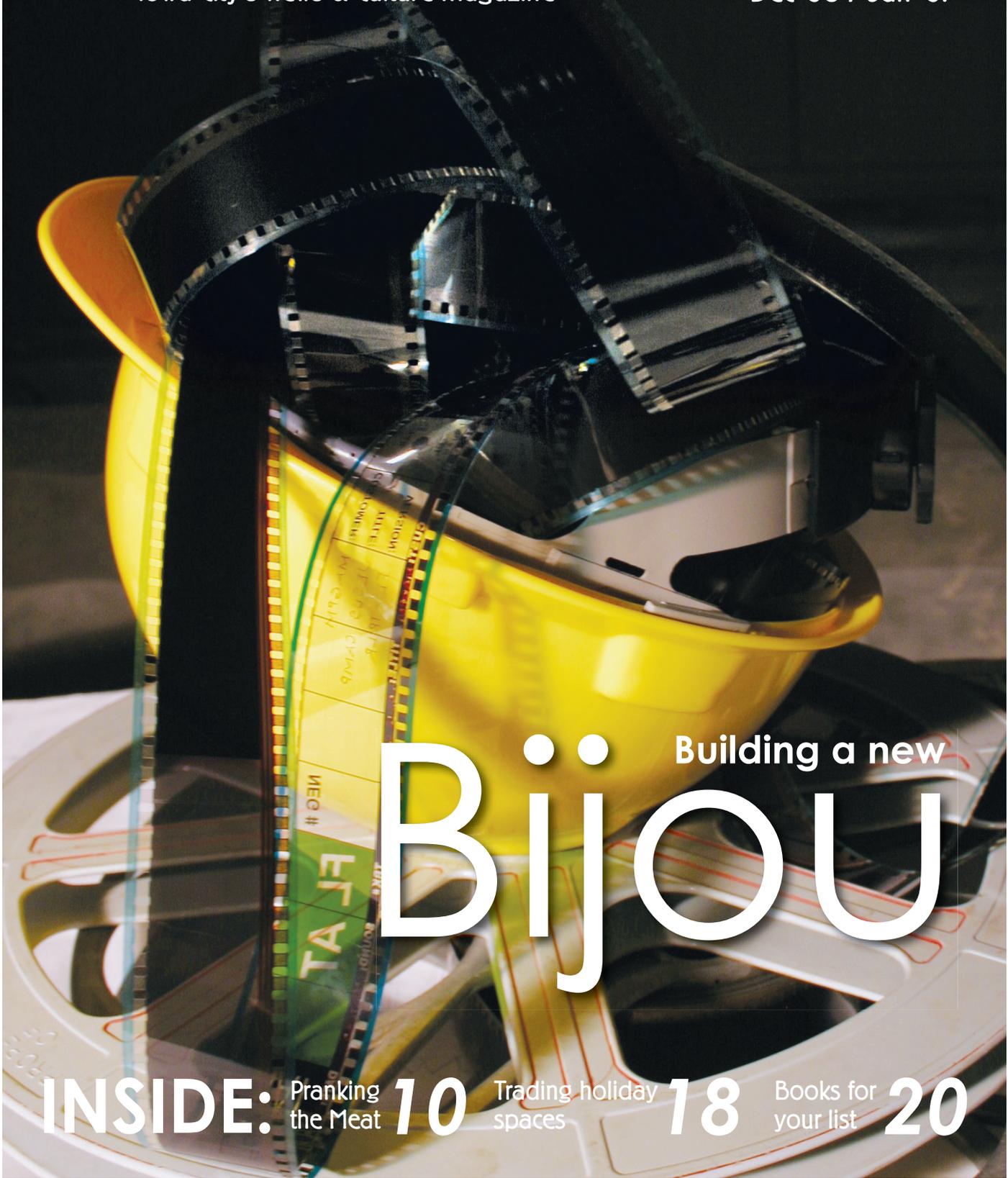


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## Letter from the Editors

It's been over a year since Todd Kimm handed over the title of editor and the keys to Little Village. In that time, Little Village has strived to be the one and only alternative monthly focusing on the heart of Iowa City.

The first issue that we worked on as a team documented the Green Room's transition to Verde. Little Village was there. In October 2005, we were there for Katrina; we brought context to the Public Power versus MidAmerican vote here in Johnson County; we chronicled the anti-war protest in Washington, Newport Township versus the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and the Mission Creek Midwest Festival. Little Village was there and we will keep on being there examining the music, art, entertainment and politics that make Iowa City extraordinary.

We will continue to bring compelling art and articles to you, our readers. We hope you'll also tell us what you'd like to see within our pages. Let us know what you want to know.

With the support of our very dedicated writers and contributors, an amazing designer and an incredible accountant/calendar editor, we have come so far in earning your support and plan to keep moving forward.

We have had the pleasure of working with Iowa's most unique artists and crafters, musicians, art collectives and businesses that touch

the core of Iowa City. Together, we have held benefits for Little Village, and collaborated on projects such as What a Load of Craft!, which Little Village continues to co-sponsor.

Speaking of Little Village's support of the Iowa City art community and vice versa, local artists have put hours of hard work into getting their art onto our publication's dispensers. We revealed these dispensers at last summer's What a Load of Craft!, and they now can be seen throughout the community, in places like New Pioneer Co-op, near Nemesis, Oasis, the Record Collector and the Pentacrest.

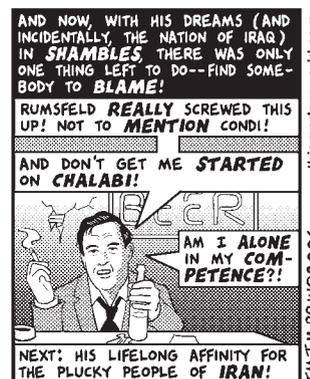
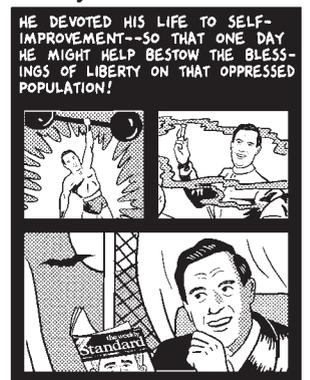
However, not everyone respects local art like our readers do. Vandals have damaged that in which artists have invested countless hours and so much of themselves, and we want you to let us know if you see it happening. This is so disgraceful.

We are still searching for homes for some of our dispensers, and since the street corners are safer for drunkards than for an artist's creation, we're looking for businesses to support our arts and culture magazine by giving shelter to a dispenser. If you know of a business in the Corridor that would like to be a host for our Little Village, please let us know.

Thanks so much for all of your support!!!  
*Alissa and Melody*

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



www.thismodernworld.com

# Goliath vs. Goliath

Mediacom battles communications giant Sinclair while local coverage gets squished.

**S**inclair's at it again. No, not the green dinosaur of fossil fuel. The other lumbering giant—the communications one, the Sinclair Broadcasting Group, owners of Channel 2 in Cedar Rapids, KGAN, the area's CBS affiliate. Sinclair is television's version of Clear Channel, a politically conservative media empire that infiltrates, according to their numbers, 22 percent of American televisions.

Our local area has had dustups with Sinclair before. Sinclair local newscasts contain daily conservative editorials by Corporate Vice President Mark Hyman called "The Point," most of which are full of howling distortions and inaccuracies. During the 2004 election, Sinclair attempted to ram a John Kerry-bashing "documentary" down every local affiliate's throat. And in 2005, after a local UI adjunct professor dared to post opinions critical of Sinclair on his blog, Hyman hit the national airwaves with a screed that falsely accused his critic of teaching students how to plagiarize. For these specific, and for more general philosophical reasons, I boycott Channel 2's local newscast.

The current dilemma that Sinclair is forcing upon our local community is the possibility of our local cable television monopoly—er—franchise, Mediacom, losing the broadcast rights to Channel 2. My interest here



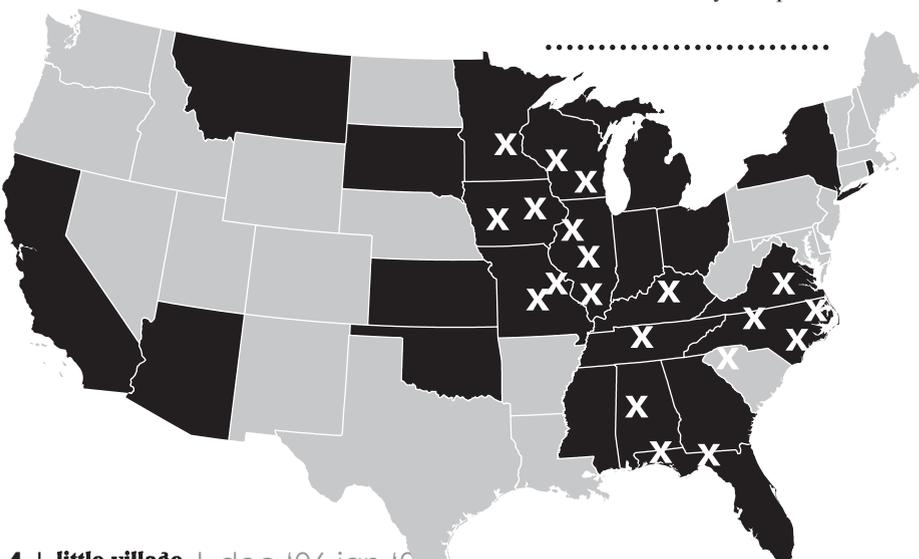
*This isn't the first time Sinclair has run afoul of the public. This Twin Cities man protested Sinclair's negatively-charged John Kerry "documentary."*

is not really to debate the merits of the two sides of the argument. Let's leave it at a "he said/she said" argument. Sinclair is claiming Mediacom won't pony up fair compensation for Channel 2, and Mediacom says Sinclair is gouging them unfairly. The two have been playing chicken for some months—this is not the first time they've played this exact game—and when this column appears, either one will have blinked (excuse me, a compromise will have been reached) or there will be no Channel 2 on our cable menu. The outcome, either way, really does not alter the basic point I'd like to address: the lack of community care by a distant corporation.

One of the fundamental beliefs I hold, and the underpinning of much of this column, is that the bonds of locality—of place and com-

munity—are important because they involve care. It's a no-brainer, really. We care for what we are close to. We care for the people we know, we care for the welfare of the community in which we live, we care for the natural world right outside our door. Sure, we care for abstract principles like freedom and democracy (and the First Amendment), we care about the poor and suffering in general, and we care about "the environment" in its totality. But the strongest bonds, the bonds from which those larger attachments and concerns grow, are our connections to the local. And the problem with distant corporations like Sinclair is that they *don't* care about the local community.

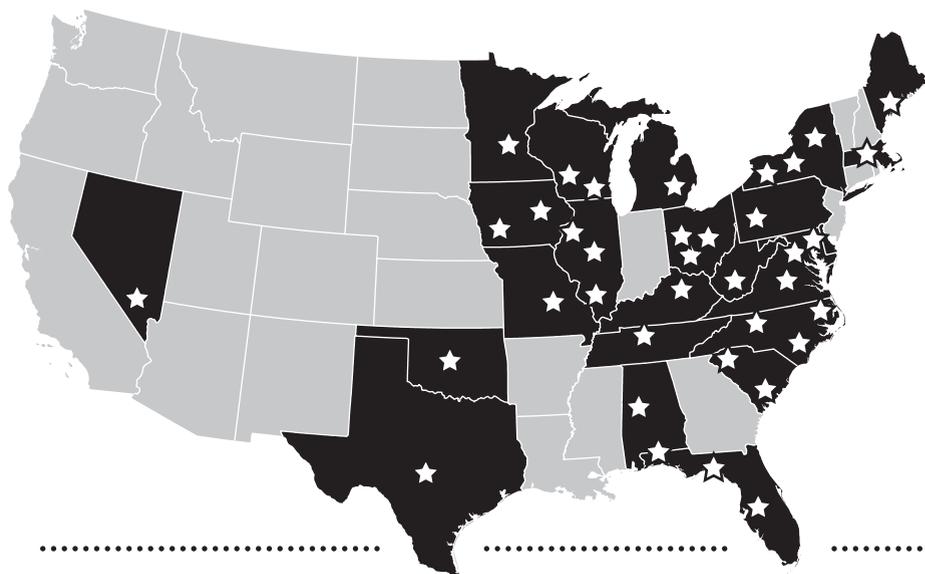
There's no arguing that the *raison d'être* of capitalism is profit. Many argue that such human benefits as freedom and community prosperity can accrue from capitalist enterprise. To some extent, history has shown that there is partial truth in this maxim. But the problem with this argument is that the *raison d'être* will inevitably trump the after-effect. To put it as a political aphorism, in a corporate environment profits come before people. This is the main reason why large corporations—manufacturers, chain stores, etc.—can be so problematic for a community. When the bottom line falters, the corporation bails, no matter what bromides about providing jobs seduced the community members at first, no matter what corporate welfare the city administration lavished at the corporation's feet to lure it there in the first place, not matter what zoning exceptions were



## Who is Affected?

Mediacom serves customers in 24 states, specializing in areas that do not have a large metropolitan population. According to Mediacom, the cable, Internet and phone company serves 1500 communities nationwide.

These communities are clustered into larger service areas. Of these, 20 service areas (x's) carry one or more Sinclair station, all of which are affected by the current conflict.



## Who is Sinclair?

Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc. owns or operates 58 television stations in 36 markets (stars) in the United States reaching approximately 22 percent of all U.S. television households. Sinclair's television group includes Fox, ABC, NBC, CBS, CW and MyTV affiliates.

Sinclair's centralizes production of national and international news, including a nightly one-minute, one-sided, conservative "news and commentary" segment called "The Point."

granted for construction, etc.

The results are, sadly, common across our national landscape—ugly, useless big box buildings (Wal-Mart has 356 abandoned retail barns for sale or lease, according to Sprawl-Busters); whiplash-inducing feast and famine employment and unemployment (especially in communities that put their economic eggs in limited numbers of nationally/internationally corporate baskets); a devastated retail environment (Iowa City should have seen Coral Ridge coming when it laid the first brick of the Old Capitol Mall over 20 years ago). Certainly local businesses cannot remain operational when business is bad. But, because they are part and parcel of the community, their efforts to remain part of that community and their sense of obligation to serve that community are much stronger than the boards, bean counters and stockholders of International Megacorp.

Which brings us back around to Sinclair, Mediacom and the loss or near-loss of Channel 2. Simply put, Sinclair does not care if Eastern Iowans don't have one of their local affiliate stations on their cable menu. Although I can't swear to it, I have confidence that locally owned Gazette Communications (owners of KCRG Channel 9), for example, feels more of an obligation toward—and, admittedly, has a greater business investment in—being widely available via cable in the area.

Underlying my argument is the premise that cable availability of Channel 2 is important to the community. Well, I understand if many of you find that premise questionable. Certainly being able to watch *Survivor* is less important than providing adequate housing to the economically disadvantaged in our community, let's say. But I would make the argument that there is *some* community importance to having Channel 2 available. Despite the ogre who runs the place, it is a local news and programming outlet and local institution—I think not

Sinclair is claiming Mediacom won't pony up fair compensation for Channel 2, and Mediacom says Sinclair is gouging them unfairly. The two have been playing chicken for some months.

a very good one these days, but that's for the individual to decide. I would also argue that the CBS network remains much more a part of the national culture than cable-only channels, and there is something of a greater obligation to provide this piece of the common culture other than just the Food Network.

One might also argue, on the other hand, that there are alternatives. Sinclair and Channel 2 are trying to convince us that the issue is really one of fair competition, and if we don't like what Mediacom is doing, we should go to satellite (especially to whatever collusion Sinclair and DirecTV has formed). There's a problem with that option, though. Because the official Iowa City cable franchise is with Mediacom, that's the only outlet for publicly produced and public access television—the City Channel, PATV, the Library Channel, the local schools channel, the UI Channel, the Kirkwood Channel. These are truly the apotheosis of public airways, and they're avail-

able through only one outlet: Mediacom cable, with which the City has a formal franchise agreement. So while I might switch to satellite Television to get Channel 2, a station with a marginal but arguable public purpose, I lose all the others.

The City of Iowa City has stated publicly it can do nothing about the Sinclair/Mediacom dispute. And while Iowa City does have a non-exclusive franchise, allowing in theory another cable company to operate here, the City makes no bones about the fact that, given our small market and the economies of scale involved in the cable business, we'll see a certain place down below freezing over before we see cable competition here. It's sadly ironic, then, that the current squeeze we find ourselves in is the result of both capitalistic competition and *de facto* monopoly. As the current situation illustrates, neither works in the public interest—because neither inherently cares about the community.

So I don't know if, tonight, early in December when this column appears, that I'll be able to thumb my nose at Channel 2's Sinclair-directed local news broadcast. And certainly the sky will not have fallen because I'm not able to tune into David Letterman's monologue on *The Late Show*. But no matter the outcome, we all will have lost at least a little something in our community. Even if you're able to see the new episode of *CSI* tonight, we all know that a major purveyor of our local airwaves just doesn't give a flying fig about our community. **lv**

*Thomas Dean grew up in the days before cable television. He admits that, as a boy, his world would have fallen apart if he had not been able to watch Batman on Wednesday and Thursday nights.*

# Love your mother

Chef Friese reflects on this year's Terra Madre in Italy.

**T**here is something awe-inspiring about entering a room filled with 6400 of the best farmers, fishers, artisans, chefs and educators from 150 countries. Those of you who know me know that I am a fairly egotistical guy (it often happens in the chef's profession), so I am unaccustomed to walking into a meeting and instantly feeling as if I am the stupidest person in the room. It has happened to me twice that I can remember (read: "have not blocked out"), and both times it was at Terra Madre.

Terra Madre ("Mother Earth") is billed as a World Gathering of Food Communities. It was first organized in 2004 by Slow Food, the international educational organization dedicated to creating a food system that is "Good, Clean and Fair." At the opening plenary session Slow Food founder and president Carlo Petrini said "we are planting a seed with Terra Madre, and that seed is the practice of the local economy ...[because] this local economy is in perfect harmony with nature."

He continued, "We must adopt the habits that shorten the distance between the producer and the consumer, to contribute to the well-being of the community, to help those who work in the fields prosper, to give health, to give beauty to our land. If we want to bring about sustainable development, we must reinforce the elements of the local economy."

To this end, Terra Madre has set out to create a global network for sharing information and expertise on what it would take to make this idea the norm, rather than the exception. So Slow Food gathered, at its own expense, the



Slow Food cooks do their thing.

people with the hands-on know-how from all around the world for five days of conferencing in Torino, Italy. There were New Orleans shrimpers and bean farmers from Ghana; wine makers from Australia and goat herders from Kazakhstan; sushi chefs from Tokyo, grain farmers from Montana and a food security expert from Iowa City.

Laura Dowd, founding director of Local Foods Connection here in Iowa City, was one of the four delegates sent by the local Slow Food Convivium to represent our community at this historic event. With her was James Nisly, who grows the organic sprouts and mi-

"We are planting a seed with Terra Madre, and that seed is the practice of the local economy ... [because] this local economy is in perfect harmony with nature."

- Carlo Petrini  
Slow Food founder and president



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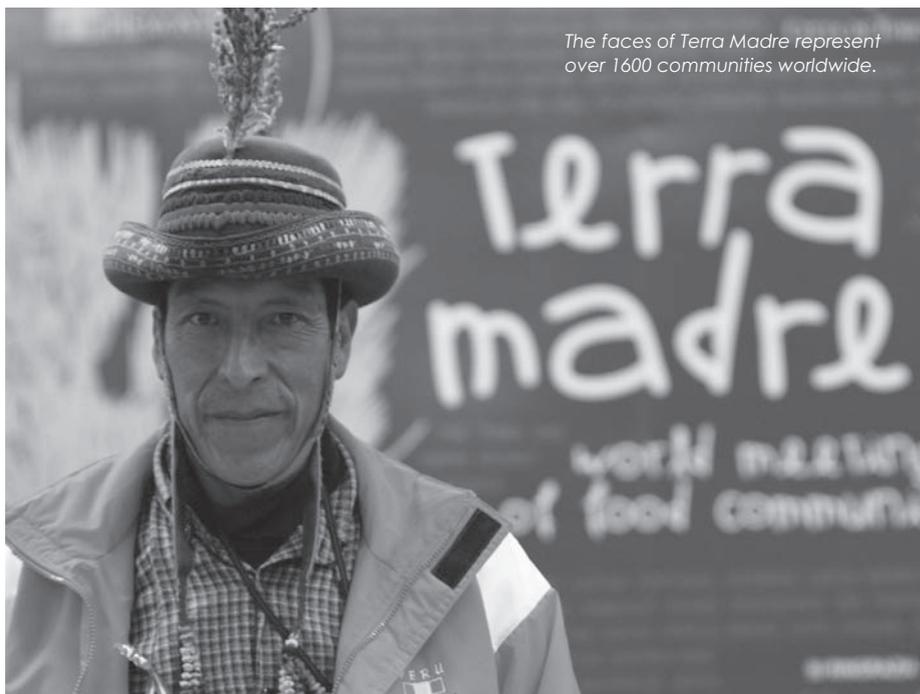
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The faces of Terra Madre represent over 1600 communities worldwide.



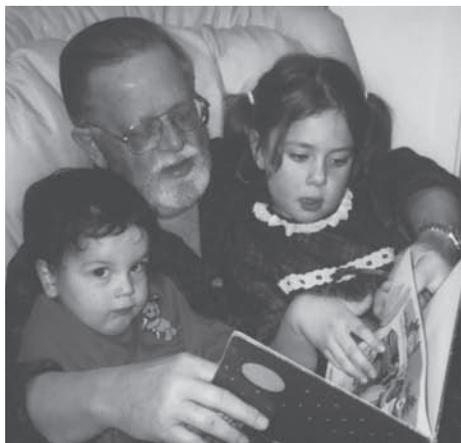
cro-greens used in so many area restaurants, and Dave Burt, chef co-owner of the all-organic vegetarian restaurant Red Avocado. Oh, and I got to tag along, too.

The message boiled down to one of sustainability. Can the earth and the communities on it long sustain the industrial production practices it has used at ever-increasing rates for the last 100 years? How long can we go on pumping chemicals into the land, the food and therefore ourselves before the poison begins to take hold? How long can our communities and our traditions survive in the face of an ever-increasing reliance on speed, mistaking frenzy for efficiency?

As for me, I came away with the reaffirmed knowledge that it is okay to make mistakes along the way, that obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal, and that a food system that is "Good, Clean and Fair" is not only attainable, it is inevitable. We can deliberately create the system, that is, be the change we wish to see in the world, or we can wait for the current system to collapse under its own immense weight in a scenario that will make the great depression or the potato famine seem like a picnic on the beach with beer and ukuleles.

The "easy" way is to do it is to do it deliberately, through careful planning. The hard way is to allow the current system to collapse under its own weight. **lv**

*Chef Kurt Michael Friese is the founding leader of Slow Food Iowa City and serves on the Slow Food USA National Board of Governors for the Midwest region. He has been chef and owner, with his wife Kim McWane Friese, of the Iowa City restaurant Devotay for 10 years. Friese's forthcoming book, Slow Food in the Heartland: A Cook's Tour will be published by UI Press in the spring of 2007.*



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# TO THE HALL MALL, WITH LOVE

**L**ike many people who grew up in the area, I first encountered much of what is referred to as “counterculture” in Iowa City. Since the 1960s, Iowa City has had the dubious distinction of being the center of counterculture in Iowa, and it has been home to countless bars, galleries, bookshops, record stores, boutiques and music venues catering to tastes outside of the mainstream. Those of us who have spent some time in this town occasionally grow nostalgic for favorite spots long gone.

I was imprinted early—I spent a lot of time as a child playing between the aisles of Epstein’s Bookstore while my parents attended poetry readings. Even at the age of nine, I felt very much at home among the beats and the hippies. In my teens and early twenties, hardcore punk was my thing, and the Unitarian Church basement was the center of our DIY scene. Still, as times changed and scenes have come and gone, certain institutions have survived.

With still-strong support for the local music scene, Gabe’n’Walkers / Gabe’s Oasis / Gabe’s / The Picador is one such institution, the New Pioneer Co-op is another—although many of their original hippie base have turned in their VW beetles for Volvo station wagons.

Along with these institutions and a handful of others, another, less illustrious cornerstone of Iowa City’s alternative scene has survived since the early seventies. Less of a cornerstone, perhaps, than a cinderblock rammed under the axle of a rusting ‘69 microbus, The Hall Mall has remained the reliable source for all things counterculture since Jim Morrison walked the earth. Dubbed “The Upstairs Underground” by tattoo artist and Hall Mall veteran Stingray, it has been home to countless vintage shops, record stores, smoke shops and tattoo parlors, providing Iowa City with its own microscopic version of London’s Kensington Market or New York’s St. Mark’s Place.

Like the universe, The Hall Mall is in a constant state of chaos. Businesses come and go, but the vibe remains the same. The merchants maintain an “anything goes” feel and a cooperative attitude that warms the hearts of libertarians and anarcho-socialists alike. “The rent is cheap and the attitude is loose,” according to Bil at

Focus Body Piercing. “It’s the kind of place that, if you are thinking about starting a business, you can go for it. We have built-in foot traffic and the people up here support each other.”

Over the years it has been home to businesses with names like The Wicca Shop, Underground Stereo, The Plainswoman Bookstore, Hemp Cat, Good Times, Ruby Tuesday, and Electric Head. The current residents include Exile Tattoo, Focus Body Piercing, The Konnexion, Antiques and Oddities, Rusty Records, FERAL!, the recently opened Convenience Store and Velocipede InfoShop, and the soon to open White Rabbit.

Located above the ped mall at 114 1/2 E. College Street, the entrance to The Hall Mall is an inconspicuous doorway sandwiched between College Street Billiards and Vito’s. The narrow, poorly lit stairwell leads upstairs to a long, open vestibule, flanked by a series of identically transomed doorways, framed in dark wood popular at the time of the building’s construction at the turn of the last century. Reminiscent of a seedy office building where Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe might have hung out their shingles, one can imagine these offices once housing green-visored bookkeepers or dark-eyed palmists. Something about the

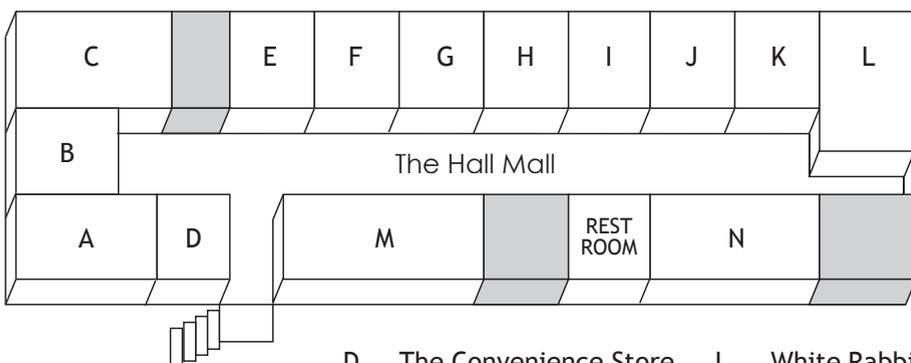
location and the modest size has made it the lair of independent small businesses for over a century.

The building which houses The Hall Mall was known in days past as the Schneider Building, originally the home of Schneider Brothers Furniture, Carpet and Rugs. City records show that in 1916, the Schneider Brothers’ empire had grown to encompass three buildings on the block, and in addition to the furniture business, the building at 114 was listed as “furniture and undertaker.”

During the 1920s, the upstairs began to be listed as a separate address, 114 1/2, “The Schneider Building Offices.” In the following decades, the offices housed a beauty shop, a number of lawyers, real estate brokers, lenders, “Morford the Chain Man,” a publisher, and by the ‘60s, it was home to the Johnson County Democrats, Alcoholics Anonymous, and L.L. Pelling, now one of the biggest paving companies in the Midwest.

In the early ‘70s, when downtown business districts across the nation began their decline, many of the spaces at 114 1/2 went empty. It was not long before a new breed of hippie entrepreneurs, including Gregory J. Stokesberry, discovered them. Also known as “The Wizzard”

## CURRENT HALL MALL RESIDENTS



- |     |                       |     |              |
|-----|-----------------------|-----|--------------|
| A   | The Konnexion         | I   | White Rabbit |
| B   | Focus Body Piercing   | J   | vacant       |
| C   | Exile Tattoo          | K   | Velocipede   |
| D   | The Convenience Store | L-N | vacant       |
| E   | Antiques and Oddities |     |              |
| F   | Rusty Records         |     |              |
| G-H | FERAL!                |     |              |

### MORE INFO:

For up to date information, check The Hall Mall’s web page at the horrendously mainstream [myspace.com/hallmall](http://myspace.com/hallmall).



Those sure are fancy wood floors for the counterculture.



The Wizzard displays a piece of IC hippie-style art, carved by Bill Schnute

(a moniker bestowed upon him by the late great artist Ed “Big Daddy” Roth), Stokesberry moved in to four adjoining spaces formerly occupied by L.L. Pelling in 1975. Along with Red Rose Old Clothes and Emerald City, “Gregory J. Stokesberry—Organic Merchant” was one of the original pioneers of the counterculture business revolution that would become The Hall Mall.

I recently visited “Wizzard World Headquarters” in Cedar Rapids’ Czech Village, where Stokesberry runs his current business, marketing original artwork and T-shirts and publishing a magazine, all targeted at the “Kustom Kulture” audience.

“The Hall Mall was the only place in town where a start up could find some cheap space,” says Stokesberry. “I got married and had to make a living. I was into antiques, I was in to green plants, all the hippie decor stuff, ya know, and I was in to the birds and monkeys [exotic animals, not the bands] so that’s what I did. I was a hail and hearty lad with a pickup truck—I used to move jukeboxes up and down those stairs.”

“The first were Rose (Red Rose Old Clothes) and Kirk at Emerald City—I moved in after them. We all tried to make it nice ... I used to go out and get a bottle of sherry and cookies from Barbara’s Bakery. Every afternoon we would have cookies and sherry ... it was always real cool. Eventually the bums started coming up and grabbing handfuls of cookies... the unemployed bums, I mean, as opposed to us employed bums.”

Over the years, The Hall Mall housed a continuous flow of alternative businesses.

“This was the place to be—I had heard of this place in Chicago. I moved out here when my girlfriend came to go to college, and I started tattooing up here in ‘95. At the height of the grunge era, it was always full of people,” says Stingray at Exile Tattoo.

It was the ‘90s—the economy was strong, business was good, and a second generation

IF COUNTERCULTURE  
CAN TRULY HAVE A  
TRADITION, IT IS OURS  
TO UPHOLD. LIKE MARLON  
BRANDO IN THE YOUNG  
ONES, WHEN ASKED,  
“HEY JOHNNY, WHAT  
ARE YOU REBELLING  
AGAINST?” THE HALL  
MALL ANSWERS, “WHAT  
HAVE YOU GOT?”

of Hall Mall regulars was coming of age with their own taste for the bizarre...but times were about to change. Corporate America was waking up to the potential for profit in the underground scene, and set out to create a safe, mall friendly version to sell to the masses. By the end of the ‘90s, the political climate in America was changing, as well. The election of George W. Bush in 2000 heralded the beginning of an era of new conservatism and intolerance, and places like The Hall Mall were bound to experience the fallout.

Hemp Cat, a hemp-clothing store and one of The Hall Mall’s most popular businesses, was raided in 2001 by the “The Man.” Several other long-time mainstays left. Stingray and several others left, and Electric Head went into decline. There was a fire. The Hall Mall hit hard times. People began asking “is there anybody up there anymore?” It was down, but not out.

A new generation began to take up residence. The Konnexion, Davey Jones Tattoo, the Lowbrow Cafe and Rusty Records opened, and they were working hard to keep The Hall Mall alive and breathing.

HALL MALL continued on page 29

## HALL MALL HISTORY

**1890**—building at 114 E. College St. is built.

**1970**—Hall Mall’s inception. Kirk Stephan, an alternative medicine and meditation practitioner, moved his emerald-cutting business along with his personal belongings into The Hall Mall, paying a mere \$30 in rent, according to a 1996 article in The Gazette.

**1976**—Emerald City and Red Rose Old Clothes make The Hall Mall their home for the time being. So begins the small business takeover of the Schneider Building. Emerald City sold jewelry from stones collected in South America and was run by Stephan.

**1987-1994**—Businesses like Daydreams and Dawn’s Hide and Bead Away get their start at 114 ½ E. College before moving to other downtown locations to expand in the early ‘90s.

**MID 1990’s**—Crop Circle Comics Guild formed and moved into The Hall Mall, using the room as a studio. Graphic artists/novelists Andy Black and Mike Ayers collaborated on Snapshots, and Ayers went on to form Candle Light Press, still based in Iowa City, to be later run by John Ira Thomas and Jeremy Smith.

**1996**—Emerald City closes for good, after having shut down in 1982 and re-opened seven years later. The reason for the absence? Ever more traveling.

**1997**—Graduate of the UI Playwrights’ Workshop and member of the International Ghost Hunters Society Todd Ristau led a ghost tour through The Hall Mall in search of “George the Ghost.”

**2001**—In February, Iowa DEA raided the Hemp Cat, which had been open for six years, causing other Iowa City pipe shops to tighten their regulations.

**2002**—On April 16, former Hall Mall business owner commits burglary and arson, causing \$20,000 in damages to the building. In local news reports, he cited a drug and alcohol binge as the cause of his actions.



**B**ecause I write about music, I often get invitations to participate in “teleconference” calls with musicians who are shilling their latest album. Most of the time I ignore these solicitations. After all, they are dreadful stage-managed affairs that provide little insight into a musician’s artistry and are instead designed to keep the culture industry’s engine running smoothly.

For years, I hit the delete key, but I couldn’t resist when asked if I wanted to speak with Meat Loaf, who was promoting the Halloween release of *Bat Out of Hell III*. This 2006 album completed a bombastic trilogy that kicked off in 1977, spawning major hits like “Paradise By the Dashboard Light” and “Two Out of Three Ain’t Bad.”

I knew I had to do something, and so I cooked up a concept: What happens when Meat Loaf’s brand of bombastic rock theater encountered a confrontational form of guerrilla theater? Also, I wanted to throw a wrench into the media machine by injecting random nonsense into a well-defined genre known as the celebrity interview. Speaking in an off-kilter cadence and a peculiar pitch, I introduced myself to Mr. Loaf.

KEMBREW: Helloooooo. My name is Kembrewwwww...

MEAT LOAF: How are ya?

KEMBREW: *Gooooood*. I just wanted to tell you that I had interpreted your lyrics in a particular way and I wanted you to confirm it with meeeeeeeee.

MEAT LOAF: [laughs uncomfortably]

For the record, I didn’t do this to make fun of him, or to point out that Meat Loaf’s records were awful or stupid; that would be too easy, and not very interesting. I targeted the guy because he’s such a compelling figure, a *sui generis* cultural oddity.

At 350 pounds, Meat Loaf—affectionately known to his fans simply as Meat—was an unlikely candidate for a 1970s rock megastar. *Bat Out of Hell*, which ended up selling over 30 million copies worldwide, was released in the middle of the punk explosion, and his ascendancy also coincided with the rise of disco. At the time, there seemed to be little room in the music marketplace for an obese actor from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* who recorded an absurd concept album about teenage lust.

Even more implausible was his 1993 comeback, *Bat Out of Hell II*, which was perhaps more campy than the first. Riding on the wings of “I Would Do Anything For Love (But I Won’t Do That),” a massive hit song that clocks in at roughly twelve minutes, *Bat II* sold as much as the first album.

All this makes Meat the ideal ingredient for a Dada chemistry experiment: Meat Loaf + High Weirdness—Script = Total Madness. During the interview, I quoted from “Objects in the Rearview Mirror (Appear Closer Than They Are),” also from *Bat II*. From there I

## What happens when Meat Loaf’s brand of bombastic rock theater encountered a confrontational form of guerrilla theater?

launched into an incoherent analysis of the song that involved the first Gulf War, Freud and what I referred to as “reality,” which I pronounced as “re-al-it-eeeeeeee.”

MEAT LOAF: Well, ya know, if you believe that, and that’s your interpretation, and that’s your connection with it, then you’re absolutely right. And I would never disagree with you. ... It’s totally against anything I believe.

KEMBREW: It’s *telling me* to run out into the street and take off my *clothes*, and roll around in my OWN *FECES!* Is that what I should do? Is that what you’re explaining to me?

MEAT LOAF: If-if-if-if-if that’s where your brain is taking ya—uh, well, ah, it wouldn’t take me there—that you should roll around in your, in-in-in your own feces, I mean, that’s an *extraordinary*, uh, uh, uh,

I don't, uh, that's an extraordinary, um, *vision*. And...

KEMBREW: Have you, *have you*...

MEAT LOAF: ...why you would interpret a lyric to that extreme, I would *never understand*. But I'm not going to argue with ya. But I don't *agree* with you—that that's the interpretation of that lyric, I can *sure tell ya that*—but that's your interpretation of it, and I'm not gonna argue with ya.

KEMBREW: Have you ever tasted your *own feces*? It's not as...

MEAT LOAF: You know **WHAT?** I'm...

KEMBREW: ... it's not as bad as you think.

MEAT LOAF: This is a **STUPID** conversation at this point.

KEMBREW: *Noooooooooo*, it's **NOT**, it means something to *meeeeeeee*, and you said what's important is...

MEAT LOAF: I *know*, but I'm not gonna go where ya wanna go now. Because if it means something to you, it means something to you, but it doesn't necessarily mean something to me. So I'm not going to, uh, *roll around the ground with ya*.

KEMBREW: But it's important that we *share* this.

MEAT LOAF: [pause] Well, ya know what? I'm *sharing* it with ya the best I can.

KEMBREW: But what about sharing it *physically*? Do you know what it's like to *hold your own feces*?

MEAT LOAF: You know, ya know *what?* I think we need to **STOP** this question now.

And then ... dial tone. Virgin Records then sent out a press release with a full transcript of the teleconference, but our exchange had been deleted from the official record. Even though his handlers erased our conversation, they neglected to scrub later references to it, such as the following:

MODERATOR: Our next question comes from Jamie Sotonoff from the *Chicago Daily Herald*.

MEAT LOAF: How are ya?

JAMIE SOTONOFF: Hi Meat, how are you doing?

MEAT LOAF: Good.

JAMIE SOTONOFF: I'm still a little rattled by that weird question from that weird dude.



What's in the fist, Meat?

**All this makes Meat the ideal ingredient for a Dada chemistry experiment: Meat Loaf + High Weirdness - Script = Total Madness.**

MEAT LOAF: *You're rattled?* Um, [inaudible].

JAMIE SOTONOFF: I was like, "What?" I know, that was freaky.

MEAT LOAF: Yeah that was. I have to say, in my 30 years that was the freakiest moment I've had.

The day after my interview, a journalist from a b-list gossip publication called *Celebrity Week* contacted me. Sean Daly, who was part of the teleconference, asked if I had anything to say to Meat, and so I said, "Yes, I'd like to invite Meat Loaf to Iowa City so we can roll around in our feces together." Daly uncomfortably chuckled and said, "Oh, I was expecting an apology," to which I replied, in a sarcastic tone, "He can personally call me and I'll apologize, and then we can have a further conversation about it." When Daly's article appeared, it quoted only the second half of my

"apology," not the *let's roll around in our feces* comment (which is clearly the most important part).

This teleconference quickly turned into a (literal) game of "telephone," in that the words I uttered—and the things I never actually said—took on a life of their own. Every news article that reported on my intervention quoted my supposed request for forgiveness, which is like a movie poster that exclaims, "this movie is ... great," when the review originally stated, "this movie is a great big pile of crap!"

Speaking of crap, a European newswire later ran a story with the headline "Meat Loaf Lyrics Are 'Like Feces.'" While I readily admit that my odd actions could be interpreted in many ways, I certainly didn't claim that his lyrics were "like feces" (even though the wire service put quotes around the words, as if I said them). "Veteran rocker Meat Loaf," the article reported, "has seen his song lyrics likened to feces by an American journalist who also asked the star if he had ever tasted his own waste. Meat Loaf was the victim of notorious prankster Kembrew McLeod during a media conference call promoting his new album *Bat Out of Hell III*."

To my surprise, the University of Iowa deemed my interview noteworthy enough to mention it in "UI in the News," a section of the school's Web site that publicizes significant media appearances by our faculty. Sandwiched between other equally important news items—such as a business scandal uncovered by a UI professor—was the headline "Prankster McLeod Confronts Meat Loaf." Heady stuff. Of course, my employer sanitized the story by wiping away any reference to feces, and it also quoted my imaginary request for forgiveness. All this nicely illustrates the way that words, facts, and ideas can be twisted when fed into the distorting echo chamber of the news media.

I'm sure that my little prank may seem stupid and juvenile, and in many ways it was, most definitely. But it's part of a more serious obsession that has defined my life since adulthood. You see, every now and then I like to throw a rock into the pop culture pond to observe what sort of patterns emerge, to study the ripple effect. After all, it's fun, not to mention educational, to poke the popular media with a stick to see how it responds. **IV**

*Kembrew McLeod is currently perfecting his 10-point plan to destroy Christmas. The audio recording of his interview with Meat Loaf can be found at [www.kembrew.com/pranks](http://www.kembrew.com/pranks).*

**S**lam-master Julia Bemis calls it “gutter poetry...the graffiti of the written word.” This is The Big Idea, the slam-poetry-turned-spoken-word forum every second and fourth Thursday of the month at The Mill, 120 E. Burlington St. Bemis is the host for this event, an ever confident, unsparingly exuberant, non-judgmental, slam-poetry super-heroine.

In the summer of 2002, slam poetry made its appearance into Iowa City’s recent history, under the guidance of Joe Mirabella. Mirabella handed the mic over to Bemis after this year’s national poetry slam competition in Austin, Texas, where Bemis, who has been spitting urban rhymes for a year and a half, joined the Iowa City slam team for the first time.

September marked the neo-genesis of spoken word poetry in Iowa City after a transition of host and venues, moving from the Green

*“Gutter poetry...the graffiti of the written word.” - Julia Bemis, slam poet*

Room to The Mill after the former closed in the fall of 2005. While the freedom to slam remains, a major change from the old format took place: no more judgment.

Spoken word has always belonged to an open-minded community, and in Iowa City it also involved the scoring of the poets’ work administered by judges with large signs and bright erasable markers. Because the new incarnation of this event is not technically slam, point giving is—well—pointless.

In a true slam competition, the following rules are generally adhered to: Each poem must be an original work of the performer; each poet gets three minutes to read one poem with points deducted from the total score if the poet goes more than 10 seconds over the time limit; five judges will score the poet with the highest and lowest score dropped and the remaining three scores will be added together for a total score ranging from 0 to 30; no props, costumes or musical instruments are allowed. While none of these rules are applied at The Big Idea, the idea of having no musical instruments is starkly antithetical to Julia Bemis’s vision for the event. She would ideally like the show to include the regular appearance of hip-hop elements, drumming and other musical accentuation of the verbal poetic expression.

Besides talented local musical artists she is working to bring the coveted hip-hop female emcee, Lunaversol9, to Iowa City. But Bemis also draws nationally known poets to the local microphone working to feature one at each night of The Big Idea. The audience has seen respected and recognized slam poets



*Johnny Blanco of the United Souls of Awareness (USA) spits an urban rhyme at The Big Idea on November 22. The USA is a traveling troupe of artist-activists from Venice Beach that popped in to perform—spontaneous performances are common at The Big Idea.*

such as Autumn Blaze from Milwaukee, Dan Solomon, and Jamie Kilstein from New York City, who is presently ranked fifth in the nation as a slam poet.

Once a stand-up comedian, the 24-year-old poet has had an ambiguously definite path towards his current place on the spoken-word stage. He said he did absolutely anything he could outside of the nine-to-five world, from

*The spoken word here is not bought or sold as a corporate commodity.*

playing in bands to stand-up.

“When I found slam, I was so relieved to find an art with just you, a mike and no expectations because there are so many different styles,” Kilstein explained. “Of course like any art, some of the artists, instead of supporting other artists, will tell you what you can and can’t do.”

He echoed a specially revised version of this sentiment at The Big Idea on October 11 asserting, “People will tell you what you can and can’t say—Julia does not.”

While Bemis does truly recruit diverse talent and poets at The Mill, having posed the question in LV’s interview with her, “Where are the black poets...where are the women?” we couldn’t help but wonder if political diversity is openly accepted, as well.

Slam poets often seem to take the stage tilted slightly to the political left. When pressed on why this is and whether a poet with “right-wing Christian-like” commentary would be welcome on the slam stage, both Bemis and Kilstein provided conclusive answers.

Kilstein gives possible reasons for the natural tendency of slam poetry to be socio-politically left in general.

“I think that’s where it really shines. People telling their stories, talking about their strug-



The Big Idea seeks to incorporate art and music in its shows. This poster art promoting the event was done by Pete Jablonsky.

gle, their families’ struggle,” he said. “Writers usually became writers because they were outcasts in one way or another. This is their way of taking it back.”

So should right-wingers pick up the mic? “I wish there were more. Kind of—” Kilstein said. “What I mean is, I wish people were more open on both ends. It’s pretty easy to get up at a poetry venue and say, ‘Hey doesn’t Bush suck?’ There is no challenge to that... as we all know, artsy types aren’t really on the White House’s to-do list.”

Bemis’s response to the possibility of non-liberal types was, after a thoughtful pause, succinct.

“Maybe Anne Coulter could do it,” she said, with the addendum, “There’s something brilliant about Anne Coulter—I hate her.”

Ultimately the poetry and music at The Big Idea is for everybody. It is a place to speak and be heard without judgment, without restriction. It is poetry that is not dependent on

a political, social or even academic structure. Your spoken word here is not bought or sold as a corporate commodity; it is not directed by professors or professionals. It is supported without ever being changed to fit a standard or category.

There will be much advice offered as you make your way as a spoken word artist, but some of the best comes from established poets like Kilstein.

“Find your own voice. Don’t try to write like anyone else, because you were told that is what poetry sounds like,” he said. “No one wants to take risks. Be that person.”

Bemis risks self-exposure for her artistic expression. After all, slam poets can be open individuals as well as performers. Her advice to wannabe poet-performers?

“Be honest,” she said. “And close your eyes more.”

Every second and fourth Wednesday of the month, The Big Idea is an Iowa Citian’s opportunity for expression, release and individuality—a place where silence is unwelcome. Kilstein’s enthusiasm for Iowa City’s judgment-free brand of spoken-word reverberated as an encouraging mantra in a speech to the crowd on the night of his performance.

“Take advantage of this; this is huge,” he said. “Do it, get on stage, even if it doesn’t sound like a poem.” **lv**

*Christina Patramanis is a free-lance artist who presently resides in Iowa City.*

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# Behind the glass

Hieronymus Square project takes a dump on diversity as City Council dreams in the wrong dimensions.

*Adam Staley Groves will be contributing monthly with a new local politics column. Groves' writing is commentary, and the editors at Little Village allow their writers to have their own opinions.*

To be erected in a new and expanded downtown Iowa City: another throbbing glass tower. And you know the players stroking such projects into existence. They've been peppered with puffballs by the local press. For all of the calls of prudence, deliberation and appreciable criticism, the hot spot to be hit is that of diversity.

The Tower Part II, known as: "Hieronymus Square," sinister twin of the 14-story Plaza Tower, a.k.a. Part I, may end up as trilogy with a 10-story cousin in the works. How closely related the third project is with Hieronymus Square Associates is speculative, however, Marc Moen, a member of the clique cabal, expressed an urge to give birth to a third glass-turd in the near future. So what's the problem with that?

First there's the tax money given away through a rejuvenated view of what qualifies for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) exemption. And TIF's burden of trust has not been met, according to Johnson County Supervisor Rod Sullivan. His September 12th letter to city council interrogated the use of tax dollars that traditionally serve a "public purpose," not that of private parties, "who have been clear about their desire" to construct high-cost residential and commercial structures. In other words, why offer incentives to private developers and deplete public funds when the players have enough zeal and resources to carry it forth on their own? Well, Hieronymus Associates simply asked for it, and the city council unanimously gave it to them. Of the estimated \$40 million project, the tax break favors the group at a reported \$16.4 million. A nice tax cut for the rich? Rep. David Jacoby, D-Coralville, weighed in on TIF at a November 13th meeting between city and state officials. The *Daily Iowan* reported that Jacoby felt TIF was used "judiciously," but that "councilors need to make it clear that money isn't given to developers, but used to build infrastructure for new developments."

So what causes city officials to give into what seems to be censured behavior by other leaders? The greedy and delusional *meta-metropolitanism* lauded by developers allied with an out of touch city council is a consequence of what dead-philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer might call an ideology of progress. Where Schopenhauer felt there was a war against nature to base his social critique of progress, such building projects in Iowa City appear more like a war against "diversity." To shun those who want to invest and improve downtown seems old hat, but it's as if "diversity" was a historical moniker downtown Iowa City coveted—and lost completely. The micropolitan ideal has become mythical, and that's evidenced in the local press.

And the city councilors are out of touch

by default—actually by your fault—because the civil body not only appoints a mayor you cannot vote for, but less than nine percent of residents voted for city council in the 2005 election, preceded by 20 percent in 2003 election. Could it be that some downtown business owners, who are also council members, would benefit by getting some of this new “diversity” in proximity to their businesses? Mere speculation?

The Iowa City Press Citizen is also responsible for this ideology of progress. Last summer in a published comment the PC highlighted what they felt were vital aspects of the project: the “disposable income” of those who want to be “part of the action.” Trust in that rationale to defend and define the “skyline” and “cultural district” of Iowa City satisfies the agenda setting for an ideology of progress. Furthermore, where’s the “cultural” in the “district?” If any place has such a district it would be Hawkeye Court, the low-rent mock prison tucked far away from the city’s center. And with the Tower Part II, not only are so-called starving artists without reason to feign alienation (oh, to live the luxurious high life!) but also the so-called “poor student” bodies, slung in expandable low-rise sweatpants in case the Freshman 15 decides to show up.

**Memories of Cultural Development**

I remember the day my mind was blown by an experience in Iowa City’s “cultural district.” After witnessing a bicycle gang of kids who were black storm the pedestrian mall playground equipment, one kid who crashed into a park bench declared, “I must be the nigger.” It was as if the Golden Horde poured into Baghdad. The utopian contact-high of white and Asian parents alike was brought down in less than 30 seconds. I recognized that kid from the low-income housing pegged between Burger King and the Only Deals from the city’s edge. I recognized him because my friend was his neighbor. Was I in the “cultural district?”

After the scene went into Orange Alert, the diversity wannabe’s became refugees. Safe were the over-lookers, jogging in place on the second floor gym in front of a large glass window—seen but not touched.

Put me in charge and I’d take diversity to the next level. First by locating HUD housing and a meat packing plant right in the middle of town, that’s the way to give people of color proper representation and access to fashion and fun as “diversity.” Then I’d make the “as-

**Will Iowa City ever fail to produce a humorously obscure, albeit reliable meta-metropolitanism? Oft from the burp stifling lips of arrogant authorities, such metropolitanism remains an implicit dream and a false claim wrapped inside a single word: “diversity.”**

sociates” pay for the relocation, followed by a Broadway Street bus stop placed in the middle of each of their lawns—with a daily compulsory ride around town, while the Jag goes to Goodwill. Not convinced? You only need visit Czech Town in Cedar Rapids to get an idea of what a “cultural district” really looks like: plenty of brown zones from a long departed steel firm and meat processing plant, plenty of debauch and drinking—and the smell of “Mount Trashmore” breathing on your good humor. (Don’t forget a healthy lower eastside

fistfight over a “got r did!” t-shirt.) Yes, the old steel building was mowed down, and the abandoned meat plant recently sold. And the loony River Walk project—similarly stupid as the Three Towers of Progress—failed along with it. This gave some momentum to the C.R. “Bohemians” who have experience some sort of renaissance, which looks more local and cultural than the likes of giant glass towers for rich people.

Will Iowa City ever fail to produce a humorously obscure, albeit reliable meta-metropolitanism? Oft from the burp stifling lips of arrogant authorities, such metropolitanism remains an implicit dream and a false claim wrapped inside a single word: “diversity.” As Iowa City passes from its micropolitan days of urbanist-argrarian cultural renegades—allegedly responsible for a cultural district—we are experiencing a new ideology. Should there be a contemporary description of culture in that city because of it, I am sure it’s the emergent consumerist-hipster clan floundering and flourishing in commodification’s finest gambit.

True diversity is recognizable by a stunning discomfort, followed by exceptional decisions, not by amounts of upper middle class comforts available. That’s simply the boring and crooked ills found nearly everywhere you go. The ethos of the towers can only generate more passivity and real challenge is claiming diversity and redefining it through intelligent development. The everyday task of climbing out of ego means reaching people not plugged into the debate. No matter what utopia bubble life offers a chosen few, we all loose in the end. Diversity has yet to be defended by the local polity’s snooze-button ethics—half are students—and when it comes to democracy, poor students at best. **lv**

*Adam Staley Groves is a native Cedar Rapiidian and currently a graduate student studying media philosophy at the European Graduate School.*



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Executive director Emily Light and programming director Andy Brodie prepare for a new Bijou.

# Reel time

The Bijou celebrates 35 years

**1972** was a year of many firsts, a year that half the people of Iowa City—when counting undergrads as residents—weren't even born yet to bear witness. These under-35-year-olds missed the introduction of the first hand-held calculator, the launching of Pioneer 10 and Apollo 16 and 17, the first cell phone call, the Watergate scandal and the debut of *The Price is Right* and *M\*A\*S\*H* on CBS.

1972 was also the first year to see a film brought to Iowa City by the student film society and the formation of Bijou Theater. The theater will celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007 with the unveiling of its new space in the Iowa Memorial Union.

"It's a big step in the right direction," said Andy Brodie, the Bijou's programming director.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the local student film society used the IMU's main lounge and ballroom for movie showings. Film projectors and folding chairs showcased the theater's impermanence.

"They would get hundreds or thousands of people at a screening," Brodie said. "Going to films was a more culturally significant thing than people think of it now."

When the Bijou purchased a new 35mm projector in 1995, the only room in the IMU with enough space to house it was the Illinois Room on the third floor. The Bijou moved in but dreamed of better things, such as the easily accessible Terrace Room on the first floor, at the time only big enough to hold a 16mm projector.



The new Bijou Theater will replace the outdated Terrace Room on the IMU's first floor.

Theater staff worked on proposals to revamp the Terrace Room for years, and in 2002-2003 finally succeeded in getting their ideas included in Phase One of the IMU's renovation plans.

The new space will feature several improvements such as surround sound, professional acoustical paneling, black masking and curtains around a larger screen, darkly colored ceiling and walls to absorb light, increased seating capacity, cup-holders on seatbacks, a vestibule to prevent light from entering with latecomers, a more elevated projection room to prevent latecomers from blocking the film's path, a traditional-looking marquee and room for the theater, box office and Bijou offices all in one location.

"It's not to say there aren't limitations to the

space," Brodie said. "It was never intended to be a movie theater, but we're doing everything we can to make the presentation the best it can be. People will find it much more theater-like. We'll feel a lot more settled than we ever have in the Illinois Room."

The renovated theater will allow the Bijou to have a strengthened sense of identity, although it won't belong entirely to the theater. Conferences and meetings will be held in the room as well.

Currently, display cases in the basement feature movie posters, the box office is located on the first floor and the movies are shown in the Illinois Room on the third floor.

"People might see movie posters in the basement and go, 'What the hell is that?'" Brodie said, noting that having everything on



Brodie shows off the 35mm projector, whose size forced the move to the third floor Illinois Room.

“We want to be thought of as a legitimate option for people besides the mall. We’re trying to get at something more than entertainment or making money at the box office.”

- Andy Brodie  
Bijou programming director

the first floor will allow more people to realize the IMU houses a theater.

In its heyday, the Bijou showed five to seven films per week—about 300–400 movies a year. Now, the theater cannot afford to sell enough tickets in one or two screenings to pay for the movie rental and only shows two films a week, opening on Friday nights and ending the following Thursdays.

The Bijou shows a mix of new releases and repertoire classics important to the history of cinema. It is a uniquely student-run, not-for-profit organization. The operating budget accounts for a yearly stipend for the directors and an hourly wage for everyone else. There is no money in the budget to pay for film rentals—they are funded by ticket sales.

Both Brodie and Emily Light, the Bijou’s executive director, agree that the theater’s goal is to entertain, have fun, provoke thought and discussion, and break even.

Brodie notes that Iowa City has 25 movie screens, all owned by the same company (Central States Cinema). He feels that it is important for Iowa City to have the Bijou’s alternate voice.

“We do serve the entire community,” he said. “We want to be thought of as a legitimate option for people besides the mall. We’re trying to get at something more than entertainment or making money at the box office.”

“I don’t think [the Bijou] is quite as comfortable [as mall theaters], but I like that they have a lot of independent films that you can’t see outside of Iowa City,” said Ben Dalgaard, a University of Iowa alum. “I like the fact that you don’t have to drive to it.”

The documentaries Dalgaard has seen in his visits to the theater, including *Y Tu Mamá También* and *Trembling Before G-d*, are typical Bijou fare.

“You might not even think to take it off the shelf at Blockbuster, but here you can share the experience with other people,” Light said. “A lot of people in this town have only had access to these movies because of the Bijou—the source for movies that didn’t play other places.”

“I tell people that what we had upstairs was standard,” Brodie said. “Yeah, it’s not the greatest, but we’re bringing you things that wouldn’t play here otherwise.”

Notable writer T.C. Boyle, who received his M.F.A. through the UI Writers’ Workshop and a Ph.D. from the UI in the 1970s, frequently attended the Bijou during his time in Iowa. He credited the Bijou Theater in a Cedar Rapids Gazette article as having provided his entire film education.

Boyle says that he attended the Bijou once a week.

“It was a cheap date—one dollar. My wife and I saw Bergman and Kurosawa complete, as well as lighter fare such as the entire Sherlock Holmes series.”

Brodie and Light emphasize the uniqueness of the theater movie-viewing experience.

“The best thing for me is when audiences like a movie enough to applaud at the end,” Light said, noting that her favorite film shown in the theater is *Bright Leaves*, a documentary by Ross McElwee.

“It unexpectedly really moved me, and got to the heart of what I love about film,” she explained.

Brodie noted that a recent showing of Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* drew a decent-sized crowd which was really moved and taken over by the funny, sweet nature of the film.

“You feel good you’ve been able to provide this movie and people liked it so much they express it,” he said. “It makes you feel like what you do is worth it.”

Brodie and Light expressed hopes that the Bijou would last another 35 years, impressed that the theater had survived until now.

“It’s a testament to the community that supports it that it’s still here,” Brodie said. “If people don’t come and support it, it will go away.”

Like many other events from 1972, the beginnings of the Bijou are remembered by many.

Boyle, now a professor at the University of Southern California, noted that his fondest memory of the Bijou was the erotic film series:

“We all got to see *Deep Throat*. And then go home. And turn the lights out. Or maybe leave them on.” **IV**

*Riva Geller is a senior at the UI, majoring in psychology and journalism. She enjoys nap-time and shoe shopping.*

## Coming soon

Dec. 1-7:  
*La Moustache & Factotum*

Dec. 9-10:  
*It’s a Wonderful Life*  
Special holiday presentation  
(see A-List, page 27)

Dec. 8-14:  
*Jesus Camp & Metropolis*

# Trading holiday spaces

**T**he White Room happened just before junior high, replacing what used to be the living room. It was my mother's idea. As it was the only communal room in the house, she put the brown Lay-Z-Boy in the kitchen, and the dank, unfinished basement served as the television room until, seemingly in response, my father built The New Room on the back of the house. Provided that we slipped out of our bedroom socks and into clean White Room Socks (bare feet were a no-no, and other socks could have 'other-area-of-the-house dirt' on them), my brother and I were allowed spread out devilishly on The White Room's curious blankness on Christmas, ready to endure the formal awkwardness of opening gifts in a furniture museum. We began to open gifts gently at the tape marks, as though the redness, the greenness of the paper would disturb the colorless display. The White Room gave new meaning, in the Hatch family, to the phrase "White Christmas."

I have just entered a certain type of adulthood common perhaps to many twenty-somethings, wherein my sixty-something parents have also entered a certain type of adulthood. This year on December 25th, my brother and I won't be setting our feet, socks or no socks, into The White Room. He'll be in Colorado with his new wife, and I'll be at a godforsaken golf resort in North Carolina where my parents have decided to grow old with all the other people who decided to grow old there.

I'm not going home for the holidays. I'm going to a retirement community with a great big "Club House" smack dab right in the middle of it.

The White Room is located in Metro Detroit.

The Club House is in North Carolina.

And I'm somewhere in Iowa.

I sentimentalize place a lot. Growing up Motor Cited meant: cars, cars everywhere, trees growing out of cars in abandoned lots, someone somewhere always saying "The Big Three," smoke that rises out of the street sewers to look like ghosts, coney island diners serving gyros all night, pick-up trucks with decals of Calvin pissing on a car logo, not being allowed to shop at Fairlane Mall ("Too dangerous! All those gangs!"), fear in general, streets with mile names, and basements adorned with "Hockey Town" paraphernalia. And of course

all your friends and family. Christmas Motor City-style meant snow and salt residue on cars and pretty much the usual things found in sitcoms about Christmas. Found maybe in "Home Improvement," for instance.

I don't sentimentalize my house, really. The whole box of it was a kind of white room in the white walled, asylum kind of way, though our straightjackets unfortunately had half-functioning sleeves, which made our conflicts more violently hilarious. In fact, I often found myself literally running away from this house

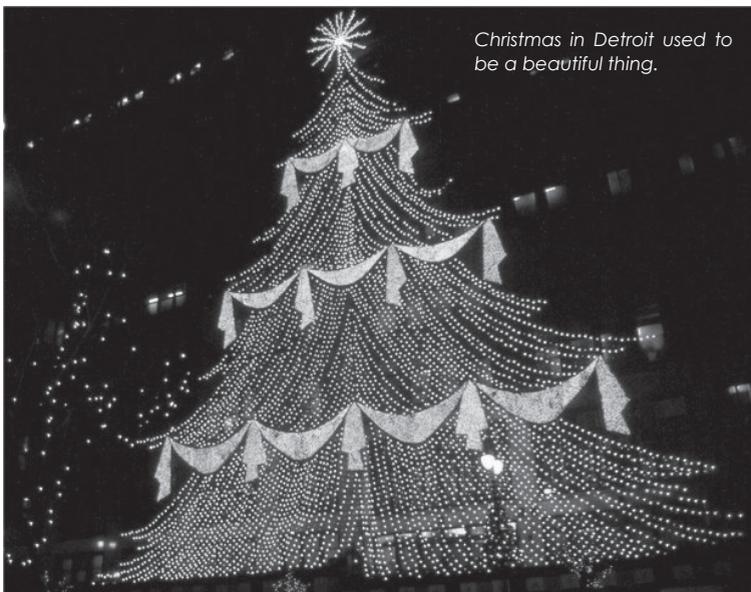
and into the big, gray refuge of the big, gray city. Detroit looked how I felt then, and the cityscape become something bigger than window-barred wig shops and the streets you weren't allowed to go down after dark (or ever).

Places can burrow into you like whole other families. Like people you love so much that you see their shitty, smelly parts and love them anyhow, or hate them in that comfortable way that's usually just mangled, mislaid love. Places begin to have personalities. Detroit wasn't so much of a city to me, rather it was my kindhearted, though sometimes vulgar and usually-stoned uncle. I think I

may be going to go visit some aloof and frigid, perhaps old-money aunt this year.

This is what should be said: There is no White Room in my parents' new house in North Carolina, and I doubt there will be any flailing, dramatic exits onto the green. We were never really White Room people anyhow. The redecoration process was just a very theatrical version of a stress-management bathroom scour. Since moving to the house I have never seen, my parents' telephone manner seems remarkably childlike, chill. North Carolina on their voices is like the bong hit Detroit never gave them. Detroit has a difficult history—and so did that house.

I wonder what it will feel like now, going home to a place that has no difficult history with me. The part of me that doesn't miss the somewhat dreary past (racism, violence, economic disparity) and very questionable future (automotive plants closing daily, a troubled



*Christmas in Detroit used to be a beautiful thing.*

We can't escape family and maybe too we can't really escape home. Maybe we just keep getting more homes... "Home" just becomes a lively extended family of places in our heads.

school system, a dwindling population) of Southeastern Michigan anticipates—with bearable guilt—pine trees and old men in knickers. I'm anxious to see my parents, giddy in their new house.

We can't escape family and maybe too we can't really escape home. Maybe we just keep getting more homes. We get sister-in-laws and new baby cousins and stepfamilies, and we meet the great aunts we've never met before. And, too, we have the places we were born in and the cities we grew up in, and the towns that we moved to, and the places that we dread seeing, and the homes we can't wait to go to. "Home" just becomes a lively extended family of places in our heads.

The White Room pretty much prevented all possibility of parties at my house in high school. Senior year my parents left for a weekend and my best friend Karen convinced me that having a *few* people over to vodka and Seven Up's (clear and teenagey) wouldn't be so bad, especially if we restricted the drinking to The New Room. After some cigarette butts were dropped into a backyard abyss via the slats in the wood of the deck my

Places can burrow into you like whole other families. Like people you love so much that you see their shitty, smelly parts and love them anyhow, or hate them in that comfortable way that's usually just mangled, mislaid love. Places begin to have personalities.

father built in concert with The New Room, we all peeled off our socks and ran barefoot through The White Room. The carpet felt like little velvet on our drunk toes. There may have been dancing. And as I flawlessly vacuumed The White Room carpet into its proper straight lines the next morning, I felt for a second a small and rather psychotic bond with it – how it yielded so selflessly to the machine, smoothing up our footprints as though tickled by and likewise conspiring in our shared secret.

I booked my flight to Raleigh the other day. Ironically, on the way back to Iowa I have a layover in Detroit. I might call Karen for a trip to the closest Coney Island. And then I might ask her to drive me past my old house. Maybe there'll be some kids who live there now. Maybe when we drive by, we'll see them romping about The White Room, kneading their confectionary giggles into the carpeting with each little barefoot jump.

And after all that, I'll come home again—to Iowa. **lv**

*Kristin Hatch likes to play Christmas carols backwards to listen for the secret messages.*

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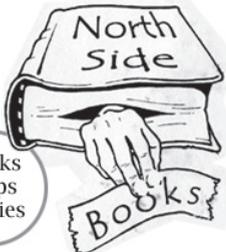
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# Hot stories for a cold break

**W**ell, it's the gift-giving season again and nobody wants to be embarrassed by giving the wrong gift to the wrong person. First of all, if you're giving a gift to a non-reader, *don't* give them a book. It's cruel. No book in the world will make a reader out of a non-reader. Socks, a tie, a Swiss Army knife are all perfectly good gifts for those whose lives do not begin and end in their imaginations.

If, however, you're giving to readers, maybe I can help you out. Fiction has had resurgence since the All-Political-Books-24/7-Since-9/11 period, which has dominated publishing for the past few years. For the hardcore, serious readers of fiction, those who love to bury themselves in a novel and so take their deepest pleasure, there are excellent new novels by Jane Hamilton (*When Madeline Was Young*), Richard Ford (*Lay of the Land*), Chris Adrian (*Children's Hospital*), Mark Haddam—remember *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time?* (*A Spot of Bother*), Kate Atkinson (*One Good Turn*), and Alice McDermott (*After This*).

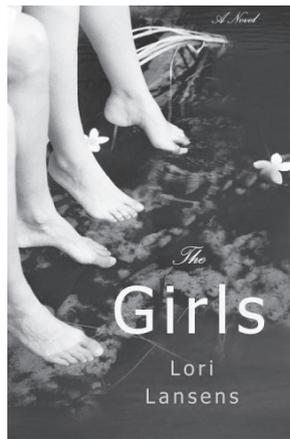
All these novels will please male or female readers, though the McSweeney generation's *Children's Hospital* has a good bit of hot sex in it. For those of Irish extraction, Peter Behrens' darkly lyrical first novel *The*

*Law of Dreams* about Ireland's Great Hunger in 1847 should prove endlessly fascinating and deeply moving. Behrens is of Irish-Canadian background and uses family memories to make this novel sing. It lives as few historical novels live.

In the sub-category Historical Novels About Women (HNAW), Sena Jeter Naslund, author of *Ahab's Wife*, seems to have trumped the field with *Abundance: A Novel of Marie Antoinette*, one of Naslund's thoughtful, well written costume dramas. I prefer *The Observations* by Jane Harris, the delightful tale of a Scottish serving woman in 19th century Edinburgh, whose ability to read and write render her indispensable to her mistress. It's told in the husky, witty, lower class voice of Bessy Buckley, who always knows more than she lets on.

A novel that has moved me deeply this fall is *The Girls* by Lori Lansens. A pair of conjoint twin girls is born and abandoned in the deep sticks of Canada to be raised by the nurse who delivered them and her Slovenian husband. Give this book to

anyone with twins in the family. There is nothing discomfoting about it, and the characters

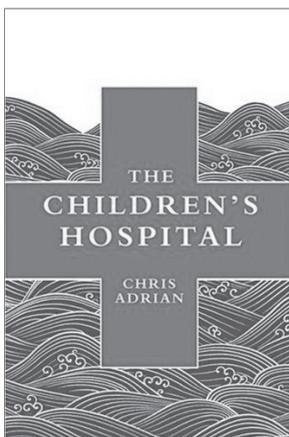


of Ruby and Rose remain distinct and alive throughout this gorgeous novel. It was difficult for me to move on to another book after finishing *The Girls*.

If you're giving to someone with piercings and tattoos, the new Dave Eggers novel, *What is the What* (not a Dr. Seuss bit) is a beautiful tale of Africa with the profits all going to Sudan relief funds. Even more exciting for the intellectual crowd is Thomas

Pynchon's new thousand-pager, *Against the Day*, which should cause a huge stir among English majors. If you must buy a political book for the pundit on your list, Frank Rich's *Greatest Story Ever Sold* is by far the best-written book of the dozens of Bush trashings currently available—and one of the best researched, too. Bob Woodward's *Denial* is also intense and probably the most up to date of the new political books. **lv**

*Paul Ingram has lived in Iowa City for 40 years, during which time he has seldom been spotted not reading a book. He's worked in all the independent bookstores in Iowa City and has served as a personal book consultant for many of the brightest lights in town. His reviews reflect his personal taste and his desire that others get as much pleasure from absorbing the richness that literature can give to one's life.*



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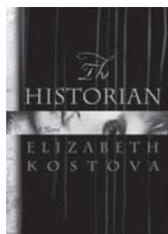
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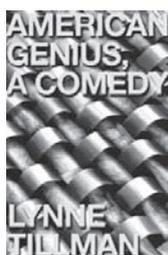
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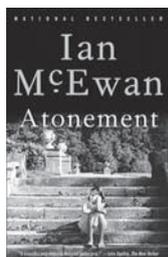
**Magic for Beginners**  
Kelly Link  
This bizarre collection of stories is metaphysical horror, which might take place in a lady's handbag or on a Cub Scout sleepover. There's no one like her. Deeply scary and funny.



**The Historian**  
Elizabeth Kostova  
This is the only Dracula novel I've ever been able to finish with pleasure. It's a long book with a deep sense of Europe's history and mythology about it—better written and more believable than Anne Rice's books.

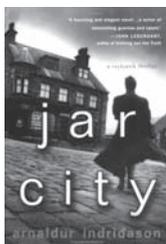


**American Genius, A Comedy**  
Lynn Tillman  
This new book by one of our greatest, though lesser known, novelists is a satire of everything American and many things literary. A woman is placed in a "facility" and beset by dermatologists. That's all I'm telling. Not a tough read but a pleasurable one.



**Saturday & Atonement**  
Ian McEwan  
If you haven't read these books, read either or both. No regrets.

LIGHT (BUT FUN) CRIME



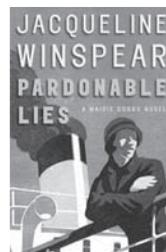
**Jar City**  
Arnhalder Indridison  
This is one of the best of the Neo-Scandinavian police procedurals set in Iceland, a wonderful picture of the culture with a great twisting plot.



**Bangkok 8 & Bangkok Tattoo**  
John Berdett  
Burdett's humorous informative mysteries feature a Buddhist cop, terrified of how he'll return in his next life. *Bangkok 8* (read it first) and *Bangkok Tattoo* are thrilling novels by an author who's lived in Thailand for 15 years.



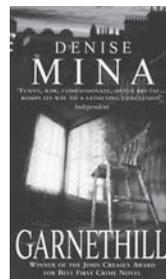
**Dissolution & Dark Fire**  
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# the best of 2006

College radio continues to influence mainstream media as more and more former deejays and programmers leave their stations to be placed in production companies for

commercials, TV shows and movies. This year's unlikely hit from college radio was "Crazy," by Gnarlz Barkley, coming from underground hip hop artist Cee-Lo, who played Hubbard Park a couple of years ago for free, and Danger Mouse, a college radio favorite ever since he defied copyright laws with his *The Grey Album*.

But college radio has never intended to generate crossover hits. This year's KRUI top 20 albums aren't completely independent records and more likely a list of the usual suspects.

Another common theme was being unusually young and successful. Arctic Monkeys, a hyped-up band from England, was recorded when most of the members were under 19 years old. Beirut, the band led by Zach Condon, of the same age, brought probably one of the year's most original albums (think of Radiohead played by a Balkan band). Cansei de Ser Sexy (CSS), a mostly girl Brazilian band, rose to great fame with their single "Let's Make Love and Listen to Death From Above," and their infectious dance punk with a South American flavor.

Cat Power came back with a complexly arranged soul influenced album. New Pornographer members Neko Case and Dan Bejar (Destroyer) reappear in this chart with

their solo projects, showing how deep the talent in that band is. Amadou and Mariam, produced by Manu Chau, was the best world music album of the year (they also were authors of the World Cup anthem). Scottish band Camera Obscura continued their search for

TVOR released the album everyone expected, an ambitious masterpiece that shuns at any precepts of what a pop song should be. But it was Grizzly Bear (in honor of one of the member's ex-boyfriends) that was outright the breakout album of the year—and according to many. I personally came to that conclusion the first time I listened to it. If you haven't heard them I urge you to look at the YouTube videos by Blogotheque.

Locally music has been as strong as ever. Deathships finally released their debut album, which has received rave reviews from deejays and has topped KRUI's charts for many weeks. Their production level has set the bar for years to come. They were also the backing band for Jay Bennett's (ex-Wilco member) comeback tour. Euforquestra and

Public Property made waves in regional festivals, and Will Whitmore, and the Diplomats of Solid Sound made the Friday Night Concert Series one of the best ever. **IV**



the perfect pop song, where their countrymen Belle and Sebastian left off years ago. The Decemberists survived the major label haters, releasing perhaps their best album—this time for Capitol Records.

Calexico solidified as an incredibly eclectic and talented indie band with their new album *Garden Ruin*. At a time in which the country is looking to increase border security, Calexico shows that in open musical borders lays the key to musical perfection. Yo La Tengo continues to be a powerhouse in indie rock, and their ambitious new album on Matador shows that they are not just a band, but many bands, some incredibly loud and powerful, some very subtle and romantic, and others incredibly pleasant and positive.

Marcelo Mena is a PhD student at the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research, where he carries out air pollution modeling for NASA and NCAR aircraft measurement campaigns. He writes for the Chilean website *Super45*, where he's published over 20 interviews while covering concerts in Iowa City. He also co-hosts *Sesiones KRUI* with KVCU DJ Oscar Vega. *Sesiones KRUI* is college radio's first internationally syndicated show. The show is downloaded 400 times weekly through [blog.super45.cl](http://blog.super45.cl).



- Local Release of the Year  
Deathships, *Seeds of Devastation*
- Hip Hop Album of the Year  
The Coup, *Pick a Bigger Weapon*
- Electronic Music Album of the Year  
Electric President, *Electric President*
- Concert of the Year  
Calexico at the Englert Theater
- College Radio Song of the Year  
"You are what you love," Jenny Lewis and the Watson Twins
- College Radio Breakout Song of the Year that We Now Hate  
"Crazy," Gnarlz Barkley (debuted at KRUI in March 2006)
- KRUI in Studio Performance of the Year  
Will Oldham (Honorable Mention: The Metal Hearts)
- KRUI Specialty Show of the Year  
High Plains Hootenanny, with Rob Russell
- KRUI Voice of the Year  
Sid the Kid, from the Hip Hop Amaza Show

# top 20

Albums of the Year

**1** **Grizzly Bear**  
Yellow House  
Warp Records



**2** **TV on the Radio**  
Return to Cookie Mountain  
Interscope Records

**3** **Yo La Tengo**  
I Am Not Afraid of You and I  
Will Beat Your Ass  
Matador Records

**4** **Neko Case**  
Fox Confessor Brings Flood  
Anti

**5** **Calexico**  
Garden Ruin  
Touch and Go

**6** **Band of Horses**  
Everything All the Time  
Sub Pop

**7** **Decemberists**  
The Crane Wife  
Capitol

**8** **Beck**  
The Information  
Interscope

**9** **Camera Obscura**  
Let's Get Out of this Country  
Merge Records

**10** **Amadou and Mariam**  
Dimanche a Bamako  
Nonesuch

**11** **Destroyer**  
Destroyer's Rubies  
Merge

**12** **Goldfrapp**  
Supernatural  
Mute

**13** **Cat Power**  
The Greatest  
Matador



**14** **Sonic Youth**  
Rather Ripped  
Geffen

**15** **Beirut**  
The Gulag Orkestar  
Ba da Bing

**16** **CSS**  
Cansei de Ser Sexy  
Sub Pop



**17** **Deathships**  
Seeds of Devastation  
Self Released

**18** **Raconteurs**  
Broken Soldier Boys  
V2

**19** **Walkmen**  
A Hundred Miles Off  
Record Collection

**20** **Arctic Monkeys**  
Whatever People Say I Am  
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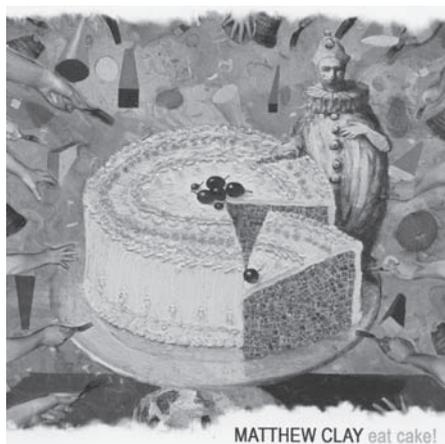
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## Matthew Clay

### *Eat Cake*

Freakin Records

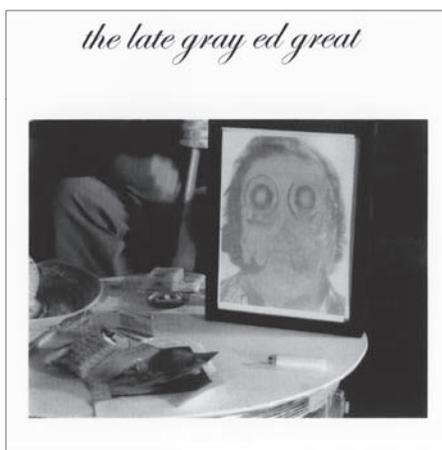
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Matt Clay is the founder of Freakin Records, home also to She Swings, She Sways and Nik Sorak. These folks play on each other's records and all live within shouting distance of each other in Ottumwa, Iowa. While they're close-knit, these musicians don't sound at all the same. She Swings, She Sways' rooty sound contrasts with Nik Sorak's earnest songwriting, which is in turn completely different from Matt Clay's intricate pop songs. The only other thing I know about Ottumwa is that there's a water park there, so it may well be Freakin Records that puts Ottumwa on the map, at least for people who like music and don't have a burning desire to sport about in a wave pool.

*Eat Cake* is just plain poppy as all get out. On first listen, Clay's songs sound as glib as any commercial songs you might hear on Top 40 radio, but it's a mistake to dismiss him as a radio-friendly hack. "The Cake Song," has all the craft and whimsy of Smile-era Brian Wilson. Songs like "33," "Wednesday Full Of Woe" and "Murder Me" show Clay channeling the Beatles by way of XTC. As long as I'm name-checking, let me add Game Theory and Big Star to the list of Clay's fellow travelers. But he's definitely his own man on *Eat Cake*—what he shares with those guys is melodic extravagance, and the ability to be intricate, even devious, while still delivering accessible ear candy. You can make a pop song out of much less than Clay is willing to lavish on each song, but he's fearless enough to squander everything he's got every time out.

In fact, the songs I like least here are the least tricky and most obvious. It's not that they aren't decent songs, but Clay isn't stretching as far with them. "Hazy May" is straight ahead rock-lite, and "Inside Of You" is a ballad that collapses under the weight of its earnestness. But those are minor infractions well overshadowed by the other songs on *Eat Cake*. For a small studio production, this CD has a wide-screen sound, sweetened with layered vocal overdubs, sampled horns and even Spike Jones sound effects. *Eat Cake* is an ambitious and enjoyable first CD, and if Clay, who's pictured on the cover dressed as a chef, keeps cooking up music like this, well...that would be sweet.



## Ed Gray

### *The Late Gray Ed Great*

Hot Potato Records

[www.edwardarthurgray.com](http://www.edwardarthurgray.com)

[www.myspace.com/littleeddiegray](http://www.myspace.com/littleeddiegray)

In Iowa City, the guy frying your eggs is working on a dissertation, and the guy next to you at the coffee shop discovers new elementary particles. Perhaps Iowa City's most unlikely genius is Ed Gray, a grizzled guy who you might see opening a show at a local club with nothing more than his nylon-string guitar and a voice that ranges from an intimate baritone to the bellowing of a drunk shouting across a crowded bar. He put out a CD in 1998 on Super Kick Ass Music, and plays out from time to time, but his tendency to go from a slow, dreamy country song into five minutes of howling feedback hasn't garnered him a huge following locally. The first time I saw him perform, he played a set so raw and shambling that it felt a little like listening to a homeless guy ranting on a street corner. It was great, but great in a way that seemed almost calculated to puzzle and repel an audience looking for comfortable folk music.

*The Late Gray Ed Great* is a CD that finally

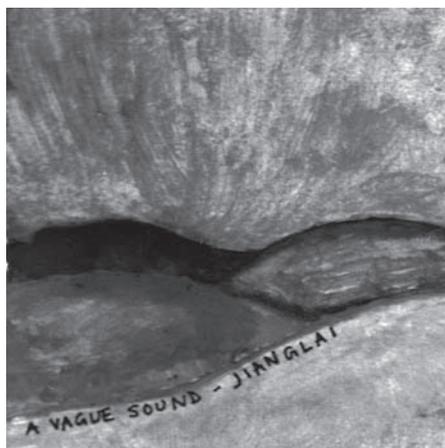
brings Ed's scary talents as a songwriter into sharp focus. The CD opens with three melancholy country waltzes, with searingly bleak lyrics. In "Chester," he sings with sad affection for a terminal drunkard who's "taking up space that nobody else want to fill" and tells him "we're dwelling in a place that physically hates us." The violin parts start out sweet and crescendo to a scary relentless requiem. "Cut" cranks up the volume and gets even more dire: "You're alone now/I never thought you'd last/till the end of today, and it's fading fast fast." "You have me at a disadvantage" is a quiet, slow, pretty ballad with just guitar and voice. The sweetness is cut with an ambiguously dark lyric: "...There's daddy's hunting gun so cool now to my touch, so patient and so sad, but no sweat I'll sit here on your porch step and wait for the time, time that hasn't happened yet."

In "rot luck (black rat snake)," Ed kicks out the jams with a couple of roaring guitar solos and woozy lap steel, ending up with discordant ascending scales and feedback. "Hullo, moon-glow" is a nifty, off-kilter love song that starts out, "Who cares now but the well water tastes like copper and screams when you drink it." In "Drink" when he sings "what shall we play now, the song's lost it's meaning, so here's where the screaming would go if we cared, but the song killed the singer, and the ghost took his place and the crowd never noticed by the look on their face," he's funny, cynical, absurd and sad all at once. The craft Gray expends on his songs is as extravagant as it is unassuming, managing to sound conversational and dashed off, but so perfectly formed that they can't be as artless as they sound.

Ed's singing and guitar playing are of a piece, sometimes delicate, sometimes unruly and wild, but always with an artless directness. Ed's art grows out of a paradox: When he plays nice, he's as good as anyone else, but when he reels out of control, he's great. He has a way of sounding positively broken that carries more emotional truth than conventional performers dare to show.

Ed recorded this album last year with an all-star cast of Omaha musicians, including Simon Joyner, Tiffany Kowalski, Alex McManus and Chris Deden. Their additions, particularly the violin and pedal steel guitar, are spot on, enhancing without overshadowing Ed's playing and singing. *The Late Gray Ed Great* makes it finally clear that Ed Gray is one of the best songwriters in Iowa, and if you'll forgive me a Leonard Maltin corny finish: Better late than never.

## A Vague Sound



## Jianglai

Slanty Shanty Records

[www.avaguesound.com](http://www.avaguesound.com)

[www.myspace.com/avaguesound](http://www.myspace.com/avaguesound)

A Vague Sound is the solo project of Corey Gingerich, who attends the UI in addition to starting his own record label, Slanty Shanty Records. I gather that Corey has played in hardcore bands in the past, but A Vague Sound is laptop electronica with industrial tendencies. It's kinda hard to get a handle on A Vague Sound—hence the name I guess. “Werewolf” combines squelchy synths with a breakbeat and an indecipherable vocal that outlines whatever the opposite of melody is. “Lost In Translation” is an industrial dance track not unlike something Trent Reznor would do, but without the ostentatious doominess. “A Question Of Faith” seems like a cracked homage to New Order’s “True Faith.” With the guitar, synths and vocals apparently all in unrelated key signatures, it definitely embraces the “wrong is right” aesthetic. But what starts out grating can win you over in the end, because it’s self-consistent in it’s wrongness—each part is in it’s own way catchy and completely at odds with everything else. The sound clash is the thing.

“Interlude” continues the deliberate transgressions, putting a dangerously catchy synth figure against a sort of electro-funk groove, only to morph into a minor key piano interlude. This is followed—I think—by “The Thought Process,” which puts Beck-on-a-bad-day falsetto vocals against a banging beat and sinister bass synth. My confusion about which song is which stems from the CD having 11 tracks, but the cover listing 12 songs titles. Some of the songs seem to begin in the middle of a CD track, so I’m never really sure what the hell is going on.

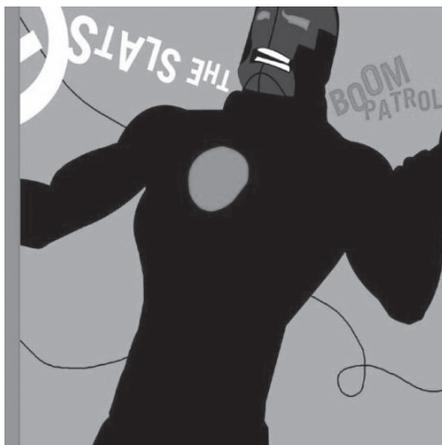
So on *Jianglai*, Corey has me completely perplexed, but strangely entertained. He has a way of taking something accessible and con-

ventionally attractive and then screwing it up with a jarring or dissonant sound with that still seems to “rhyme.” And with the vocals buried in the mix and often distorted, I have no idea what the hell he’s singing about, either. I think a lot of people who like music that stays closer to the rock or folk traditions would find this CD to be awful beginning to end. But there’re genuinely catchy hooks that jump out at you when you least expect it, and indistinct bits of strange noise that jump in to keep things from ever settling down into something conventionally musical. If *Jianglai* is meant to confuse the hell out of you, it succeeds—I honestly can’t tell if Corey is deliberately messing with a listener’s musical expectations or if he’s just tone deaf and musically incompetent. The real genius of “A Vague Sound” is that of those two alternatives: prankster or doofus. It’s hard to say which would ultimately be more awesome.

*Kent Williams writes the software that makes the whole world sing. Or at least, the software that helps psychiatrists classify anatomic features of the brain. He also produces his own electronic music and writes for various publications. Turn ons: creative use of a ring modulator and cooking with garlic. Turn offs: Meat nuggets, CNN and Fox News.*

## The Slats

### Boom Patrol



Latest Flame Records

[www.theslats.com](http://www.theslats.com)

[www.myspace.com/theslats](http://www.myspace.com/theslats)

“I feel the need to relocate so get out of my way,” sings Slats leader Brian Cox, and this Iowa trio is indeed now based in Minneapolis (although part of the band remains in Iowa City when they’re not on tour). The move seems to be doing wonders for their visibility, yielding some well-deserved press for *Boom Patrol*, their fifth full-length album.

The Slats continue to be saddled with the “lo-fi” tag, but it’s been a few records since they’ve actually sounded anything less than polished and professional in the studio. Then again, they’ve managed to keep things simple enough to retain their catchy punk rock spirit. (Cox is credited with playing the “four-string guitar” in the liner notes.) While everyone seems to draw comparisons to riff-based rockers Guided By Voices, “Call My Telephone” recalls more straightforward outfits like the White Stripes than anything.

The most striking thing about The Slats has always been the amazing use of wrong notes that sound right, something that needs to be heard in order to be believed. It’s as if Cox has invented his own musical scale that has little to do with traditional rock guitar, and the results are often both chaotic and perfectly matched to the tune at hand.

Guitarist Jon Hansen continues to add elements of rap to the proceedings, a venture that could go horribly wrong in lesser hands. Hansen was a member of Iowa City’s hip hop collective Psychosomatic, and even a full-on stab at Slats-rap like “Ignatius” is so much fun that any sense of novelty is quickly forgotten. Even the title track tips its hat to the rappers lurking in their indie rocking shells.

*Boom Patrol* is not exactly a concept album, at least not in the traditional sense, but the superhero imagery that adorns the cover is found in every nook and cranny on this comic book of a record. Whether issuing the “I’m an ironman” credo on the opening song or slyly bragging about writing the code that crashed a thousand computers, Cox has given himself so completely to the spirit of the comics world that his music could easily serve as the soundtrack to the latest big screen Marvel flick.

The Slats’ overall sound hasn’t changed all that much since their earlier home recordings, but their concepts and approach to writing stabbing Midwestern punk rock was pretty mature from the outset. Here’s hoping that their hard work pays off by exposing larger audiences to their irresistible brand of music, which would be right at home on a Warped tour stop.

*William Fare lives and works in Cedar Rapids, Iowa where he plays music, writes about music and lives in harmony with his piles of records.*

## Art/Exhibits

### African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center

55 12th Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 877-526-1863

*Scrapbook of Memories: African American History in Cedar Rapids, Iowa*, through Jan. 2 • *Africans in Iowa, ongoing*.

### AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave., Iowa City, 351-1227

30 x 5, through Dec. 7.

### Art Mission

114 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 466-1006

Small Advertising Posters, through Dec. 31.

### Barnes and Noble

1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville, 337-3337

Mohammed Ali, paintings, throughout December.

### Bella Joli

125 S. Dubuque St., 341-4562

Lonna Keller, various designs, through Feb. 1.

### Brucemore

2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids, 362-7375

*The Families of the Brucemore*, ongoing.

### Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 366-7503

*Rembrandt Magnified*, through Dec. 31 • *Art in Roman Life*, through Dec. 31 • *Cedar Rapids: Day into Night*, through Jan. 7, 2007 • *Midwestern Visions: Grant Wood, Marvin Cone and Beyond*, through Sep. 2 2007.

### Chait Galleries Downtown

218 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 338-4442

*Passion for Paint*, Gretchen Caracas-Rogovin & Brad Krieger, through Dec. 15 • *Faces and Figures: A Festival of Life*, Alicia Brown, paper work; Mary Koenen Clausen, compositions; Bekah Ash, representational oil paintings; John Coyne, metal sculpture; Heidi Hehnly, mixed media, through Dec. 31 • *Simply Stunning*, George Walker, Louise Rauh, Sara Slee Brown, various works, through Dec. 26.

### The Cottage

14 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 351-0052

Angela S. Tornabane, through Dec. 30 • Brian Massa, black and white photographs, through Dec. 30 • Corbin Bailey, abstract paintings, through Dec. 30.

### CSPS

1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, 364-1580

Three Czech Painters: Michael Rittstein, Boris Jirku, Josef Bolf, through Jan. 21.

### Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 688-2653

*People, Places and Things*, drawings and paintings

by Ruth Muir, through Dec. 30.

### Endorphinden

632 S. Dubuque, Iowa City, 688-5185

Jennifer G. Schwartz, Recent Works, Closing reception, Dec. 23, 5pm.

### Faulconer Gallery

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell, 641-269-4660

*Left Behind*, Angela Strassheim, through Dec. 10 • *Portraits from Asia*, Marco van Duyvendijk, through Dec. 10.

### Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

110 Parkside Dr., West Branch, 643-2541

Charles Dickens Christmas, through Jan. 2.

### The History Center

615 1st Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 362-1501

*Living along the Tributaries*, ongoing • *Timequest*, ongoing.

### Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City, 351-8686

Handmade for the Holidays, through Dec. 31.

### M.C. Ginsberg

110 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 351-1700

*Organic Form meets Geometric*, Minato Nakamura, through Dec. 31.

### Mythos

9 S Linn St., Iowa City, 337-3576

*Buddhas of Compassion*, through December.

### National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

30 16th Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids, 362-8500

*Works by Warhol from the Cochran Collection*, through Mar. 11 • *Homelands: The Story of the Czech and Slovak People*, ongoing.

### Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, UI Campus, 335-0548

*Animals Among Us*, animal photography, through Jan. 14.

### The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 354-4788

*What a Load of Craft!*, local art show/sale, record swap, live music, Dec. 9, 5pm on.

### Science Station

427 1st Street SE, Cedar Rapids, 363-IMAX

*Hunters of the Sky*, through Dec. 10 • *Whodunit? The Science of Solving Crime*, through Dec. 30 • *Fossil Lab*, Iowa fossils and a T-Rex, through Dec. 30 • *Lights at Night*, ongoing.

### Senior Center

28 S. Linn Street, Iowa City, 356-5222

*Morning Light*, Suzy Maktabi, through Jan. 15 • *An Uncommon Eye*, paintings by Louis Picek, through July 30.

### UI Hospitals and Clinics

Project Art of UIHC, Iowa City, 353-6417

*All exhibits, Patient & Visitor Activities Center, 8th floor John Colloton Pavilion unless noted otherwise.*

*Naked Truths: An Odyssey in Poetry, Painting, & Prose*, Kristi Ylvisaker & Mary Ylvisaker Nilsen, works based on the writings of Denise Levertov, Gallery II • Work by Dale Phelps, through Feb. 2, Galley I • Work by Joan Webster-Vore, through Jan. 17, main lobby 1<sup>st</sup> floor John Colloton Pavilion.

### UI Main Library

100 Madison St., Iowa City, 335-5299

*As Long As Condition Permit: Science Fiction Fanzines During World War II*, through Jan. 31, third floor.

### UI Museum of Art

150 North Riverside Dr., Iowa City, 335-1727

*The Need to Dream of Some Transcendent Meaning*, Jules Kirschenbaum, through Dec. 10 • *Animal Expressions*, International Perspectives from the Collection, through Dec. 31.

### US Bank

204 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 356-9000

*Portraits in the Wild: Memories of East Africa, a Vanishing Eden*, portraits by Gerry & Bernita Howe, through Jan. 15.

## Music

### Clapp Recital Hall

UI campus, Iowa City, 335-1160

*All music 8pm unless noted otherwise.*

Jeffrey Agrell, horn; John Manning, tuba; Richard Gloss, piano, Dec. 1 • Jazz Repertory Ensemble, Dec. 2 • UI Philharmonia and All-University String Orchestra, Dec. 3 • Maurita Murphy Mead, clarinet; Rafael Dos Santos, piano, Dec. 5 • University and Concert Bands, Dec. 6 • Jazz Alumni All-Stars, Dec. 7 • Center for New Music and Electronic Music Studios, Dec. 9 • Hannah Holman, cello; Rene Lecuona, piano, Dec. 10, 3pm • Semi-Annual Last Chance Concert, Iowa Percussion, Dec. 10.

### CSPS

1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, 364-1580

*All music 8pm, except Sundays, 7pm.*

Tribute, Dec. 1-2, 8pm • Shout Sister Shout: Steppin' In It with Rachael Davis, Jan. 22.

### Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 688-2653

Replacing Property: A Benefit for Public Property, Dec. 13, 7pm • Iris Dement, Dec. 16, 8pm • 1964: The Tribute, Jan. 18, 8pm.

### Hancher Auditorium

UI campus, Iowa City, 335-1160

Paquito D'Rivera, Dec. 1, 7:30pm • Dianne

Reeves, "Christmas Time is Here," Dec. 8, 7:30pm  
 • Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano, *Fiesta Navidad*, Dec. 10, 4pm • Holiday Pops: Sounds of the Season, Cedar Rapids Symphony, Dec. 19, 7:30pm • Hamburg Symphony, Jan. 21, 7:30pm

**Harper Hall**

**Voxman Music Building, UI Campus, 335-1603**  
*All music, 8pm unless noted otherwise.*  
 Paquito D'Rivera, Dec. 1, 3pm •

**House of Aromas**

**118 S. Clinton St., Iowa City**  
*Incarnation: The Languages of Belief, Proof and Contradiction*, Dec. 8 through February.

**The Mill**

**120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City, 351-9529**  
*Open Mike Mondays, 8 pm • All music, 9pm unless noted otherwise.*  
 The Wilders, The Finder Band, Dec. 1 • Escape the Floodwater Jug Band, Dec. 2 • Indigenious, Dec. 6 • Truckstop Honeymoon, Dec. 7 • Andre Perry & Jason Lewis, Dec. 8 • Kelly Pardekooper, Dec. 9 • The Nadas: Acoustic Duo, Dec. 12 • Billy Howke and the Hoax, The East Side Guys, A Vague Sound, Glowing Glass, The Puritanicals, Dec. 15 • Jason Reeves, Dec. 16 • Dennis McMurrin and the Demolition Band, Dec. 22, 9:30pm • Bastard Sons of Johnny Cash, Dec. 28 • New Beat Society, Dec. 29 • Public Property, Dec. 31.

**U.S. Cellular Center**

**370 First Ave., Cedar Rapids, 362-1729**  
 Martina McBride, "The Joy of Christmas Show," Dec. 9, 8pm • Disturbed, Stone Sour, Flyleaf, Nonpoint, Dec. 21, 7pm.

**Paramount Theatre**

**123 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 363-1888**  
 Pianist Jim McDonough & his Orchestra, "Holiday Grande 2006," Dec. 10, 2:30pm • Go Fish, Christmas Show, Dec. 11, 7pm • Holiday Pops: Sounds of the Season, Cedar Rapids Symphony, Dec. 16-17, 2:30pm & 7:30pm • *Masterworks IV*, Cedar Rapids Symphony; Sheryl Staples, violinist, Jan. 27, 8pm.

**A-LIST**

**It's a Wonderful Life**  
**Bijou Theater**  
 Dec. 9, 7pm • Dec 10, 2pm  
[www.bijoutheater.org](http://www.bijoutheater.org)

So, there really is something about watching a classic film with a whole bunch of other people watching a classic film—and what better classic film, and at what better time of year, to watch *It's a Wonderful Life*?

Sure, the film plays 'round the clock on Christmas, but the suicide attempt will look even more dramatic on the Big Screen, and Jimmy Stewart dipping Donna Reed for a triumphant kiss will reinforce our beliefs that traditional family love truly will conquer all—even bankruptcy.



Of course, this film isn't just about traditional love and community handouts, monopolistic slumlords and being stuck in a crummy little town, it's about sobering up in the morning and realizing that life is worth living. It's about cute little blond girls who believe in angels, and it's about cussin' out The Man—even if it's only with minor expletives.

What would life be like if you never existed? Would your brother be dead right now? Would a childhood friend now be a prostitute facing arrest? Maybe you need your own personal Clarence for this holiday season.

You just know y'all be singing "Auld Lang Syne" as you exit, and wouldn't that be delightful?

Brings tears to the eyes just thinking about it.

Bah Humba! Be a Heatmiser at...  
**PHYSICAL CHALLENGE**  
 ...AND DANCE!  
**THURSDAY NIGHTS!!!**  
 AND TOTALLY FREE!!  
 19+

**Tues. Dec. 5 -- ALL AGES 6PM**  
**Cattle Decapitation**  
 Goatwhore Lair of the Minotaur DAATH

**Thurs. Dec. 7 --**  
**The Hold Steady**  
 Catfish Haven Sybris

**Sat. Dec. 9 --**  
**What A Load Of Craft**  
 local artists displaying and selling their work as well as the 1st Annual Picador Record Fair downstairs!  
**Early Show -- tba**  
**Late Show --** Ed Gray Blizzards of Wizards East Side Guys Coyote Blood

**Tues. Dec. 12 -- Ambulette**

**Sat. Dec. 16 --**  
**Orquesta de Jazz y Salsa Alto Maiz**

**Sat. Dec. 23 --**  
**Autodramatics** Thee Almighty Handclaps

**Wed. Dec. 27 --**  
**Sea of Miranda**  
 Dillweed Telomere Repair

**Thurs. Dec. 28 --**  
**The Feeding**  
 With Dead Hands Rising The Serpent Son

**Fri. Dec. 29 --**  
**The Bent Scepters**  
 Thee Almighty Handclaps

**Sat. Dec. 30 -- Coop's B-Day party!!**  
**The Bad Fathers**  
 Coolzey Damn The Gods Voodoo Kitten

**Sun. Dec. 31 --**  
**NEW YEARS EVE** with  
**Murder By Death**  
 2 SHOWS!  
 EARLY ALL AGES 6PM  
 LATE 19+ 9:30PM  
 with **Tornavalanche**

**Sat. Jan. 6 --**  
**The 10th Annual Elvis Tribute and Benefit**

**Fri. Jan. 12 --**  
**The Diplomats of Solid Sound**  
 The Afterparty

**THE PICADOR**  
 330 E. Washington [www.thepicador.com](http://www.thepicador.com)

**CARVER-HAWKEYE ARENA**  
**CHRISTMAS**

**ARTS & Crafts SHOW**

Over 150 Exhibitors

**SUN., DEC. 10**  
 CARVER-HAWKEYE ARENA  
 IOWA CITY, IOWA  
 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 ADM.: \$3  
 Over 150 Talented Exhibitors Present The Midwest's Finest Handcrafts with 1,000's of Unique Creations.  
 Something for every style, taste and budget. A Fantastic Christmas Shopping opportunity.  
 Callahan Promotions, Inc., 563-652-4529

**The Picador**

**330 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 354-4788**

*Physical Challenge Dance Party, Thursdays, 9pm. All music, 9pm unless noted otherwise.*

Karl Denson Trio, Dec. 1, 8pm • Towncrier, Dec. 2, 9pm • Tight Phantomz, Pinebender, Euphone, Dec. 3, 9pm • Cattle Decapitation, Goat Whore, Lair of the Minotaur, Daath, Dec. 5, 6pm • The Hold Steady, Sybris, Dec. 7, 8pm • *What a Load of Craft!*, music and art, late show: Ed Gray, Blizzards of Wizards, East Side Guys, Coyote Blood, Knorosov; early show: 12 Canons, Lipstick Homicide, Quiet Bears, Moist Ladies\* Dec. 9, 6pm • Ambulette, Dec., 9pm • Pomeroy, Bottle of Justus, Dec. 14, 9pm • Naked Hasselhoff, The Pee Pees, Illinois John Fever, Family Van, Dec. 15 • Orquesta de Jazz Y Salsa Alto Maiz, Dec. 16, 9pm • Autodramatics, Thee Almighty Handclaps, Surf Zombies, Dec. 23, 9pm • Sea of Miranda, Dillweed, Telomere Repair, Dec. 27 • The Feeding, With Dead Hands Rising, The Serpent Son, Dec. 28, 6pm • The Bent Scepters, Thee Almighty Handclaps, Dec. 29 • Matt Cooper's Birthday Party: Bad Fathers, Coolzey, Damn the Gods, Voodoo Kitten, Dec. 30 • Murder by Death, Tornavalanche, Dec. 31, 9:30pm.

**Sanctuary**

**405 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 351-5692**

*All music, 10pm.*

UI Jazztet, Dec. 2 • UI Jazz Alumni, Dec. 8-9 • Saul Lubaroff Quartet, Dec. 16.

**Senior Center**

**28 S. Linn Street, Iowa City, 356-5222**

New Horizons Woodwind Ensemble, Dec. 5, 2:30pm • New Horizons Band Brass & Percussion Ensemble, Dec. 7, 2:30pm • UIHC Heartbeat Choir Holiday Concert, Dec. 11, 12:15pm • New Horizons Concert Band Holiday Program, Dec. 14, 2:30pm • Holidays with the Voices of Experience, Dec. 19, 2:30pm.

**UI Hospitals and Clinics**

**Project Art of UIHC, Iowa City, 353-6417**

*John Colloton Pavilion Atrium, 12pm, unless noted otherwise.*

The Chameleons, Dec. 1 • The Heartbeats, Dec. 8 • Jazz Band, Dec. 15 • Clinton High School Choir, Dec. 18 • Sugar and Spice, Dec. 19, 6pm • Tipton High School Choir, Dec. 20 • Kol Shira, Dec. 21, 10am • Xavier High School Choir, Dec. 21.

**UI Museum of Art**

**150 North Riverside Dr., Iowa City, 335-1727**

*WSUI's Know the Score Live!*

Volkan Orhon, Bahri Karacay, Alaa Elwany, Maurita Murphy Mead, Dec. 1, 5pm • Maia Quartet, Gro Sandvick, Jan. 26, 5pm.

**Uptown Bill's Small Mall**

**401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 339-0401**

*Open Mic Night, every Friday, 8-11pm.*

**Yacht Club**

**13 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 337-6464**

*Blues Jam, Sundays, 9pm; Throwdown: Free Dance Party, Tuesday nights; Open Jam, Wednesdays, 10pm. All music, 9pm, unless noted otherwise.*

Koi, Dead Larry, Dec. 1 • Dennis McMurrin and the Demolition Band, Dec. 2 • Part One Tribe, Caleb Ryder & Friends, Rude Punch, Dec. 7 • Gglitch, Caveman Spaceship, Dec. 8 • Chicago Funk Review, Insectoid, Dec. 9 • Public Property, Broke Out Steppers, Dec. 14 • New Beat Society, Run Side Down, Dec. 15 • Hunab Ku, Javier Trejo, Dec. 16 • She Swings She Sways, Moonshine Runners, Dec. 28 • Bad Fathers, Dec. 29, 10pm • Homemade Headtrip, Shame Train, Highway Shelter, Dec. 30 • Euforquestra, Dec. 31 • Wooley, Jan. 5 • Mayflies, Koi, The Supporters, Jan. 6 • Lunatix on Pogostix, The Trollies, Jan. 12 • The Gglitch, Jan. 13 • Paradise City, Guns n' Roses Tribute, Dec. 19 • New Beat Society, Hunab Ku, more TBA, Jan. 20, 7pm.

**Theater/Performance/Dance/Comedy**

**Englert Theatre**

**221 E. Washington St., Iowa City, 688-2653**

*The Nutcracker, Dec.1-2 • The Tender Land, Dec. 8-9, 8pm, Dec. 10, 2pm • The Second City, Jan. 25-27, 8pm.*

**Hancher Auditorium**

**UI campus, Iowa City, 335-1160**

*The Chanukkah Story, The Western Wind, Dec. 3, 2pm • Simple Gifts, Cashore Marionettes, Jan. 23-26, Jan. 27, 1pm & 4pm, Hancher Loft.*

**Old Brick**

**26 E. Market St., Iowa City**

Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol, Dec. 2, 9, 6:30pm & 8:30pm.

**Paramount Theatre**

**123 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids, 363-1888**

*Great Russian Nutcracker, Dec. 2, 3pm • Jesus Christ Superstar, Jan. 10, 7:30pm • Jim Gaffigan, Jan. 28, 7:30pm.*

**Riverside Theatre**

**213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 338-7672**

*Small Miracles, Dec. 9-10 • Guys on Ice: An Ice Fishing Musical Comedy, Jan. 26-Feb. 18.*

**Space/Place Theatre**

**North Hall, UI campus, Iowa City**

Graduate Concert, Dec. 1-2, 8pm • Advanced Choreographic Design Concert, Dec. 7-9, 8pm.

**Theatre Cedar Rapids**

**102 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids, 366-8592**

*Thursdays, Fridays, & Saturdays: 7:30pm; Sundays: 2:30pm. Christmas: Hans Christian Andersen, Dec. 1-3, 8-10, 14-17.*

**UI Theatres**

**Theatre Bldg., UI campus, Iowa City, 335-1160**

*Tall Grass Gothic, Dec. 1-3, 6-9, 8pm, Theatre B.*

**U.S. Cellular Center**

**370 First Ave., Cedar Rapids, 362-1729**

Disney on Ice, Dec. 1-2, 7pm, Dec. 2, 11am & 3pm, Dec. 3, 1pm.

**Words**

**Iowa City Public Library**

**123 S. Linn St., Iowa City, 356-5200**

*International Writing Program panel discussion, Fridays, 12pm*

**The Mill**

**120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City, 351-9529**

*Every 2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month, The Big Idea, Slam Poetry. Talk Art Cabaret, Dec. 20, 10pm.*

**Pomerantz Center**

**UI Campus, 335-0416.**

*"Study War No More: Violence and the Literary Imagination," Robert Hass, Dec. 1, 4pm.*

**Prairie Lights**

**15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City, 337-2681**

*All reading 7pm unless noted otherwise. Gary Holthaus, Lisa Knopp, Dec. 1 • Peter Behrens, Dec. 7.*

**Sanctuary**

**405 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 351-5692**

Talk Art Cabaret, Writer's Workshop Readings, Dec. 7.

**Shambaugh House**

**UI Campus, Iowa City**

Brenda Hillman, Robert Hass, poetry reading, Dec. 6, 8pm.

**UI Museum of Art**

**150 North Riverside Dr., Iowa City, 335-1727**

*Know the Score Live Dale Fisher, Dec. 1, 5pm • Alan Sener, Jon Winet, Alan MacVey, Jan. 26, 5pm.*

**Film/Video**

**Bijou Theatre**

**UI Memorial Union**

**UI Campus, 335-3258**

*La Moustache & Factotum, Dec. 1-7 • Jesus Camp & Metropolis, Dec. 8-14 • It's a Wonderful Life, Dec. 9, 7pm, Dec. 10, 2pm.*

**Uptown Bill's Small Mall**

**401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City, 339-0401**

*Movie Night, Sundays, 6pm.*

HALL MALL from page 9

In 2004, with the independent spirit, youthful zeal and naiveté which is a hallmark of Hall Mall tenants, Kelly Stucker bought an existing Hall Mall smoke shop, Shasta Mountain, re-opening under the name The Konnexion.

“I used to hang out at The Hall Mall when I was about fifteen – I remember flirting with the cute guy at Moon Mystique. Twelve years later, I have my shop in that same spot...it felt really freakin’ awesome when I got my key to the front door and the old Moon Mystique. It was just fate...”



In October 2004, my wife Ericka and I were pedaling my paintings and custom bikes and her jewelry at the “Inktober” Tattoo Expo when we met Kelly and Davey. They convinced us that The Hall Mall was coming back, and we should consider renting a space. We opened FERAL! on a shoestring, just before Christmas, selling vintage oddities, lowrider bikes and outsider art and homemade organic catnip toys. It seemed, somehow, like a good fit.

As with all things, the cycle is coming back around, and the “Schneider Building Offices” are being reinvented once again. The Hall Mall has become a music venue, featuring some of the best young acts in the area and offering the only space in town available to the experimental and unabashedly weird. As it has always been, the potential of the space is limited only by the resourcefulness of its occupants.

As I grow older and more cynical, I remain optimistic about The Hall Mall. As I watch the increasing corporatization of our society, it seems more and more essential to maintain an outpost whose only mission is to buck the system. If counterculture can truly have a tradition, it is ours to uphold. Like Marlon Brando in *The Young Ones*, when asked, “Hey Johnny, What are you rebelling against?” The Hall Mall answers, “What have you got?” **lv**

*Rich Dana plans to continue compiling Hall Mall history—if you have stories about or photographs of The Hall Mall throughout the ages you would like to share, please contact Rich at [feral@dana-arts.com](mailto:feral@dana-arts.com).*

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# Begging for the Big O!

If you don't know exactly how to give your woman an amazing orgasm every-single-time, someone else will," says Femaleorgasmsrevealed.com, with the Web site's own italics. So it seems as if both partners should care about whether she comes or not, no?

John Cameron Mitchell's new film, *Shortbus*, dedicated an entire plotline to the female search for orgasm, playing up the irony that couple counselor/sex therapist Sofia was pre-orgasmic, meaning, well, the girl couldn't get her tingle tickled.

The movie opens with a sex scene between Sofia and her husband, which could have been a page-by-page re-enactment of Nerve.com's *Position of the Day Playbook*. From the "Sex on the brain" (May 25<sup>th</sup>, where the woman stands on her head to receive penetration) to the "How Dr. Heimlich got his big idea" (June 2<sup>nd</sup>, bent over on all fours with a wrap-around grab-fest), Sofia exhausts limbs and limberness to fabricate her own pleasure. She even pretends to stop him from letting her come too soon.

"Remember, a position of the day keeps the love doctor away," states the back of this Nerve.com book. But, apparently, a position-a-day doesn't even help this love doctor herself. In the post-coital convo, Sofia confides to her husband that a friend of theirs has not even been able to achieve orgasm with her partner, following with an aren't-they-so-lucky-that-they-themselves-have-such-a-great-sex-life?

Orgasm: faked.

Maybe the reason she wasn't able to achieve orgasm has to do with the fact that an orgasm has to be "achieved" rather than "felt." One popular notion as to why it's harder for women to come is because of the pressure they feel to succeed in having one in the first place.

However, the less-often discussed reason women come with less regularity than men is because of the vag its-genital-self. It's not always built for it. It sometimes is, but it sometimes isn't.

The book *Guide to Getting It On!*, by Paul Joannides, cites a study done in the 1950s by

Kermit Kranz where he found that female genitals are as individual as fingerprints. (And it wasn't the kind of "hands-on" experiment your naughty little mind is thinking of. Kranz wasn't so lucky to work with *living* bodies—he had to dissect corpse-vulvas.) Nerve endings vary from female to female, he found, and so a technique that revs one woman's engine will make another's sputter.

According to the book *The Female Thing*, by polemicist and cultural theorist Laura Kipnis, only 29 percent of women report always having an orgasm, and 75 percent of women need



that "final push" to finally "achieve" one; i.e., stimulate the clit and you'll have it.

This, she rants, does shit for women's position in the orgasm-gap. First a glass ceiling on

## First a glass ceiling on wages and then an anatomical barrier to the body's pleasure peak.

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"No one likes to say this, for obvious reasons," she writes, "...but among Nature's little jokes at women's expense are the entire excruciating, immobilizing burden (sorry, "privilege") of childbearing (a privilege that can kill you, thanks), PMS, painful sexual initiation... and on top of all that, the unkindest joke of all: the placement of the clitoris, the primary locale of female sexual pleasure, at some remove from the vagina, the primary locale of

human sexual intercourse."

This great distance seems to lead guys to faraway lands of not-clitoris—or worse—not-responding clitoris. Jokes about finding the elusive clitoris abound in pop culture (from Jane in the British sitcom *Coupling*: "How difficult is front and center? I mean it doesn't hide or pop 'round the back or anything"); and a gi-normous, glowing clit appears as the Holy Grail sought by four South Park young'ins in a feature-length flick.

The clitoris even has its own international day of celebration (March 20<sup>th</sup>), a day dedicated to the eradication of female circumcision. And—in our Western, cum-shot obsessed, equality seeking culture—why wouldn't we want to eradicate that which prevents our "primary locale of female sexual pleasure" from doing its non-biological job to help us feel liberated?

After all, without one, a girl might as well give up on the idea that her lover could find it, much less touch it right. It's just that the *possibility* of response once found compensates for thrust after thrust leading to not-orgasm.

Not-orgasm in this day and age confirms the nagging notion that our love lives aren't as good as we imagine they could be. And so, like Sofia, we fake it.

Yes, even Queen Zelda has faked an orgasm or two, usually to get out of a "jamb." *Shortbus*' Sofia faked it through years of marriage, what jamb was she trying to get out of?

Her desperation for orgasm climaxed as she failed to climax at the orgyfic *Shortbus*, the sex club. Her husband literally lost control of her femme-pink vibrating egg—her vibrator's remote control became confused with the on-the-fritz television's remote—and in a rage, she grabbed a mannequin's burlesque-decked leg (complete with red tights and black heels) and gave that vibrating egg a good burlesque-leg thrashing.

Hmm...frustrated much?

See, Sofia was a failure, or at least she felt like one when it came to having orgasms. She could achieve positive results when counseling couples, but she couldn't achieve orgasm when fucking her husband. For however many years of marriage, faking success seemed to be better than trying something new. **lv**

*Pink Cashmere Kink is Iowa City's only column for sex positive ranting and ravings. Queen Zelda does it for the love and loves what she does. For questions and comments, email queenzelda.lv@gmail.com.*

FORECAST FOR DECEMBER 2006

**♈ ARIES**—Your situation is quite hopeful but rather unwieldy. It will be hard to make all the pieces come together and go in the right direction, but indications are positive overall. You are insulated somewhat from risks. Take the high road. Dodging moral and spiritual issues will get you in trouble this month. Don't let manipulations and power plays mess up key relationships. Anything that educates or broadens the mind, like travel or study, is strongly favored. Events or people who live at some distance will have a beneficial influence.

**♉ TAURUS**—Financial issues are very strongly emphasized. Complex and momentous long-term financial decisions are in the works. Let situations develop; let facts emerge before making final decisions. If you take it slow and keep day-to-day costs down, you will hit your targets. However, investment and saving issues are quite favorably expected overall, so don't worry. All your financial holdings should grow a little faster from now on, no matter what. It is especially important to integrate family and community concerns wisely into your overall lifestyle. Avoid schemers on the job.

**♊ GEMINI**—Your continued financial success depends on your ability to win over many people with differing agendas. You are one of many voices trying to influence important events. Relations with most key associates are shifting, also. However, your voice is particularly appealing to both the minds and the hearts of those who must hear you. Although the situation is surprisingly complex, the general atmosphere is supportive, and your message has weight and central importance. Don't compromise your ideals to succeed. You'll only end up facing the same issues again, very soon.

**♋ CANCER**—Your preferences and desires take a back seat to the needs and demands of others—at home and at work. Many people have issues and questions that relate directly to things that you understand innately and that are especially important to you. Help others work through the complications and risks so they can see the benefits. Help them understand that, despite appearances, good things are definitely coming. You must dig deep, find the right thing for yourself and others and get the message out. Developments at work bode well financially.

**♌ LEO**—The burdens and responsibilities that most Leos are facing will soon be transformed into sound, long-term achievements and deep satisfaction. Creativity, romance and joyful self-expression are all indicated. This positive influence will continue for many months. Even so, you must make an effort to steer these developments in new and more rewarding directions. Don't be tempted back into old patterns that you know for sure will lead nowhere. You should continue to work on reorganizing your finances. Short-term spending and long-term financial needs must be brought into balance.

**♍ VIRGO**—Tap the breaks. Confidence and energy are running high, but check carefully to make sure things are worth doing. Evaluate your many activities and identify those few involvements that suit you and that you can sustain with available resources. But be faithful to your ideals and don't give up your dreams. Home and family areas are calling for a lot of extra attention, maybe too much. You need greater balance between family obligations and the rest of your life. Update your ideas about how you come across to others.

**♎ LIBRA**—December offers a possible new starting point. There is protection from risk, opportunities to consolidate and grow, but there are restrictions. You have patience and deep insight helping your efforts to achieve your ideal lifestyle, as well as economic and community standing. But, impulsiveness and unpredictable behavior, especially at work, can work against you. Discipline is required. Be confident, but be aware of the need to change some things. You would profit greatly from looking within and changing or tossing out any personal attitudes that might be holding you back.

**♏ SCORPIO**—Many aspects of your outer life are out of sync with many aspects of your inner life. For everyone's sake, you've had to pretend that this works for you. There are certain things you can't change. But the planets are encouraging you to experiment. Even within existing limits, many possibilities are now open to you. They will improve life for you but they might cause confusion among those close to you. It will take time to make everyone understand. Keep your thoughts about important relationships simple, clear and bright.

**♐ SAGITTARIUS**—People want your help with their plans and dreams for the future. The planets are empowering you to provide the insight and confidence that they need. Be careful not to compromise your principles or ideals in order to help. Discourage others from compromising their principles. Fear not. There is a lot of positive, creative chaos at work in the world now. It will help bring about things that seem impossible to those feeling discouraged or thinking negatively. A new cycle of economic and personal growth is beginning for Sagittarius.

**♑ CAPRICORN**—December will lift Capricorn spirits as good news comes in about issues that have weighed on your mind. You should also experience relief from financial worries as earnings and savings improve. There is planetary resistance to larger, long-term goals right now. Effort will be needed to lay the foundations for success, but you should continue to work toward these grander goals. Much can be achieved in more modest projects, in matters close to home or in your community. Marriage or another close bond will bring strength and personal satisfaction.

**♒ AQUARIUS**—In this complicated and changeable month you can depend on your luck to make things work out well. There have been many stresses, strains and tensions between you and your key partners and other important associates in recent times and these have caused you much soul searching. The issues that have divided you will now yield new understandings and these, in turn, will become the basis of a stronger and deeper bond, better than you have ever enjoyed. Activities undertaken on sheer impulse could turn out to be costly.

**♓ PISCES**—Those in charge, both at home and at work, are sending mixed signals. You couldn't do exactly what they all said if you tried. You have plenty of wiggle room, though. Everybody needs to slow down and figure out what really needs to be done and how to do it. In recent times, work has been a real burden. However, all the hard lessons you learned about work will soon coalesce into something useful. It will help out at work and take you in new and very rewarding directions.

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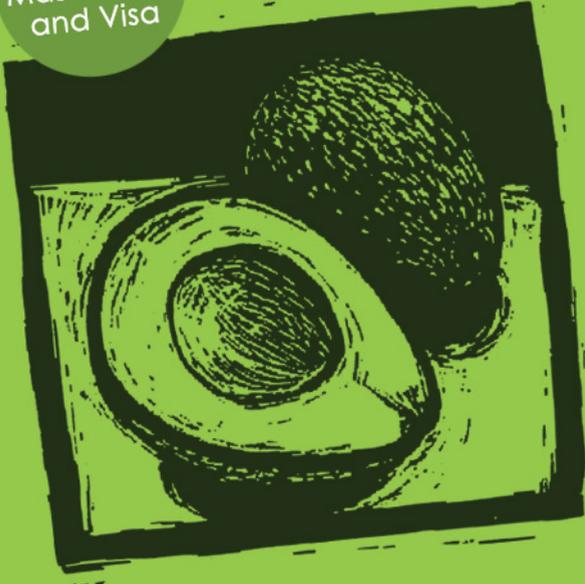
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