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February 09

IC + BOOKS 4 EVA

(It's Valentine's, and
we're feeling sappy, ok?)

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Buy Happiness?

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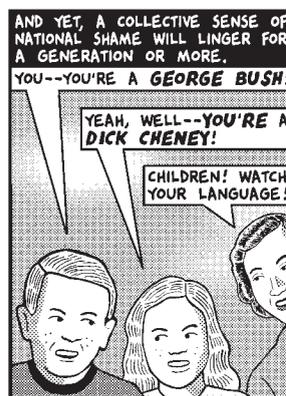
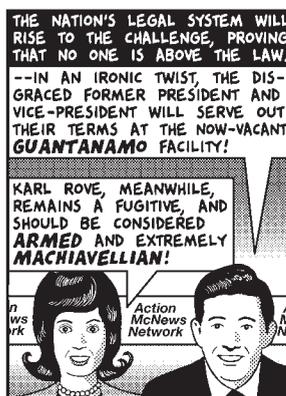
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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So what if it's Cold?

Usually by this time of year, I'm ready for summer again. I hate the layers I roll my body in to keep warm. I hate the ice that does everything it can to make me slip and fall. I hate the mounds of slop that I walk through to go about my day.

No, winter isn't exactly my favorite time of the year. However, during one of the more recent snowstorms, I actually stopped to enjoy it. As big, fluffy snowflakes fell into a blanket over our fair city, I flew down a hill on a piece of plastic.

My recent jaunt with a sled led me to look at the activity with a little more interest. Now I may not be in the best of shape, but going up and down that hill got my heart pumping, and my mind thinking back to the days of my childhood.

Kids sure seem to have the right idea when it comes to physical activity. Kids play. They enjoy themselves, and they burn off their lunches at the same time. If we took a hint from our childhoods, maybe we could find the path to better health.

We may not have the endless amounts of energy that kids do, but we can still take time out of our days to do something fun that we enjoy. Running doesn't thrill everyone. Too



Photo by Elizabeth Graf

Keep moving in the cold and you'll stay plenty warm.

often people feel limited by their fitness choices, but there are many other options out there for those people who just can't do that whole jogging thing. But why not take a lesson from childhood and play for fitness?

Sledding

Do what I did and hit those snowy hills for some good old-fashioned fun. Remember how exciting it used to be to go sledding when school was canceled? Charging down the hill backward, forward, standing, or with friends always made for an exciting and fun endeavor. While climbing up to the top of the hill now can be more tiring than when you were younger, you still get to slide back down! Bring some friends along and make it an event. You can race each other down the slope and then back up.

Play with a Dog (or a kid)

I'm personally a fan of playing with the dog, especially since I don't know too many toddlers. I like taking my Border Collie into the backyard with two Frisbees. I'll throw one in one direction and then chase her until I

catch up, then I throw the other one and she takes off in the other direction after it and I chase her again. Whoever your playmate may be, just enjoy it, and get moving with him!

Dancing

Whether you get your groove on out at the bars, or you partake in a dance-inspired fitness class, don't hold back. Dancing is a great workout. If you don't want to go out or don't feel like dancing in front of others, just rock out hardcore in front of the mirror at home—pretend you're the next big thing and jump around. Maybe even sing at the top

of your lungs?

Childhood Sports

Playing catch is a timeless American tradition. Some people got really good at it and do it professionally now. But for the rest of us, we

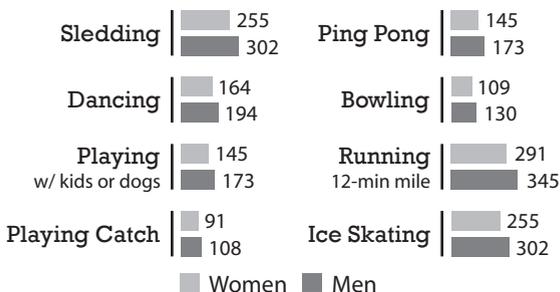
As big, fluffy snowflakes fell into a blanket over our fair city, I flew down a hill on a piece of plastic.

can still love that same game we did growing up. Want to get moving? Try to really get into a game of ping-pong or bowling. If you want less downtime, go ice skating out in the frozen ponds in City Park, or burn some extra calories and shovel your own rink at Coralville's North Ridge Pavilion.

While the workout may not be as strenuous and hardcore as running, there are plenty of activities out there that can still get you moving if you do them right. Just keep fitness in mind and shake it. **IV**

Kelly Ostrem is Little Village's editorial intern and Live Healthy Iowa team captain. Her biggest 100-day challenge will be to prevent Little Village's lethargy-loving managing editor, Melody Dworak, from staying home and watching Hulu.

Here are how many calories you would burn doing these activities for 30 minutes. Counts are based on the average weight of the American female (160 lbs) and the average American male (190 lbs) according to the Center for Disease Control. Calorie counts obtained from WebMD.



No more agribusiness as usual

Like so many, I have very high hopes for the new administration. I expect a new deal that looks to new frontiers, offering us a great society with a chicken in every pot in a shining city on a hill. And did I mention I want it now?

Also like so many, I like President Obama "except..." Seems as though folks find him to be at or near perfect were it not for their one pet issue, and so it is with me. While it is true that he is the first presidential candidate in decades to even say the word "food" during a campaign, he also played stereotypical politician in appointing Tom Vilsack to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.). This appointment may have been pragmatic, but it was also flagrant payback for our former governor dropping out of



Obama played stereotypical politician in appointing Tom Vilsack to head the U.S.D.A.

the race early, forcing Senator Clinton to compete in Iowa and thus creating an opening for the superior ground game of the Obama campaign. It was also a huge setback for a local food movement that is finally gathering steam.

Now it is true that now-Secretary Vilsack presided over a massive expansion of farmers markets as Governor of Iowa. He also signed legislation making it illegal for local and county governments to have any say whatsoever in regards to the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in their areas. His campaigns were largely financed by major corporate ag donors, and he has been deep in their hip pocket for years.

But a friend of mine in Clear Lake may have found a work-around. Dave Murphy made national news during the transition by organizing

a (mostly) successful online petition drive to persuade then-President-Elect Obama to appoint one of six proposed "sustainable" choices for SecAg – Iowans Neil Hamilton, Denise O'Brien and Fred Kirschenmann among them. As I said, Vilsack got the nod anyway, but the overnight success of the petition drive, in terms of attracting tens of thousands of signatures, did not go unnoticed.

Now Murphy has turned his attention to the undersecretary positions at his new website FoodDemocracyNow.org, where he has expanded his list to what he calls "The Sustainable Dozen." At press time, he has attracted more than 83,000 signatures, and counting. The Undersecretariats are where the real work gets done, and so anyone with designs on reforming the food system should be keenly aware of what goes on there. If

Secretary Vilsack makes these calls from his position inside Cargill's Carharts, then we can expect agribusiness as usual from the U.S.D.A. for the foreseeable future.

If, on the other hand, the same sort of net-roots-style movement that helped put President Obama in office can be cultivated for real change at the U.S.D.A., then a new, more sustainable, not to mention economically secure food future may well be at hand. We could see the revitalization of infrastructure and our rural communities, and a local chicken in every pot. **IV**

It's About the Food is a monthly feature of Little Village. Chef Kurt Michael Friese is co-owner, with his wife Kim, of the Iowa City restaurant Devotay and serves on the Slow Food USA Board of Directors. Comments may be directed to devotay@mchsi.com.

The Sustainable DOZEN

FoodDemocracyNow.org's candidates for Under Secretaries at the USDA

Gus Schumacher, former Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services at the U.S.D.A. Boston, MA.

Chuck Hassebrook, Executive Director, Center for Rural Affairs. Lyons, NE.

Sarah Vogel, former two-term Commissioner of Agriculture for the State of North Dakota. Bismarck, ND.

Fred Kirschenmann, organic farmer; Distinguished Fellow, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Pocantico Hills, NY.

Mark Ritchie, current Minnesota Secretary of State. Minneapolis, MN.

Neil Hamilton, Dwight D. Opperman Chair of Law, Professor of Law and Director, Agricultural Law Center, Drake University. Des Moines, IA.

Doug O'Brien, current Assistant Director at Ohio Department of Agriculture. Reynoldsburg, OH.

James Riddle, organic farmer; founding chair of the International Organic Inspectors Association. Winona, MN.

Kathleen Merrigan, Director of the Center on Agriculture, Food and the Environment, Tufts University. Boston, MA.

Denise O'Brien, organic farmer; founder of Women, Food, and Agriculture Network. Atlantic, IA.

Ralph Paige, Executive Director, Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. East Point, GA.

Karen Ross, President of the California Winegrape Growers Association; Executive Director of the Winegrape Growers of America. Sacramento, CA.

Enough!

Building an economy of abundance

“The/That One”

is finally in the Big Chair! Hallelujah! I am proud of the presidency once again.

Last month, however, I wrote about how, despite my enthusiasm for our new president, Obama would not adequately address the fundamental needs of our economy and our lives on this planet. For me—and several other thinkers whom I cited last time—relo-

Although the locavore-oriented economy does harken back to older times, in its fundamentals, in need not be a “primitive” life.

calization of our economy can be the “one true path,” if there is one, to living a sustainable life in resilient communities. I would like to follow up on those ideas by briefly discussing a couple of other essential concepts that not only will make a relocalized economy practi-

vore-oriented economy does harken back to older times in its fundamentals, it need not be a “primitive” life with no joy, no luxury, no sophistication, and no culture. In fact, quite the opposite can be true. But a reoriented mindset is necessary.

Let’s start with the concept of “enough.” As discussed last month, the global economy and the current definitions of success depend on perpetual material growth. As Bill McKibben clearly articulates in *Deep Economy*, which I also cited last time, perpetual economic and material growth is simply impossible. It can only outstrip societies’ and the planet’s carrying capacity. And, as detailed last time, McKibben demonstrates that wealth leads to happiness only up to a certain point anyway before satisfaction declines.

So, first, we’ve got to accept “enough” as a legitimate concept. If we have enough to provide a roof over our heads, good food on our table, and personal and social fulfillment, why do we need more? Some might argue that stagnation might ensue, but that need not be. Can’t we define “growth” in ways not dependent on material gain? The deepening of our relationships with our families, community members, spirituality, and natural world? The widening of our sharing of local arts and culture? The increased

gest we go one step better in the concept. We need to see “enough” as “abundance.”

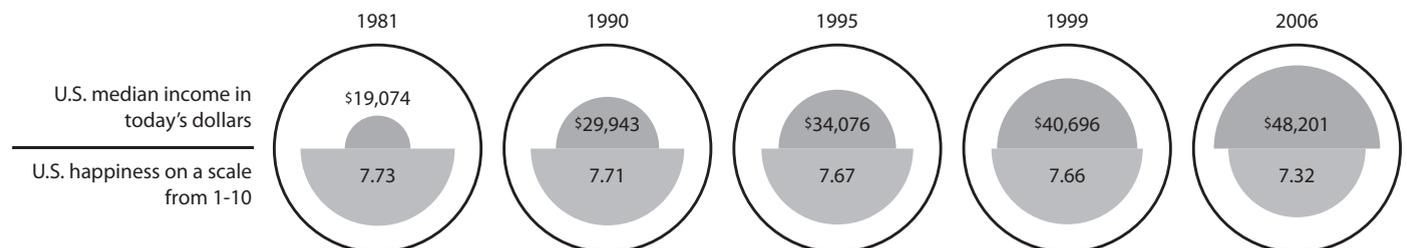
It may seem counter-intuitive, but our current system of endless growth and material wealth is really an economy of scarcity. Partly that means we have an endless material desire that is never satisfied. But in our capitalist system, we also seek to make goods and services scarce enough for optimal profit. If supply completely meets demand, value plummets. And once demand is met adequately, it must be replaced by a new demand—newer, and more, and scarcer stuff. As Wendell Berry has said, “The industrial economy’s most-marketed commodity is satisfaction, and...this com-

McKibben demonstrates that wealth leads to happiness only up to a certain point before satisfaction declines.

modity, which is repeatedly promised, bought, and paid for, is never delivered.”

A scaled-back economy, an economy of “enough,” is actually an economy of abun-

Can money buy happiness?



Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce, *World Database of Happiness*, Ruut Veenhoven, Erasmus University Rotterdam

cal, but also fulfilling and even uplifting.

Often when the subject of a relocalized economy comes up, people have visions of isolation and deprivation. Although the loca-

quality of what we make and do for our vocations? None of these necessarily require more money or possessions. Being satisfied with the riches we have right around us makes relocalization possible.

Some may still see “enough” as a concept that merely settles for the minimum. So I sug-

dance. Hunter-gatherers are an excellent example. They acclimate their material desires to the available resources, and, in so doing, the world provides for them abundantly. And not only are their material resources abundant, but so are the resulting cultural benefits—plenty of time and energy for the development of

family, community, and culture.

Now, of course, I'm not suggesting that we all must become hunter-gatherers. But we could learn a lot from the attitudes and prac-

A scaled-back economy, an economy of "enough," is actually an economy of abundance.

tices of a culture of abundance. When we scale back our material desires and forsake the (arbitrary) value of perpetual growth, our locality can become a place that provides generously for all of our needs. We can exchange the treadmill of upward mobility for the deeper pleasures of home, community, and place. A relocalized economy can work extraordinarily well as an economy of abundance.

Some might argue that our upward mobility, our economy of scarcity, and our globalized competitiveness have led to the most remarkable innovations and advancements that human ingenuity and potential can muster. And, from many perspectives, they'd be right. But, as with everything in life, we must look at all the consequences of our actions, not just the positive ones. We must decide when the disadvantages of the way we live outweigh the advantages and re-strike the balance. That's not a crazy idea. In fact, at its foundation are basic economic principles familiar to all—we're really talking about cost-benefit analyses and points of diminishing returns. But in this context we're expanding those principles beyond mere dollars and cents. We should hardly make all of our cultural decisions based on such a narrow category as the perpetual growth of material wealth. The collapsing global economy is now showing us the folly of such limited thinking.

A relocalized economy will no doubt provide us with fewer consumer goods and a simpler material lifestyle. But those goods, as well as the services we provide each other, will be of higher quality and will build community as we share and trade with each other. We will also provide ourselves the time and attention to build a culture of shared care and concern, of shared learning, and shared cultural expression. Now that's an economy of abundance that is more than enough for me. **lv**

Thomas Dean took a few hours off from work to watch the Inauguration of the 44th President of the United States of America.



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Ruth Gómez, *Animales de compañía*, 2005. Single-channel digitized animation video projection, color, sound; 2:50 min. continuous loop. Courtesy of the artist and Galería Oliva Arauna, Madrid



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MIX TAPE MASTERPIECE

Brian Eno and David Byrne's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, released in 1981, is a seminal album frequently cited as one of the first to popularize so-called "world music" (we can forget their recent 2008 reunion, *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today*, a lightly melodic though inconsequential and traditional record). On their classic early-1980s collage collaboration, Talking Heads frontman David Byrne and pop experimentalist (and soon to be U2 producer) Brian Eno appropriated a plethora of voices from around the globe.

The voices included a Lebanese mountain singer, an Egyptian pop singer, firebrand preachers recorded off the radio, and several other "exotic" voices. Even though the album didn't have a massive impact—in terms of chart success—it nevertheless influenced a wide range of musicians,



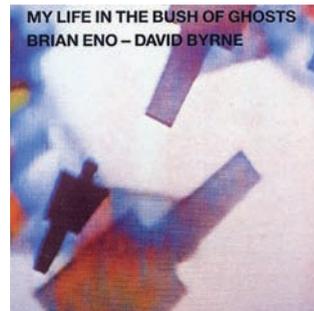
Photo by Hugh Brown

including DJ Spooky, who tells me, "Probably my favorite album, looking at early sampling, is *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*."

Years before the copyright wars began, not to mention the rise of the Islam-West conflicts, this album waded knee-deep into those emerging issues, and didn't look back. In my interview with David Byrne, he tells me why the two of them used so many "found" voices on that record.

"I seem to recall we fell into it as a unifying thread for that record," Byrne tells us. "We certainly weren't the first people to use 'found' voices in music." He continues on this in his typically brainy, conceptual style.

"I believe we did maybe one or two songs that used voices and soon realized that by using varying sources and treatments we could make that the unifying factor for the whole record. It also relieved us of the burden of dealing with who would sing any particular song, as we both sing. By avoiding that issue we created



My Life in the Bush of Ghosts
Brian Eno & David Byrne
1981

The title of the album is taken from the 1954 book of the same name by Nigerian author Amos Tutuola. The book (which neither Eno or Byrne had read when they started the album) is a folktale about a bush so dense that civilization couldn't penetrate it. A young boy enters the bush, discovering towns filled with ghosts. The sadness of the bush is so overwhelming that the boy can no longer sing the songs of his native earth.

another one—as listeners often presume that whoever is singing is, if not the author, then at least the “voice” of a particular song, because the singer (or author) is conveying his or her feelings by singing. In this case, those ways of listening and of authorship were upended.”

In the case of their song “Qu’ran”—which featured Algerian Muslims chanting passages from the Koran—they ran into problems. Byrne told the hipster music website Pitchfork “Way back when the record first came out, in 1981, it might have been ‘82, we got a request from an Islamic organization in London, and they said, ‘We consider this blasphemy that you put grooves to the chanting of the Holy Book.’ And we thought, ‘Okay, in deference to somebody’s religion, we’ll take it off.’”

Byrne expands on this story. “This was all pre-bombings and the rise of global jihad, at least as far as we knew,” he tells me. “When a fundamentalist Islamic organization in London said they found the use of the chanting of the holy book over a music track to be offensive—prayer chanting is not considered music—we immediately replaced the track on subsequent pressings with one we had on the shelf. Maybe we could have argued the point, but we weren’t out to make those kinds of points or to challenge or offend someone else’s sensibilities.”

Not only were they being sensitive for religious and other reasons, they also didn’t want to be sued.

“I think we were certainly feeling very cau-

“It’s no more theft more than playing the blues inspired licks that have been appropriated by rock bands forever.”

- David Byrne

tious about this whole thing,” Byrne tells me. “We made a big effort to try and clear all the voices, and make sure everybody was okay with everything. Because we thought, ‘We’re going to get accused of all kinds of things, and so we want to cover our asses as best we can.’ So I think in that sense we reacted maybe with more caution than we had to. But that’s the way it was.”

There are economic issues at play, but this is not the only aspect of this debate over “world music” we should consider. For instance, because non-Western indigenous com-

munities frequently ascribe significant powers to music—the ability to heal, kill, create bountiful game, etc.—these cultures place an importance on the restriction and regulation of music’s use. Financial considerations just don’t factor in. Western law, on the other

“We thought, ‘We’re going to get accused of all kinds of things, and so we want to cover our asses as best we can.’”

- David Byrne

hand, places a premium on the protection of one’s property rights, and therefore, legal expert Sherylle Mills argues, “Traditional music and Western law clash at the most fundamental level.”

David Byrne has been drawing from non-Western music since the late-1970s in his work with Talking Heads and solo career, and he thinks there is certainly a difference between being influenced by certain types of music and outright theft.

“Stealing is when Rod Stewart lifts the tune from a Jorge Ben tune,” Byrne says, “and doesn’t compensate Ben.” He’s referring to the fact that Rod Stewart and his co-writer on “Do Ya Think I’m Sexy” directly lifted the melody from “Taj Mahal,” a song by Brazilian music legend Jorge Ben.

Ben sued, and Stewart agreed to donate the song publishing royalties for “Do Ya Think I’m Sexy” to the United Nations Children’s Fund. Providing a contrasting example, David Byrne continues, “If I work with, say, some Latin percussionists to lay down some grooves for a tune I’ve previously written, is that stealing? I don’t think so. It’s no more theft more than playing the blues inspired licks that have been appropriated by rock bands forever.”

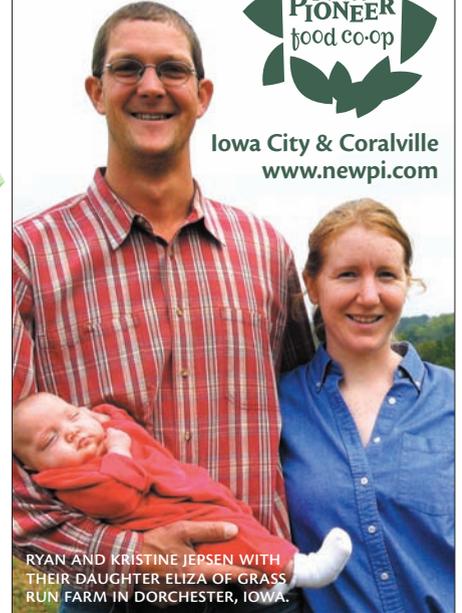
Of course, this sidesteps the fact that rhythm (a central component of much non-Western music) is left out of an authorship equation that favors words and melodies, not the beat. It’s a downfall of the law, one that has caused much heartbreak—even in the United States, where drummers like Clyde Stubblefield (James Brown’s funky drummer) also have no rights over the fruits of their labor. **lv**

Kembrew McLeod will spend the winter months practicing with Lynne Nugent to develop their excellent Rock Band skillz.

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RYAN AND KRISTINE JENSEN WITH THEIR DAUGHTER ELIZA OF GRASS RUN FARM IN DORCHESTER, IOWA.

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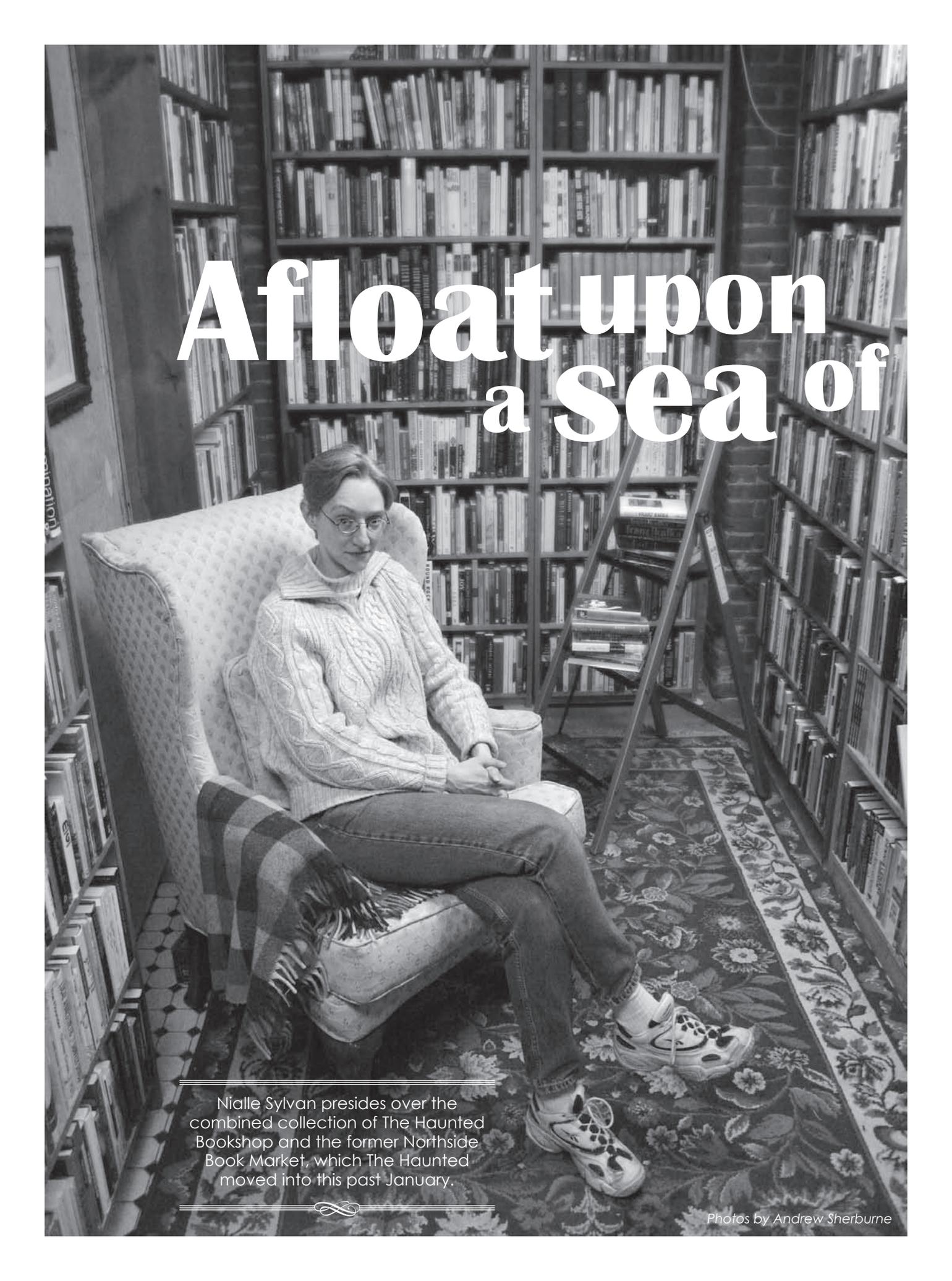
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Afloat upon a sea of

Nialle Sylvan presides over the combined collection of The Haunted Bookshop and the former Northside Book Market, which The Haunted moved into this past January.

Photos by Andrew Sherburne

This is a story about the story of books in Iowa City, told through the words of the town's mesh of buyers and sellers and enjoyers, young and old and odd. It is a long story, but in no way exhaustive, surely missing many angles and colors of this City of Literature's romance with

coincidence. I should stipulate that at the beginning. Just be prepared."

It's day one of The Haunted Bookshop's re-opening and Nialle couldn't be more pleased. These places are perpetual holders of odds and ends, but the new location (Northside Book Market's old) is filled with a drafty brightness

around a corner on a bicycle. About 35 miles an hour. And he has a bag of tenpenny nails in his hand. The bag is here, my face is here, a door is here—I dive."

Her hands follow her memory; after a potentially painful setup (head versus nails), a quick jerk to signal a dive. And where to?

"Into Shakespeare & Company. The man jumps off the bicycle. And I'm now going to demonstrate exactly what his man said with his precise inflections. How's your French?"

Non-existent.

"That's okay, because what he said was,"—Nialle now speaks like a frog on testosterone—"you want to help me build a bookshelf?" Exactly like that—

because this guy is George Whitman, owner of Shakespeare & Company."

A pretty big deal in the bookselling world. Whitman is a legend, a Massachusetts native who successfully inherited Paris' literary oasis.

Back to Nialle:

"I must have had bibliophile written on my forehead or something, so George gets off the bicycle helps me up and I go help him build a book shelf. I end up sleeping by the bookshelves at night, hanging out in the bookstore during the day, and George realizes I'm spending more time in his shop than any of the cute Parisian guys. So he suggests to me, and again I'm going to quote exactly, 'Nialle, go back to the States, find a nice bookstore, and settle down.' And I'm like, George that's a great idea—but how would you even start?"

2. How she starts, or, a potential encounter with a ghost named Claire.

[To catch up: Nialle is back in the United States, working at The Haunted Bookshop but not yet the owner. She's been offered the chance to buy it, fulfilling George's implanted dream. The conflict: She doesn't have the money.]

"This is where the ghost comes in. People are always asking me if the shop is haunted—Okay, the shop is not haunted in any sort of conventional sense, there's no blood dripping down the walls, we do not see visions, we do not have cold spots...I had taken it entirely with a grain of salt."

But.

"One night it gets late. I come back to the bookshop after having left pretty late because I realized I didn't turn off the coffee pot. I'm

books

literature, failing completely to examine certain said must-sees—the Writers' Workshop, Prairie Lights, other cross-referenced book-people who could shed hours of knowledge in a breath. It's merely the summary on the jacket, filled with quotes from esteemed appraisers.



The first chapter belongs to Nialle Sylvan.

It could start like this:

Nialle Sylvan, of 203 N. Linn Street, was proud to say that she was perfectly strange, thank you very much. She was the first person you'd expect to be involved in things strange and mysterious, because she always stood by such nonsense.

Mrs. Sylvan was the owner of a store called The Haunted Bookshop, which just moved. She was a tall, skinny woman hugged by a turtleneck, and peered behind very circular glasses. She had a cat who was a special kitty of God and in her opinion there was no finer kitty anywhere.

Or this:

Nerdy, spry Nialle Sylvan perched behind her desk, bearing a box of books in which a novel and cookbook lay crossed. A beige sweater, overlong, was filled warmly by the musky hardcover air. She held a volume aloft and intoned:

—A man almost killed me with a bag of tenpenny nails.

But this particular story, it begins like this:

"Everything that happens here is a bizarre

that illuminates and settles the mesh of competing residents, *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* residing an aisle away from six copies of *Sons and Lovers* and an Oscar Wilde action figure spying on leftover baskets and packing material.

The story dizzyingly shifts from law school potential to Da Vinci to a gay Nigerian, a near death experience in Paris, a ghost named Claire, happenchance inheritance, and finally wild success.

I wander in a stranger, but before long Nialle is halfway through her bookseller origin story. It dizzyingly shifts from law school potential to Da Vinci to a gay Nigerian, a near death experience in Paris, a ghost named Claire, happenchance inheritance, and finally wild success (relative to this business, of course).

Key excerpts:

1. Regarding Paris and fate.

"I was so exhausted when I finally got to Paris I didn't know what I was doing. I remember thinking, oh my god, Notre Dame is white—it was the year they started cleaning it but it still looked like the Victor Hugo novel in my head. Everything looks like a book in my head, pretty much. So I head toward the left bank where the youth hostels might be, delirious, not watching what I'm doing, man comes



Logan, one of the Haunted Bookshops resident cats, keeps a close eye on book patrons.

living in Cedar Rapids at the time, and it's ridiculous o' clock in the morning, which is sometime between two and six. I decide I'm going to cash out in the arts books room, I find a blanket in the car...

Like a text-spouting Pied Piper, William summoned his books—now almost 600,000 of them.

"I wake up smelling something that I shouldn't have been able to smell in that building—it's supposed to smell like old books, right?—I'm smelling what my great grandfather used to make for breakfast when I was a little kid. Twenty years since I smelled this. You know how, at stupid o' clock in the morning, you are maybe a little less hardline skeptical? So I wake up and I'm like, wow, this is weird, is this the ghost then? This Claire chick? And because it's stupid o' clock in the morning—and if I'm being honest with myself about my agnosticism—I'm like, okay, so Claire, if you're a real ghost...and I don't know how this ghost thing works...but I like it here and I think we make a good team. So if you could swing anything to help me out with this...like, how do you even phrase this question, right? Consulting the paranormal on business advice. What am I even doing?"

And then.

"Two days later I get a letter in the mail from my grandmother's estate. She passed away five years before, but they had trouble finding

my uncle Snake who's a Hell's Angel. That's a whole other story there. One thing leads to another leads to another, and the amount of money available to me as a result...guess how much?"

I'm thinking what would make a good story. The exact amount?

"Matched it down the penny. As in blah blah blah 61 cents. The paraded amount to purchase The Haunted Bookshop on September 9th, 2004. So I did."

Animated and emphatic, Nialle relays her personal tale like a book meant to be read aloud. But as she explains, Iowa City's literary scene is an ongoing conversation—extending well beyond her newly opened door into stores like William Ingles.



Chapter Two: Book people are good people

William Ingles, the owner of 608 S. Dubuque Street's The Book Shop, has his own backstory and passion—though one contained quietly and refined, a wise man who shares his catalog knowledge of all-things-book through a considered sieve.

After a slight Iowa City history lesson (taken back to the 1850s, traveling from stage-coaches to railroads and finally to 1986, where he purchased the land now holding his store), William takes me to 1963. He is 11 years old and about to discover books. Choosing a downtown Des Moines bookshop over bicycles, the 45-year love affair begins.

"What really sold me on books and those who work with them, in 1963—well, November 22nd of that year was not a good day. But folks at that bookstore were so articulate about their feelings about Kennedy's as-

sassination, put things in words that I couldn't imagine putting in words. That really made an impression on me, that book people are really good people. And thoughtful."

Perhaps even more than Nialle, William defines an Iowa City book person. He lives it. He traveled 49 states (and Mexico and Canada) as a writer for the '70s trucker TV series "Movin' On," joined a staff writing team in Los Angeles, keeps contact with book buyers national and international, yet almost always maintained a residence here. And finally once home was home, like a text-spouting Pied Piper, William summoned his books—now almost 600,000 of them.

While only 25,000 books reside in his shop ("handsome" ones that make the best wallpaper), he maintains the rest in storage. Like many Iowans, a chunk of his belongings drowned in the '08 floods (a death toll of 200,000). He owns more books than he'll ever live to handle, but what impresses more than sheer quantity is the caliber of his knowledge of and through them—extensive and odd, bottling it up until someone like me comes along.

Things to talk to him about:

1. How Ronald Reagan ruined the publishing (and writing) trade.
2. The delicate and precise art of the internet book market.
3. The lost goal of university life, "to learn how to enjoy your life better."
4. Why Tom Clancy can do the same thing in a sentence that Melville did in a dozen pages.
5. Desperate housewives (the type, not the show) are often boring.
6. That folks will always decry the decline of reading, but the book shall persist.

And so forth. He's the rare sort that would keep absorbing text and conversation forever if he could.

"One of the worst things that ever happened to me was learning—well, being told—by a junior high school librarian, as I finished reading one shelf of books and was moving onto the next shelf, telling her, 'I'll have everything in here read by the time I leave school!' And she said, 'no you won't.' It was big shock to me that I wouldn't be able to read everything that's ever been written. It wasn't very pleasant."

But William seems happy enough, peeking out above stacked books as we talk, a tattered gray "Old Iowa" hat on his head, cat sprawled snugly on his chest. A perennial good neighbor with an answer and often a helping hand.

William tells this story:

"I remember a group of high school students who stumbled across our gay area. We

have quite a big lesbiana section—lesbian fiction. And two of the high school students just sort of teared up, just didn't know there were this many books—that this subject was even addressed. It's the 21st century and these folks were stunned that they weren't the first people to ever have these questions. I remember the two young women who sat down in front of it were just giddy with delight.

“One of the great things about books, then, is that you can find out what other people share with you when you thought you were completely alone—and you can find other people through books, find that you're not alone. Whether it's a shared sense of humor or a shared sense of the world or religious value. You can find soul mates in the books that other people have written.”



And more, and more, and more

The start of another chapter: Tom Walz only stops to talk during what must be his lunch break—after hours coordinating an assortment of loose ends and people. Being the heart and hands of Uptown Bill's Small Mall,

Tom is a true social worker. Books, to him, are just as beloved as to the Nialles of the world, but take on functions more therapeutic and charitable. Uptown Bill's and its used book-

“One of the great things about books, then, is that you can find out what other people share with you when you thought you were completely alone.”

shop is the core of a nine-business web serving people with disabilities—and having recently launched their own publishing label, Sackter House Media Productions, with plans to engage the UI undergraduate writing program and a cast of characters begging to tell their stories, books will always remain crucial to the store's mission.

Or another: Gregory Delzer is the newbie in town, opening his Defunct Books in June 2007 after moving from Spokane, Washington, to

our Midwest oasis. He's more businesslike and formal than the other bookshop owners, less glowing with book love though with some obviously lights underneath. I come and leave to NPR blaring in the background, and never am told why he labels his store “Defunct” (apparently a secret).

Or another: Joe and Linda Michaud's Bookery and Bindery is a family business, run out of a quiet eastside Iowa City neighborhood away from its literary core. Upstairs: the typical signs of everyday life, the kitchen settings, the leftover Christmas decorations. Downstairs: 14,000 books lining rows of shelves (though sharing one with a spillover pantry), an operating table Linda uses to repair neglected binding. Joe's jutting goatee rises and falls as he talks, giving his history of his ephemera trade, his old downtown store, a few gripping stories about Iowa's book thieves. And all the while Linda watches and smiles, a quiet woman best described as bookish.

Still more: I never get to Murphy-Brookfield, which I'm told is run by a lovely man and is the only true specialty seller (all others are “gen-

LIT LUST CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 >>

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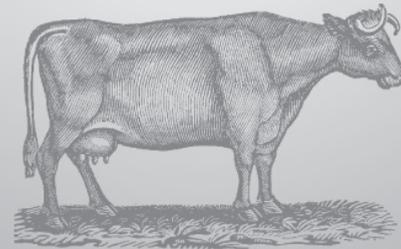


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// Pulitzer Town //

Iowa City's literary worth can be measured in many ways. To illustrate just one of the many reasons Iowa City was recently dubbed a City of Literature by UNESCO, we've compiled a timeline of The University of Iowa's connections to 40 Pulitzer Prizes, ranging from poets to editorial cartoonists.

📰 Journalism 🎭 Drama 📖 Poetry 📄 Fiction 🗣️ Editorial Cartooning

Pulitzer Prize

Created by Joseph Pulitzer to honor excellence in journalism and the arts. The inaugural 1917 prizes were given in reporting, editorial writing, history and biography.



Iowa Writers' Workshop Is Born

Founded in 1936, it is the nation's first program to award a Masters of Fine Arts in English. The creative writing program has been emulated throughout the world. In 2003, the Workshop received a National Humanities Medal from the National Endowment for the Humanities, a first for a university.



Tennessee Williams 📖

One of America's most well-known playwrights. A two-time Pulitzer winner, in 1948 for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and in 1955 for *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. BA, Theatre, 1938.



Robert Penn Warren 📖 📖

Versatile writer who won three Pulitzers in two categories. 1947 for *All the King's Men* (in fiction); 1958 for *Poems 1954-56, Now and Then*; and 1979 for *Poems 1976-78*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



Wallace Stegner 📄

The Lake Mills, IA native won a 1972 Pulitzer for *Angle of Repose*. MA, 1932; PhD, English, 1935.

Anthony Hecht 📖

Former Poet Laureate of the U.S. won a 1968 Pulitzer for *The Hard Hours*. Former UI student.

1847 | 1917 | 1936 | 1939 | 1947 | 1948 | 1952 | 1955 | 1958 | 1960 | 1964 | 1965 | 1968 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972

Frank Luther Mott 📰

1939 Pulitzer in history for *A History of American Magazines*. Former director of the UI School of Journalism.



Don Ultang 📰

1952 Pulitzer for his work in news photography covering the "Johnny Bright incident" at the Des Moines Register and Tribune. BA, Commerce and Science, 1939.

Robert Lowell 📖

Former Poet Laureate of the U.S. and two-time Pulitzer winner, first in 1947 for *Lord Weary's Castle* and then in 1974 for *The Dolphin*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



W.D. Snodgrass 📖

1960 Pulitzer for *Heart's Needle*. BA, 1949; MA, 1951; MFA, 1953.

John Berryman 📖

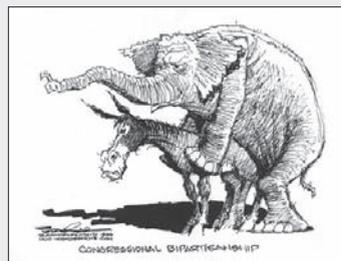
1965 Pulitzer for *77 Dream Songs*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop where he taught Snodgrass, Justice, Levine and Iowa's current poet laureate Robert Dana.

Marquis Childs 📰

1970 Pulitzer for her commentary at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (the first time the category was awarded). MA, Journalism and Mass Communication, 1925.

Paul Conrad 🗣️

Daily Iowan alum won three Pulitzers in 1964, 1971, and 1984 for his work at the Denver Post and Los Angeles Times. BA, Art, 1950.



At left, one of the cartoons the LA Times refused to run, a 1999 depiction of "Congressional Bipartisanship"



University of Iowa Founded

Created as the State University of Iowa on February 25, 1847, only 59 days after Iowa became a state.



Carolyn Kizer 
1985 Pulitzer for *Yin*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

John R. Camp 

1986 Pulitzer in feature writing for a series on a farming family in the Pioneer Press Dispatch. BA, American Civilization, 1966; MA, Journalism and Mass Communication, 1971.

Dick Locher 

Cartoonist win in 1983 Pulitzer for his work at the Chicago Tribune. Former UI student, 1948.

James Alan McPherson 

Current faculty member at the Iowa Writers' Workshop. 1977 Pulitzer for *Elbow Room*. MFA, 1969.



Mona Van Duyn 
Waterloo, IA native and former Poet Laureate of the U.S. won a 1991 Pulitzer Prize for *Near Changes*. MA, English, 1943.



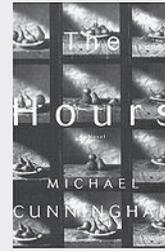
Jane Smiley 
1992 Pulitzer for *A Thousand Acres*, a contemporary re-imagining of *King Lear* set on an Iowa farmstead. MA, 1975; MFA, English, 1976; PhD, English, 1978.

James Tate 

1992 Pulitzer for *Selected Poems*. MFA, 1967.

Jorie Graham 

1996 Pulitzer for *The Dream of the Unified Field*. MFA, English, 1978. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



Michael Cunningham 
1999 Pulitzer for *The Hours*. MFA, English, 1980.

Mark Strand 

1999 Pulitzer for *Blizzard of One*. MA, 1962; former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Sheba R. Wheeler 

2000 Pulitzer for her contributions to a team of Denver Post reporters covering the Columbine High School tragedy. BA, 1996.

Marilynne Robinson 

2005 Pulitzer for *Gilead*. Current faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

1974 | 1977 | 1979 | 1980 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1995 | 1996 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2005 | 2008

Donald R. Justice 

1980 Pulitzer for *Selected Poems*. PhD, English, 1954; former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



Rita Dove 
Former Poet Laureate of the U.S. won a 1987 Pulitzer for *Thomas and Beulah*. MFA, 1977.

Robert Olen Butler 

1993 Pulitzer for *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*. MA, Theatre, 1969.

Louise Glück 

1993 Pulitzer for *The Wild Iris*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Steve Berry 

1993 Pulitzer for investigative reporting while at the Orlando Sentinel. Current UI journalism faculty member.

Michael F. Toner 

1993 Pulitzer for explanatory journalism in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, *When Bugs Bite Back*. BA, Journalism and Mass Communication, 1966.



Philip Schultz 
2008 Pulitzer for *Failure*. MFA, 1971.

Robert Hass 

Former Poet Laureate of the U.S. won a 2008 Pulitzer for *Time and Materials*. Frequent visiting Writers' Workshop faculty member.



Philip Roth 
1998 Pulitzer for *American Pastoral*. Former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Charles Wright 

1998 Pulitzer for *Black Zodiac*. MFA, 1963.



Philip Levine 
1995 Pulitzer for *The Simple Truth*. MFA, 1957; former faculty member in the Iowa Writers' Workshop.



Tracy Kidder 
1982 Pulitzer in general nonfiction for *Soul of a New Machine*. MFA, 1974.



technology made possible the reunion of artist and book. Bury writes that “20th-century artists have used the technological advances in reproduction—lithography, invented by Alois Senefelder in 1798, and photoengraving—to cut out the typefounder and typesetter, and have no intermediary between reader and writer.” With these new technologies, book production became cheaper, facilitating smaller-scale projects that could be undertaken by individuals.

The book art field has been gaining momentum ever since its resurgence in the 1960s, said Julia Leonard, UI School of Art & Art History lecturer, Center for the Book and Book and Print Studio Coordinator and one of the key organizers of the Art, Fact and Artifact conference. The first book to address the book art field, Joan Lyon’s *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, was published in 1985. In that same year, the first major exhibition of the form was organized by Anne Moeglin-Delcroix at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, *Livres d’artistes*. Many universities developed programs dedicated to the study of book culture and book arts in the 1980s as well, including the UI Center for the Book, which was founded in 1986. And in the 1990s, two comprehensive histories of the book art field were published: Bury’s *Artists’*

ent from regular book production, in which writing, design, and production are separate functions, performed by different people.

Artists have had a role in book production from its inception: In the Middle Ages, when books were copied by hand, artists would create elaborate designs in the margins and filigreed letters, as in the Book of Kells, a famous illuminated manuscript. However, these artists had little to do with the content of the book, which was most often religious in nature.

In the 15th century, invention of the printing press and moveable-type by Johannes Gutenberg in 1439 made mass production of books possible, further removing artists from the book-making process.

Stephen Bury, a leading book art historian, acknowledges the role of technology in the evolution of the artist’s book in his history *Artists’ Books: The Book as a Work of Art, 1963-1995*. With the spread of printing, he writes, “... The artist became increasingly divorced from the design and making of the book: He became a provider of woodcut-block or plate, and often merely of a design to be transferred to block or plate by another hand.”

Yet further developments in reproductive



Ellen Knudson
Self-Dual (How to Walk a 30,000 Mile Tightrope)

Letterpress printed handmade book. The paper is 100% cotton rag paper from family clothes bound in a built-in groove case.

Books and Johanna Drucker’s The Century of Artists’ Books.

At the UI Center for the Book, Leonard said enrollment has been steadily rising since they added a graduate certificate program in 1996. The Center typically offers anywhere from 10 to

BOOK AS ART CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 >>

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Feeling Bookish

Book reading is an art. There are the masters who plow through dozens of books in a month, mentally recording favorite passages along the way. Then there are those of us who, try as we might, can only muster biannual attempts at bestsellers, pushing ahead a few pages per night before reluctantly admitting defeat one quarter of the way through.

In between are the rest of us: the bedtime-warriors, the *Harry Potter* addicts, the mystery lovers, the history junkies. The world's supply of books will always far outpace our appetite, but we soldier on, savoring those too few literary morsels which we have the time or impetus to dine on.

As part of our cover story, we asked our editorial staff to tell us what whets their appetite for ink. But the question "what is your favorite book?" gave us more than a simple list of answers. Happily, we learned just as much about our relationships with books as we did about the books themselves.

Kent Williams, arts editor on Philip K. Dick

I don't remember the first Philip K. Dick novel I read. I started reading science fiction in grade school, starting with Bradbury, Heinlein, and Sturgeon. Eventually I found the works of Philip K. Dick. Back in the 1960s and '70s, Dick was not the endlessly name-checked icon of weird cool he is now. Once I had an appetite for his work, I spent my teenage years scouring libraries and bookstores for his books. Until the last few years in his life, it was catch as catch can—*The Man in the High Castle* (1962) was on a wire rack at Jim's Pharmacy, a few blocks from my house.

I found *The Zap Gun* (1967) in a dusty bookstore in Marion, Iowa. *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) was hiding in a rack in the Pueblo, Colorado, Greyhound bus station, hidden behind racy novels that had something to do with night nurses and spanking. Finding a book I'd not yet read was like discovering a crack in everyday reality.

There are three things about Dick's work that enduringly kick my ass. First was the feeling that reality itself was provisional, fragile, and full of barely comprehensible beauty and menace. Second was the central tropes that provided an armature for his stories: the robotic Abraham Lincoln, only friend to a discombobulated boy growing up on Mars in *Martian*

ing off a pharmacy delivery girl's Christian fish necklace, Dick became obsessed with his own peculiarly outlandish form of Gnostic Christianity. He believed that the history of the last two millennia was an illusion, and that we were really all alive still in the first century after Jesus's death. The imminent resurrection of Christ would free us from the "cast iron prison" of this false world.

Or maybe not—his most famous pull quote is "Reality is whatever refuses to go away when I stop believing in it." Dick spent his final years in the grips of an epic hypergraphia that produced his mostly unpublished *Exegesis*, which tried on, discarded, and mutated a thousand different theories about what his spiritual experiences really meant. As this relates to my life, and Dick's place in my understanding of the world, the works of Philip K. Dick are a vast, scary, hilarious, entertaining exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13.

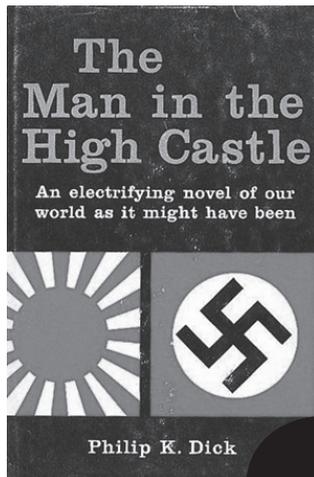
For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, loving kindness, these three; but the greatest of these is loving kindness.

Paul of Tarsus—that first century Philip K. Dick—says that we don't know what's real, we don't even know what we don't know. The one thing in life we can cleave to, that will save our lives, is the loving kindness we share with others. That spirit of caring and empathy is what abides in Dick's fractured, terrifying, fascinating, falling-down worlds.

Andrew Sherburne, publisher on *Cat's Cradle*

I don't have a favorite book. In fact, I hate that question. I don't have a favorite album or a favorite movie either. How can one compare *La Dolce Vita* to *The Goonies*? The films, books and music that we love are often more about who we were and when we found them than about the art itself.

But there is a list. And those books that I hold dear are tied to a time or place that helped define the book itself. Riding in a bus past shantytowns in the bleak Peruvian desert made Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* oddly more real. Reading Richard



Reality itself was provisional, fragile, and full of barely comprehensible beauty and menace.

Time-Slip (1964). The mind-boggling reversal of time's arrow in *Counter-Clock World* (1967), the cult author writing an alternate history of the world by throwing the I Ching in *The Man in the High Castle*. Third—and as I've grown older, most important—is the devastating humanity of his characters, caught between their ideals and their petty appetites, fighting for the smallest of personal victories in worlds beyond their ability to comprehend. Beneath all the sci-fi shiny, Dick's characters struggle to find a working model of how to be human, as jarring events and the cruelty of others reveals their habitual model to be a shabby, comical mistake.

In his later years, Dick's novels became increasingly autobiographical, while paradoxically becoming ever more fantastic and baroquely imagined. Starting from a religious experience triggered by the light flash-

Wright's *Native Son* helped me understand the relatively benign cultural turmoil of the once predominantly black neighborhood where I grew up.

If forced to pick one book-reading experience to celebrate, Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* is the one. As in nearly all of his writing, Vonnegut combines the simplicity of Middle-American life with metaphoric sci-fi absurdity. In *Cat's Cradle*, the story revolves around Felix Hoenikker, the fictional inventor of the atomic bomb. Hoenikker values scientific inquiry over all else, including money, fame and family. His other great discovery has just as much deadly power: *ice-nine*, an isotope of water which is solid at room temperature, holds the potential to destroy every living thing if exposed to the world's water supply.

Vonnegut toys with world extinction, and the plot is wrapped around the battle between science and morality, but he makes pit stops

came something different, an allegorical tale cautioning against the triumph of hubris and human stupidity.

A book is best when it reveals as much about our own world as the fictional one that it describes, exactly what one finds in Vonnegut's pseudo sci-fi. But better than that, as the world changes around us, a good read stays relevant, and *Cat's Cradle* is such a book.

Melody Dworak, editor on Loving Books

I used to joke that my favorite book was a magazine. Then I joked that I was a book slut, teasing all of them by doting on first chapters while knowing I'd move on within a month. I tried rationalizing my lack of habit by saying that I preferred nonfiction books, while ignoring the nonfiction books as well. In January, I finally found an article about reading books elucidating the problem: I'm just not that into it.

It's almost blasphemy to admit that in a town like Iowa City, UNESCO fucking City of Literature. Maybe it's escapism that I could do without, but I love watching TV on the internet. Oh my god, effortless entertainment after a 9 to 5 job is a gift to us in this hardest-working nation. Is reading such an arduous effort? Because I edit Little Village articles for a non-living and proofread for a living, is reading work for me, like, a job I need to be compensated for? Is it like going home to plunge the toilet after earning a day's pay as a hotel janitor?

No, that's not it. When books are like wine, I totally read them. Maybe I just like writing more than reading, or maybe I read only for the sake of writing. Or maybe I'm just too goddamn picky and need all words and phrases to be brilliant and poetic and most books just aren't my style. Then I have to be ashamed to admit I've even abandoned short stories by David Foster Wallace. I'm even having trouble

remembering the books I've actually read all of, and had to make a list to assist me:

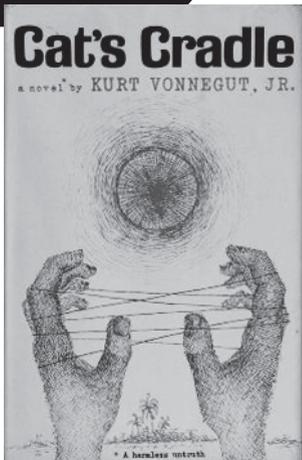
- 100 Years of Solitude; Love in the Time of Cholera
- David Sedaris's books (though I'm not quite sure about Dress Your Family In a Long Title)
- Eats Shoots & Leaves
- Elements of Style (somewhat shamefully,

The books we love are more about who we were and when we found them than about the art itself.

throughout to skewer many of American society's other sacred cows, including religion, family and patriotism.

Vonnegut's relentless insistence that we deconstruct our own existence is a welcome confrontation. Too often books are only an escape from reality, and upon our return from those alternate worlds we bring back few souvenirs. But *Cat's Cradle* and Vonnegut allow us to apply the lessons of another world to our own.

As I said, my "favorite" books are born as much out of their place in my own life as they are in the writing itself. The first time I read *Cat's Cradle*—as a godless teenager—I found a story which examined happiness, the meaning of life, and the dangers inherent in absolute faith and organized religion. Ten years later—in the middle of the Bush Ages—the story be-



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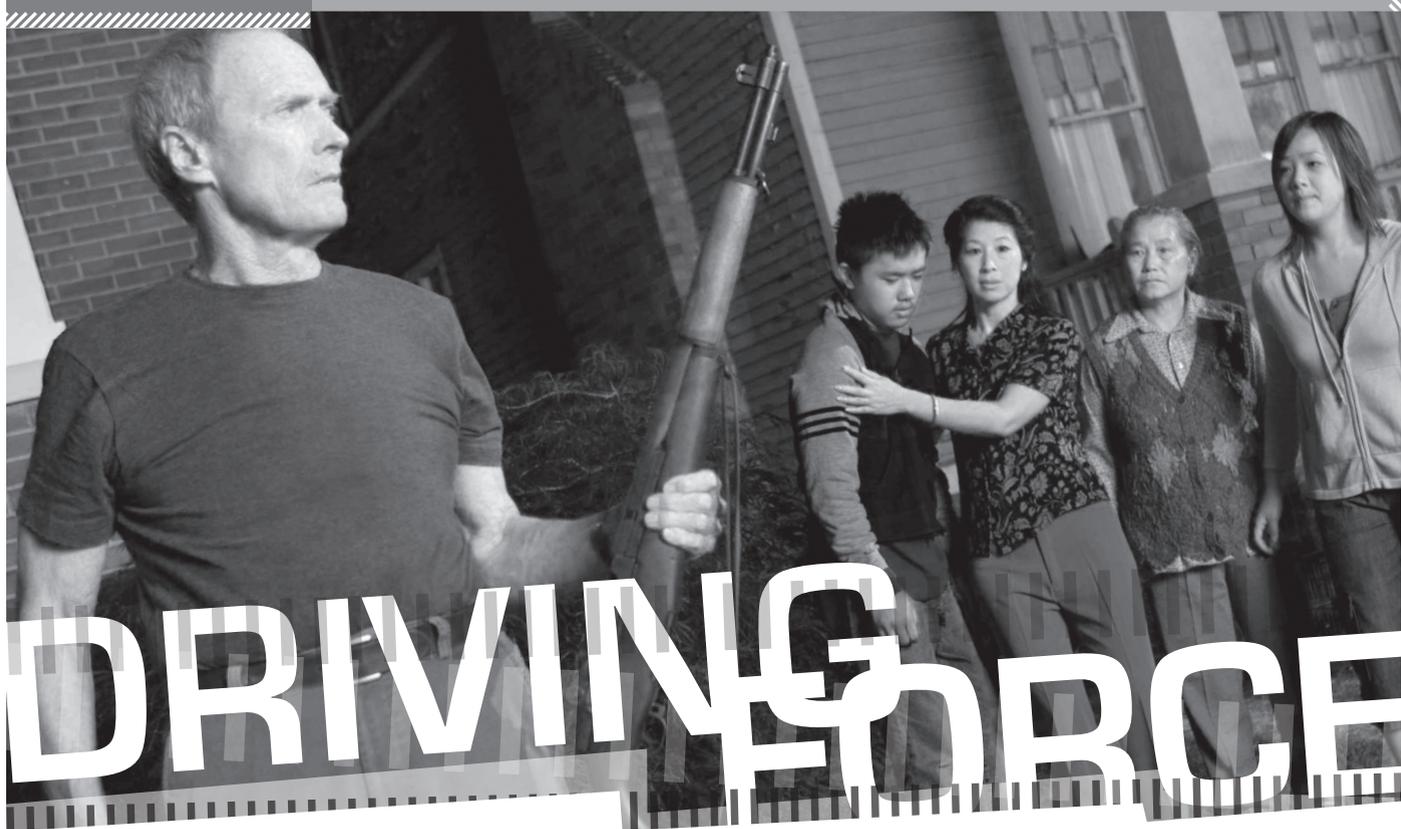
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BOOK PICKS CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 >>



Experienced *Gran Torino*, Clint Eastwood's sixth film in six years, with my father. He'd grown up, in the 1960s, with a very different batch of Eastwood pictures. When he was 24, Clint was king—a man's-man who inspired men like him to wear ponchos, à la *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. My father's Clint subsisted into the '80s as Inspector "Dirty" Harry Callahan, a masculine wet dream armed with catchphrases and a .44 Magnum.

As a 24-year-old in 2009, this is not the Clint Eastwood I know.

My generation's Clint, so evident in *Gran Torino*, is a man of restraint, tolerance and unabashed sentimentality. He's a revision of his prior persona—the man who could, as he growls in *Gran Torino*, "Blow a hole in your face and sleep like a baby."

Part '50s melodrama, Western, and '70s vigilante pic, *Gran Torino* is a deceptively quaint effort on cinematic violence and cultural hybridity. It's a film as moving as it is subversive, as intellectually rooted as it is emotionally penetrating. It is, in short, Eastwood's most rewarding film since 1992's *Unforgiven*.

Set in a derelict Detroit neighborhood, *Gran Torino* concerns Walt Kowalski, a widowed Korean War veteran (Eastwood), and his interactions with a Hmong family that lives next

door. Kowalski is a dying breed: a Rust Belt racist "still living in the '50s," so says his son. A man who refuses to evolve with the culture and technology of the 21st century, Kowalski spends most days on his porch, cooler full of Pabst, muttering PC-unfriendly slurs while admiring his 1972 *Gran Torino*, an emblem of his blue-collar past on a Ford assembly line.

Kowalski, the last white American on his block, overcomes his xenophobia just enough to befriend two neighborhood teenagers, Sue

It's a film as moving as it is subversive, as intellectually rooted as it is emotionally penetrating.

and Thao (Ahney Her and Bee Vang, both non-professional actors). Unwillingly, Kowalski becomes invested in their happiness, protecting the two from a Hmong gang committed to emasculating Thao and harassing Sue, whose aggressive wit disarms them. As Kowalski threatens the gang and other neighborhood predators, flashes of his violent past from the

Korean War resurface, triggering more overt forms of hatred and intimidation.

Unpacking *Gran Torino* requires some familiarity with American history, cinematic and political. To portray a man fixated with the Korean War of 1950-1953, Eastwood crafts *Gran Torino* as a '50s Hollywood melodrama. Like popular titles from that era, the film uses the domestic neighborhood setting to dissect familial and social behavior, often with an emphasis on gender roles; the film's characters make much of Thao's passive, unmanly manner, as compared to Sue's assertive, (more traditionally) masculine air. Also similar to the '50s melodrama are the film's broad performances and characterization, both of which a viewer with rigidly contemporary eyes might call "over the top" or just "bad." Further still, the film's titular *Gran Torino*—like James Dean's flaming red jacket in *Rebel Without a Cause*, to name one famous example of the melodramatic convention—is a fetishized object meant to loudly broadcast a protagonist's inner psyche.

Kowalski's '72 Ford is a pretty obvious signifier of his refusal to accept modern America, but it's also a more subtle evocation of '70s era Eastwood (*Dirty Harry* hit theaters in 1971). Seventies Clint was a product of his time, a cinematic response to escalating urban American crime; viewers wanted to see a

TORINO CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 >>

Small month, big sound

Probably the biggest news in local music this month will be the release of William Elliott Whitmore's long-awaited album, *Animals in the Dark*. The album is coming out via Anti-, a record label that features big-name artists like Neko Case, Man Man, and Tom Waits(!). Whitmore, an Iowa fella', will celebrate the album's release (in stores on February 17th) by playing a two-night run at the Picador. The first is a late show on Saturday the 21st, featuring (FT) The Shadow Government. Luke Tweedy, a mem-



William Elliott Whitmore's new album drops in February.

ber of The Shadow Government, recorded Whitmore's new record, so expect this one to be packed with local friends, family and scenesters. If you can't get through the door or like to get to bed at a reasonable hour, come back on the 22nd for an early all-ages show where Whitmore will be performing with "Hagan

With such rich local offerings in this short little month, it'll be important to plan on also catching some of the national acts coming through town.

Myers presents The Coyote Club Vaudeville Extravaganza!" I have no idea what that is, but I bet it will only compliment the mad carnival barking and foot-stomping of Whitmore's banjo balladry.

Also in local news, there's also a lot happening this month with Iowa City's soul-revivalists the Diplomats of Solid Sound with the Diplomettes. They whole crew will be together for a show on February 7th at the Mill, but some individual members will also be playing solo

gigs around town. On January 31st, Diplomats guitarist Doug Roberson plays the Yacht Club with Chicago soul singer JC Brooks (backed by The Uptown Sound). A mere week after the Yacht Club's 6th anniversary bash, the new upstairs bar should be open for you to check out. One of the sultry Diplomettes, Sarah Cram, will take the stage at the Mill backed by The Derelicts on the 17th. That show, which also features Matthew Grimm, is free as a part of the ongoing Tuesday Night Social Club series.

Acts this month include a ton of local favorites, including Mannix! and The Black Slacks (2nd), and The Brown Note with Petit Mal (10th). No cover, cheap PBR, and several dozen of your closest friends are all guaranteed.

Speaking of Mannix!, I'm really looking forward to the debut of bass player Sarah Mannix's new project, the Wandering Bears, who play at the Mill on the 18th. Joined by electronic popsters The Western Front and Minneapolis folk-pop band Caroline Smith and the Goodnight Sleeps, this one is going to feature lots of hummable hooks, and will probably warm your cold little February heart.

On the 28th, two of the Mill's renowned soundmen will take their turn on the other side of the mics, as Sam Knutson's band Shame Train shares the stage with Samuel Locke-Ward. Expect alt.country songs and dangerously astute lyrics from the Train, and god-knows-what from Sam Locke-Ward, but hopefully destroyed pop songs, cowpunk revival, dirges, ballads, waltzes, and everything in-between. I've said it before, but really: Locke-Ward is one of the most entertaining and talented guys we have in town.

With such rich local offerings in this short little month, it'll be important to plan on also catching some of the national acts coming through town. I'm most excited for Titus Andronicus, whose Festivus-titled album *The Airing of Grievances* was very well-received and will soon be reissued by the folks at XL Records. Their music will remind you of the Clash and a slew of other '70s Brit-rock, and the stage show is allegedly quite wild. It's an

Wishes Granted: The Mill

In my column last month, I suggested that the Mill could improve their sound. I'm glad to report that they got a new soundboard for the New Year, which had nothing to do with the fact that I wrote about it. It's a happy coincidence that we'll all benefit from.

However, also in that column, I inadvertently offended some of the staff at the Mill, who are good people in the Iowa City restaurant scene. The premise of the column was somewhat hokey, and—I hoped—in good fun, but as some of the servers there let me know, it came across as rude. The truth is, when I sat down to write, I had a hard time coming up with things to change about Mill concerts, so I chose to rant on something that was, at best, out of place in a music column, and at worst was a bit hurtful. So, to everyone who has served me a drink, made me a Leon's fish sandwich, worked behind the boards, stamped my hand on the way into a show, or helped me find the door at the end of the night: Thank you.

off-day from their tour with buzz-band twee-megastars Los Campesinos. I would expect hand-clapping and pogo dancing aplenty.

Lastly, for those of you so inclined, you have some options for complementing your attempts at Valentine's Day romance with some music. The first of these is the Sweetheart Serenade, an annual tradition at the Mill which features a fixed-price menu and the return of local folksters Mike and Amy Finders (who recently moved to Colorado). If "anti-love" is more your thing, I would head over the Yacht Club, where Mint Wad Willy, the White Tornado Outbreak, and Mannix! (again!) are playing. Expect sweat and single men all over the dance floor. **IV**

Craig Eley is a music writer, promoter and American studies grad student, usually in that order. Got news on the music scene? Write to him at craig@missionfreak.com.

>> LIT LUST FROM PAGE 13

eral practitioners,” according to Nialle). Nor do I talk to Karl, an Iowa City book hero who manages to sneak up in most other conversations. I pass on interviewing a bevy of readers to attempt to diagnose our town’s book pulse, ignore the Writers’ Workshop, don’t touch Prairie Lights or the libraries.

For the first time it’s easy to understand why we’re deemed a UNESCO “City of Literature.” Not for our workshops, our alum,



Luke Allen rearranges books in the stacks of the Haunted Bookshop.

or our PR—but because of the “ongoing book conversation,” as Nialle calls it, an exhausting thing, “more complicated than Star Trek.” It isn’t shared by all, but those in on the talks have thousands of years of conversation starters, from Plato to Frank Herbert to Latino history, and plenty of open ears to what we talk about when we talk about books.

**To arrive where we started**

My conversation with Nialle is interrupted by Leiden, a 14-year-old member of Nialle’s extended book family who first visited the store when she was 10, explaining to Nialle why Marxism wouldn’t work—an excellent ice-breaker. Today’s problem: a vegetarian cookbook found in the art history section. And the ensuing conversation: “vegetable art” to paint-by-numbers to performance art, somehow ending with a misguided artist locked in a “mad scientist kitchen,” arranging food for photographs.

Without a breath in-between, Jack arrives—a young Welsh man with long black hair and a coat to match. The visitors talk about others of their kind, a Milton scholar and her young child who scuffle over taste. The reported conversation: “No. I don’t want you to get a Curious George book,” says the mother, “I don’t like

Curious George.” “Don’t worry mom,” says the girl, “I don’t like Milton.” Jack reports that he appreciates reading Milton, “just so I can get other people’s Milton references.”

“It’s like watching *Wayne’s World*,” Nialle says. “You just have to do it.”

Nialle understands that books are necessarily haunted, inhabited by a previous owner who left a crease in the spine or folded a corner down or underlined something. “You get a feel off a book of who had it before and what it meant to them.” But still, despite being surrounded by these ghosts of readers past, it’s the living that binds her business. People like Leiden, or the volunteer who taught her to use a nail gun (“quite satisfying”), or those who foster days-long conversation about Harry Potter or finger puppets, or the past and present holders of Iowa City’s book keys.

“I’ve learned so much from my...I don’t want to say customers.” She pauses. “From my book family.

People I’ve met and some who were visiting the Haunted long before I ever set foot in it. And they get so defensive of bookstores in this town. ‘I always like how this one did this, and

**Today’s problem:
a vegetarian cookbook
found in the art history
section. And the ensuing
conversation: “vegetable
art” to paint-by-numbers.**

this one does this,’ and so on. They talk about them like it’s a community and they’re people—but they’re bookstores. And they’re okay with the people changing, but not too much, not too fast.

And for those like Nialle—guardians of ghosts, hosts of perpetual homecomings, book romancers and ecstatic lovers—there’s no reason to leave. **lv**

Paul Sorenson promises the book gods of Iowa City and beyond that he will keep reading. Contact him at sorensonpaul@gmail.com with recommendations or questions, and he’ll be sure to take a break from his passionate aimlessness to respond.

>> BOOK PICKS FROM PAGE 19

but someone had to make an informed decision about the apostrophe-s on singular possessives ending in an S.)

- Geek Love
- Tao te Ching (in several translations)
- The Virgin’s Diary (porn fiction from one of the porn shops on Kirkwood Ave—a gold mine find at the time. And yes, I read all of it; it was hilarious.)
- Against Love, The Female Thing, and Bound & Gagged (I *still* love Laura Kipnis.)
- Broom of the System
- Wenn Härtzen Klopfen
- George Saunders short stories

That’s all I’ve come up with in the hour I’ve spent writing this. This list spans 10 years, five while working in a library. I can’t rightfully include chapters of textbooks or poems

When books are
like wine, I totally
read them.

in collections, although poems for me have been an escape even after having read and re-read them, and moved on with my day. (My so-far all-time favorite line: *One more day and he will enter the core as one enters a flower.* That line sends me places no book can.) And I also can’t count grade school or high school reading. Like textbooks, they were required in order to be a grade slut. They were not read for fun.

I think I have to be the blasphemer here and say that books are only important to me for their servitude to the human imagination, to human knowledge. This might be naive of me to say this, but what role do books play for the oral historian? Pretty phrases and informative words belong to humans; meaning cannot be possessed by books without a mind to write them and a mind to receive them. I’m pretty satisfied having a mind engaged without instantly picking up on an in-circle’s allusions.

But maybe the truest explanation is that we treat books like lovers. One is allowed an infinite amount of love and partners if one so chooses, and serial monogamists cheat but trade up while doing it. Those who mate for life find their genre and stick with it. And people like me, who pick and choose and tease and toss, play hard to get. **lv**

>> BOOK AS ART FROM PAGE 17

20 classes per semester in printmaking, book-binding, papermaking, calligraphy, and book culture and history. Leonard says they almost always fill quickly with waiting lists.

Given book art's historical connection with technology, it seems apt that its recent resurgence parallels the most recent technological uptrend: the use of personal computers and the World Wide Web. Far from destroying the creation of physically beautiful objects, the history of artists' books demonstrates that new technologies can actually encourage artistic innovation.

However, Leonard is leery of placing too much emphasis on this connection. There are other documented reasons for the renewal, she said, including "a re-evaluation of the fine art field, questioning the role of the gallery and critic as the final arbiter, interdisciplinary exploration breaking down the traditional modernist definitions that categorized fine art practice."

Still, she says, technology certainly has played an important role in how we perceive our interactions with physical objects.

"I do think that with book art as with many hand processes and craft disciplines, the rise of interest in making things oneself is in re-



Jessica C. White
The Bad Sparrow

Letterpress printed from photopolymer plates and metal type; watercolor; ink; on Okawara paper.

response to our disengagement with the physical world and a cultural, almost visceral, non-conscious desire for a reconnection with that," Leonard wrote in an email, citing the do-it-yourself (DIY) movement and sites like etsy.com—billed as "the world's most vibrant handmade marketplace"—as other examples of physical culture in the digital age.

Leonard also pointed to the number of attendees at the Art, Fact, and Artifact confer-

ence as further evidence of growing interest in the book art field. Nearly 240 people attended this first-time conference hosted by an organization that's less than a year old. A volunteer at the conference said they had been expecting 50 to 100.

And the attitude at the conference was perhaps surprisingly techno-friendly. One presenter discussed Amazon's Kindle—often framed as the book's arch-nemesis—and the questions after her presentation reflected more curiosity about the device's potential than fear. Another panelist explored the way her experience with a physical book was different than her experience with the digital version of that book, available on the online artists' book database, artistsbooksonline.com. In some ways, she noted, the book was more accessible to her in its digital format. A librarian added that she sees a great value in the digital archiving of books, as students coming to her collections seem much more comfortable with the actual objects after having been able to prepare by looking online.

Leonard is not surprised at this intellectual engagement with change. In fact, it is what she expects. "The interest in the book is not nostalgia for a lost or past form, but rather an interest in how the book can function within our contemporary technological world and other forms of communication," she said. "While there is an interest in preserving the role of print, it is in the context of this new world: Where do print technologies make sense? How do these various forms of communication function together and complement one another? It is becoming ever clearer (following an initial blind love affair with all things digital) that each form has its strengths; how they work together is what becomes interesting." **IV**

Maggie Anderson is an Iowa native who has lived and worked in Iowa City for the past five years. She is currently the marketing and media manager for The University of Iowa Museum of Art.

Gran Torino, though it brims with postmodern references to our past, works best as a genuine, deeply moving yarn about our present.

Gran Torino, though it brims with postmodern references to our past, works best as a genuine, deeply moving yarn about our present. This is its real miracle. Eastwood and screenwriter Nick Schenk have shaped a film about American cinema, only devoid of easy pomo trickery. Clint's a story-first director, with an unassuming visual style that refuses to draw attention to itself. *Gran Torino* exudes unfashionable earnestness; it depicts an anachronistic America—one that slips between the '50s, the '70s, and the Wild West—yet it never takes its eyes off 2008, the year when old white men lost home court advantage in the United States. **IV**

Soheil Rezayazdi is a master's student in journalism and mass communication at The University of Iowa. You can reach him, if you are so bold, at soheil.rezayazdi@gmail.com.

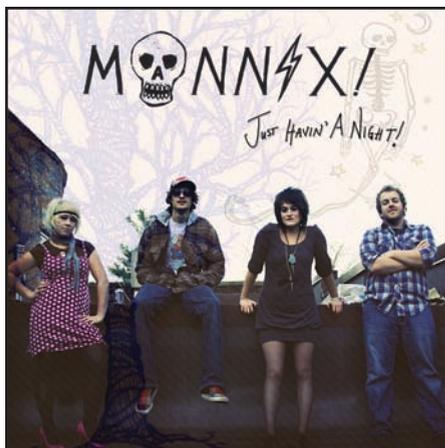
>> TORINO FROM PAGE 20

man who got things done, even if he had to sidestep the law. Eastwood can't escape this history of glorified violence, and he knows it. He, thus, fashions Walt Kowalski as his screen persona's logical conclusion: a bitter man, resigned from life, and racked with regret over his brutal past.

Read this way, the film breathes with poignancy and subversion; viewers, along with Thao and other characters on screen, expect and even want Kowalski to snuff Detroit's unsavory thugs. The film skillfully toys with our expectations, satisfying our lurid desires one moment (Clint does have some killer one-liners, including the instant-classic "Ever notice how you come across somebody once in a while you shouldn't have fucked with? That's me"), and eluding them the next.

Though it brims with postmodern references to our past, works best as a genuine, deeply moving yarn about our present.

Soheil Rezayazdi is a master's student in journalism and mass communication at The University of Iowa. You can reach him, if you are so bold, at soheil.rezayazdi@gmail.com.



Mannix!

Just Havin' a Night

www.myspace.com/mannixtheband

Brimming with alcohol-fueled mayhem, growled come-ons and garage rock riffage, *Just Havin' A Night* is exactly what we've come to expect from Iowa City's favorite garage rock, go-go family (literally—they're family), Mannix! However, Mannix! could have been their own worst enemy on its second album. If you cut your teeth on beer-soaked stages and strive for attention with all the kicks and hollers you can muster, when you finally get in the controlled setting of a studio, you can end up with a flaccid hunk of plastic.

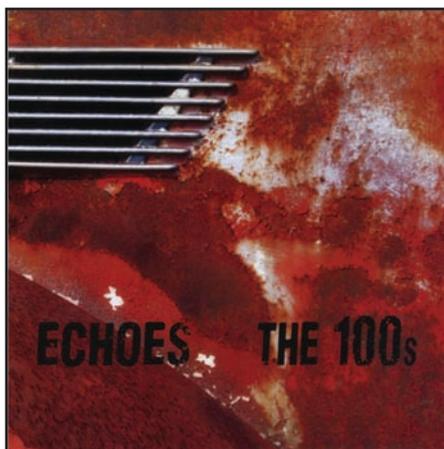
However, Mannix! dug deep and found the boozy grit of their live shows in the otherwise sedate confines of the studio. With the hiss of an amp at the head of album opener "I've Got Something to Say" to the in-the-red vocals of standout "Pull the Pin," it sounds like the group cut the record in a bar. Which would be appropriate since a lot of the action on *Just Havin' A Night* seems to center around being out or wanting to go out.

The one-two punch of "Possibilities" and the aforementioned "Pull the Pin" at the heart

of the album highlight and deftly employ the band's strengths. "Possibilities" is fueled by a spindly Sleater-Kinney-esque guitar figure, over which Karlee Mannix sings about what amounts to cabin fever and erupts into a rave-up chorus replete chants about how she'll make her escape and make it happen for "I, I, I, me, me, me." This is followed by "Pull the Pin," which opens with a blast of pumped up power chords and Karlee sneering at a loser she's trying to ditch (presumably at a bar).

This is music for a night out. All the loves won or lost, the missed opportunities, or the guilt the morning after your successes, *Just Havin' A Night* basically soundtracks all the possibilities.

John Schlotfelt is a University of Iowa graduate and staff writer for missionfreak.com.



The 100s

Echoes

www.the100s.com

straitjacketbowtie records

There's country music, and then there's Country Music. The 100s are the latter.

What I mean to say is that there's Nashville Commersh, with its \$800 cowboy hats and \$500 haircuts, and then there's the music that seems to come up out of the ground. Will Whitmore has a song that's so close to the earth he sings of eating the very dirt. The 100s are Whitmore's fellow travelers, but they've picked their own fertile row to hoe. Where Whitmore's music is devastatingly spare, the 100s are a full country band, and they cleave to the conventions—tight harmonies, guitar, bass and plenty of pedal steel.

But these guys stay away from country's tendency for craven emotional pandering, or even worse, the reflexive tail-devouring of songs like Tim McGraw's "Kristofferson." The 100s are straightforward, un-ironic, and heartfelt. But not without nuance. In "Miles of Rope" David Petersen sings "Could I get an answer please, before I end up on my knees, don't make me put it in a letter. I'd swear if I didn't know you better, I'd say you're enjoying this." As country lyrics go, it's the real deal: words of one or two syllables with emotional intensity, and yet tinged with a teasing wryness.

Lyrics aside, the arrangement and production of these songs is tasteful, but undeniably lush. Vern McShane's pedal steel guitar is fantastic, never reaching for that hokey moan that makes my teeth hurt. The 100s have a sackful of good songs here, but McShane's work makes each one a sensual pleasure. He's a player who listens, underscoring Pedersen's vocals like Bill Evans behind Miles Davis. The rest of the band members are good musicians, but I'm sure know as well as I do that they've got a treasure on their hands in McShane.

And if that's not enough, there's a story song about Kate Shelley, who in 1881, rescued of a train full of passengers from death by warning of a washed bridge. The 100s are smart enough to know to stay out of the way of a great story. Maybe that's what makes the

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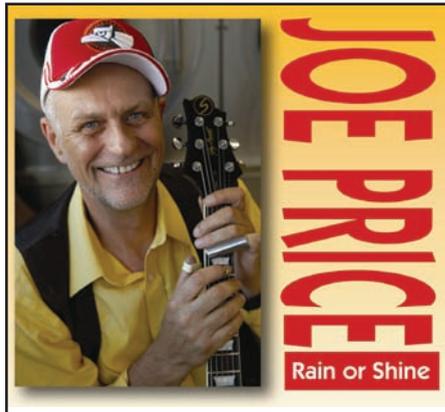


Easier.



100s so good—they know how to stay out of the way of the songs.

Kent Williams is an optimist who loves life, sport, and hates lies. He is Little Village's arts editor.



Joe Price
Rain or Shine

www.joepriceblues.com

During these long winter months some hot

blues can be just the thing to warm the soul. Joe Price is bringing the heat on his new recording, *Rain or Shine*. Released on Blues Acres Productions, this is the second of three planned releases by Price and his wife, Vicki, on their homegrown recording label.

Included are 10 new songs, all written by Price, five of which are blues instrumentals that alternate between the vocal tracks. This spirited recording finds Price in a rollicking mood. Equipped with his National ResoRocket guitar, Price rips into stories about wondering women and love lost. The opening track, "Hornet's Nest," sets the tone for the disc. This old fashioned rave up gets the floorboards rattling with furious guitar picking and boot stomping splendor.

Rain or Shine is essentially a solo recording, just Price and his guitar for the most part. In a similar style to Elmore James or John Lee Hooker, this is stripped down to the frame. Price's raspy call is well steeped in the blues and capable of telling a story by itself. Hook it up with some beat box slide guitar and this is vintage blues.

A cut destined for summer outdoor concerts is "Beer Tent Boogie Woogie." Echoing the lament of many a music festival attendee Price sings, "I got too drunk to drive."

Price does have some friends join him on a couple tracks. Vicki adds just the right accent to the chorus on the rowdy "Steel Guitar". And on "Rock Slide," Keni Ewing plays drums and Al Naylor, from the Bob Door Blue Band, brings a big trumpet to talk back at Price's guitar.

This disc was recorded live in the studio at Wow & Flutter in Nashville and at Catamount Studios in Cedar Falls, Iowa. In keeping with Price's authentic style *Rain or Shine* has a raw mix to it that includes some distortion. And yes that is a real train whistle at the end of "Beer Tent Boogie Woogie" from outside the Nashville studio. This doesn't detract from the recording, it's more of a style decision and makes the songs more personal.

Overall, *Rain or Shine* is a thoroughly enjoyable listen. On a snowy winter day it takes a little bit of the chill out of the air.

Pete Wilson is a Kentucky boy who landed in Hawkeye country after Katrina did its number on New Orleans. He covers music and culture related events, and occasionally dabbles in public interest reporting. With a May graduation date looming, it's time to sell the house and pack up the wagon—a new town is calling.



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ART/EXHIBITS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org

Check website for locations

Marin Luther King Day Celebration, free admission, Jan. 19

AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City

www.akardesign.com

Recent Ceramics: Margaret Bohls, through Feb. 13

Arts Iowa City

103 E. College St.

www.artsiowacity.org

Self Portrait: Angela Regas, Feb. 8-28

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids

www.crma.org

Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, open, Saturdays & Sundays, hourly 12-4pm

The Year of the River: Flood Photography from The Gazette, through Feb. 22 • Persian Visions: Contemporary Photography from Iran opens Feb. 21

The Chait Galleries Downtown

218 E Washington St., Iowa City

www.thegalleriesdowntown.com

Fresh Paintings, through Mar. 13

Faulconer Gallery/Bucksbaum Center for the Arts

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell

www.grinnell.edu/fulconergallery

Animated Painting, opening night Feb. 6, 4:30pm, exhibit through April 19

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Art, Fact, and Artifact: The Book in Time and Place, through Feb. 15

Public Space One

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

James Sham Gallery Opening, Feb. 6, 7pm

Terrapin Coffee

Oakdale and 12th, Coralville

New York City Series by Julie Staub

UI Museum of Art

www.uiowa.edu/uima

Check website for locations

Bette Spriestersbach Distinguished Lecture by Adam Gopnik, Feb. 5, 7:30pm

UI School of Art & Art History

Studio Arts Building, 1375 Highway 1 W,

Iowa City

www.art.uiowa.edu

Graduate Exhibits: Andy Castro, Feb. 9-13 • Zach Stensen, Feb. 16-20 • Crystal Roethlisberger, Feb. 23-27

MUSIC

Capitol Theatre

311 Ripley Street, Davenport

www.thecapdavenport.com

Mudvayne, Feb. 10, 7pm

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Bill Bourne, Wyckham Porteous and Jas, Feb. 13 & 14, 8pm • Buckwheat Zydeco, Feb. 17, 8pm • Gary Louris & Mark Olson, Feb. 19, 8pm • Tyva Kyzy, Feb. 21, 8pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Dr. John with The Neville Brothers, Feb. 13, 8pm • Gathe Raho, Feb. 14, 9pm • Mason Jennings, Feb. 20, 8pm • 1964: The Tribute, Feb. 27, 8pm

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu

Check website for locations

St. Lawrence String Quartet, Feb. 4, 7:30pm • Time for Three, Feb. 12, 7:30pm • Vienna Boys' Choir, Feb. 13, 7:30pm

The Industry

211 Iowa Ave., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/theindustryic

All shows at 8pm unless noted

Thumpday every Thursday

Jumbies with Samba Nosso, Feb. 6, 8pm • JJ Grey & Mofro with Backyard Tire Fire & Dead Larry, Feb. 8, 8pm • The Schwag, Feb. 13, 8pm Holding Mercury, Feb. 14, 8pm • Dead Larry with Hyentyte, Feb. 21, 8pm • Insectoid with Cirrus Mirror and Jason Sturgis, Feb. 28, 8pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Sunday Night Pub Quiz, Sundays, 9pm-Midnight
Open Mic with J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up

Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays

Mannix!, The Black Slacks and the Post Mortems, Feb. 2, 9pm • GB Leighton, Feb. 3, 8pm • Iowa City Free Radio Benefit, Feb. 6 • Diplomats of Solid Sound with The Parlour Suite, Feb. 7, 9pm • Titus Andronicus, The Envy Corps & Birth Rites, Feb. 8, 9pm • The Brown Note, Petit Mal & Wax

Cannon, Feb. 10, 9pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Feb. 11, 7pm • Pieta Brown with the Awful Purdies, Feb. 12, 8pm • The Beaker Brothers, Feb. 13, 9pm • Sarah Cram and the Derelicts, Matthew Grimm and the Red Smear & Sam Knuston, Feb. 17, 9pm • Caroline Smith and the Good Night Sleeps, The Western Front, Sarah Mannix and the Wandering Bears, Feb. 18, 9pm • West Music Young Jazz Warriors, Feb. 19, 6pm • Joe and Vicki Price, Feb. 20, 8pm • Andy Carlson and Casey Cook with guests from Big Wooden Radio and Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Feb. 21, 8pm • University of Iowa Jazz Performance, Feb. 24, 9pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Feb. 25, 7pm • Pokey Lafarge Duo, Feb. 27, 9pm • Miles Nielson w. Shame Train and Samuel Locke Ward, Feb. 28, 9pm

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

Piano Sundays, Uriel Tsachor, Feb. 1, 1:30pm • Was My Brother in the Battle? Songs of War, Feb. 4, 8pm • New Music for Violin and Viola, Feb. 8, 2pm • Sopro Brasil woodwind quintet, Feb. 9, 8pm • Zoran Jakovcic, Hannah Holman, and Réne Lecuona, Feb. 15, 2pm • The Finders, Feb. 14, 7pm •

The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.thepicador.com

All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Pharaohs of Rhythm & Dr. Z's Experiment, Feb. 2 • Kaiser Cartel & Midwest Trend Kill, Feb. 3 • Yo Majesty & Natalie "the floacist" Stewart, Feb. 4 • Collectible Boys & Local Clamor, Feb. 5 • Schaffer The Dark Lord & Coolzey, Case The Joint, Feb. 6 • T Gaines & Keys Davis, J Miracle, Feb. 7 • Tilly and the Wall & Porno Galactica, datagun, Feb. 8, 7pm • Aseethe, Shores of the Tundra, Lord Green & Lwa Feb. 10 • Young Coyotes, Single Indian Tear & Olivia Rose Muzzy Feb. 13, 5pm • The Horde & Helmsplitter, Feb. 13, 10pm • Marah & The Mayflies, Feb. 14 • Man Made Man, Albino Spiders, Burn The Rest & Grave Corp, Feb. 15, 6pm • Tyrone Wells, Trevor Hall, & Keaton Simons, Feb. 17 6pm • Heligoats & Camel of the Sea, Feb. 17 10pm • Foxy Shazam, The A.K.A's, Dr. Manhattan & Lost Apparitions, Feb. 18, 6pm • I am Ghost, Lower Definition, Driver Side Impact & Makeout Party, Feb. 19, 6pm • The Slats, The Wheelers & Teddy Boys, Feb. 20 • William Elliott Whitmore, (FT) Shadow Government & T Wehrle, Feb. 21 • William Elliot Whitmore with Hagan Myer presents: "The Coyote Club Vaudeville Extravaganza!", Feb. 22, 6pm • Waka Winter Classic Battle of the Bands, Feb. 24, 7pm • The Arms are Snakes, Darker My Love, All The Saints & Private Dancer, Feb. 25

Public Space One

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

Them Damn Kids & The Broken Spokes, Feb. 1, 8pm • Beati Paoli, Olivia Rose Muzzy & Live Ghost, Feb. 8, 8pm



My Life and Work as a Feminist Porn Activist Annie Sprinkle, Ph.D.

Wednesday, February 4, 7pm

King Chapel, Cornell College,
600 First Ave. SW, Mount Vernon

Oh, Annie Sprinkle—excuse me—*Doctor Annie Sprinkle*, how do we third-wave feminists love thee? Let me count the ways: You complicated the porn-is-bad mantra and showed us positive portrayals of female sexuality. You chose to love whom you love and let the whole world know. And you threw your life into art that offended and enticed. And now, Dr. Sprinkle, you grace Iowa with your sex-positive presence and give us stifled Midwesterners a little hope.

For 35 years, Dr. Annie Sprinkle has been personally researching—whether she knew it when she started or not—pornography, prostitution, sexuality and love, and now shares her findings not in an academic journal, but on the stage and screen. (She earned her doctorate in human sexuality from the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, an Institute that trains professional sexologists.) Annie Sprinkle's performance art ranges from her personalized burlesque style to multimedia theater. She has authored seven books and written, directed or performed in innumerable films and videos for both the light and dark side of porn. Annie Sprinkle is coming to Cornell to present this evening talk on Wednesday, and hang around through Thursday evening for two more events. The Sidewalk Sex Clinic is held from 11am to 1pm Thursday, and she'll show her latest film, Annie Sprinkle's Amazing World of Orgasm, at 6:30pm in the Hedges Conference Room. And for those who have 11am to 1pm available Wednesday, Annie Sprinkle will be giving sex life Tarot card readings in the Bowman Formal Lounge.

For those who can't make it and meet the goddess in person, some of her art and videos can be viewed or purchased on her website, AnnieSprinkle.org, and the website of her collaboration with her lover and partner, LoveArtLab.org.

Redstone Room

129 Main St., Davenport

www.redstoneroom.com

All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

ABK with AMB, Detroit Warriors & Ajax, Feb. 2 • Cracker, Feb. 4 • ZOSO: The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience, Feb. 5, 8pm • Seeker with the Hue, Feb. 6 • Woodbox Gang / Parish Festival, Feb. 7 • Eargasm 4, Feb. 13 • The Little Ones, Feb. 17, 8pm • Joe Price CD Release, Feb. 19, 8pm • Three Years Hollow with All Its Glory, Feb. 20 • Rude Punch CD Release, Feb. 21 • Tim Reynolds & TR3, Feb. 25, 8pm

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside

www.riversidecasinoandresort.com

Eddie Money, Feb. 14, 8pm

UI School of Music

www.uiowa.edu/uima

Check website for locations

Benjamin Coelho and Alan Huckleberry, Feb. 3, 3pm • Iowa Listz Festival (see website for events), Feb. 6-7 • UI Symphony Orchestra, Feb. 18, 8pm • Maia Quartet, Feb. 19, 8pm Jory Vinikour, Feb. 21, 3pm • University Symphony Band and Honor Band, Feb. 21, 7pm • Philharmonia Orchestra Invitational Concert, Feb. 27, 7pm

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.uptownbills.org

Open Mic, Fridays, 8pm; Sign-up, 7:30pm

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.uscellularcenter.com

Chris Tomlin, Israel Houghton & New Breed, Jan. 30, 7pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City

www.iowacityyachtclub.org

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Mondays Blues Jam, Tuesdays Dance Party, Wednesdays The Jam
Euforquestra & The Hue, Feb. 5 • Bob Marley's Birthday Party with Public Property & Heatbox, Feb. 6 • Dennis McMurrin & The Demolition Band, Feb. 7 • French Horn Rebellion, Feb. 8, 8pm • Strange Arrangement, Feb. 12 • Natty Nation, Feb. 13 • Mint Wad Willy, The White Tornado Outbreak & Mannix!, Feb. 14 • Second Hand Smoke, Feb. 19 • Summercamp Battle of the Bands, Feb. 27, 8pm • Family Groove Company, Feb. 28

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE
w/ DJ JOSH BOY
EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT 12 AND OVER

Mon. Feb 2 --
Pharaohs of Rhythm Dr. Z's Experiment

Tues. Feb 3 --
Kaiser Cartel

Wed. Feb 4 --
Yo Majesty Natalie "the floacist" Stewart

Thurs. Feb 5 --
Collectible Boys Local Clamour

Fri. Feb 6 --
Schaffer the Dark Lord
Coolzey Case the Joint

Sun. Feb 8 -- ALL AGES 7PM
Tilly and the Wall

Tues. Feb 10 --
Asseethe
Shores of the Tundra Lord Green Lwa

Fri. Feb 13 -- ALL AGES 5PM
Young Coyotes datagun Olivia Rose Mussy

Sat. Feb 14 --
Marah

Tues. Feb 17 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Tyrone Wells Trevor Hall Keaton Simons

Wed. Feb 18 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Foxy Shazam The A.K.A.s Dr. Manhattan

Thurs. Feb 19 -- ALL AGES 6PM
I Am Ghost
Lower Definition Driver Side Impact Makeout Party

Fri. Feb 20 --
The Slats Teddy Boys The Wheelers

Tues. Feb 24 --
Waka Winter Classic BATTLE OF THE BANDS!!

Wed. Feb 25 --
These Arms Are Snakes
Darker My Love All The Saints

WE HAVE A HEATED BEER GARDEN!

WILLIAM ELLIOTT WHITMORE

2 SHOWS!!
19 AND OVER 9PM
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 21
WITH (FT) THE SHADOW GOVERNMENT T WEHRLE
ALL AGES 6PM
SUNDAY FEBRUARY 22
HAGAN MEYER PRESENTS: THE COYOTE CLUB VAUDEVILLE EXTRAVAGANZA

THE PICADOR
330 E. Washington Iowa City, IA www.thepicador.com

THEATER | DANCE | PERFORMANCE

Brucemore

2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids

www.brucemore.com

Dear Sweetheart: The Letters of Howard and Margaret Hall, Feb. 12-14, 7:30pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Alley Cabaret - The Vagina Monologues, Feb. 27-28, midnight

Old Creamery Theater

39 38th Ave., Amana

www.oldcreamery.com

Love Letters, Feb. 6-21, 7pm

Penguin's Comedy Club

Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids

www.penguinscomedyclub.com

Check website for showtimes

Michael Winslow and Teague Hayes, Feb 6-7 • Mike Armstrong and Chris Schlicking, Feb. 13-14 • Ben Ulin and Johnny Beehner, Feb. 20-21 • Dan St. Paul and Mike Marvell, Feb. 27-28

Rage Theatrics

Space Place Theatre, UI Campus

www.ragetheatrics.com

Check website for showtimes

Prisoner of Zenda, Jan. 30-Feb.1

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.riversidetheatre.org

Showtimes are Thurs, Fri & Sat, 7:30pm, Sun 2pm
Guys on Ice: An Ice Fishing Musical Comedy, through Feb. 22

Senior Center

28 N Linn St, Iowa City

Classes are free unless otherwise noted

Irish Dance, Tuesdays, Feb. 3-24, 3pm • Two Line Dancing, Tuesdays, Feb. 3-24, 2pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City

www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com

Shows start at 9:30pm

Darryl Rhodes, Feb. 4 • Charlie Weiner • David Beck, Feb. 18 • Tin Slagle & Shawn Gregory, Feb. 25

Theatre Cedar Rapids

Lindale Mall, Cedar Rapids

www.theatreocr.org

A Dream Fulfilled: The Saga of George Washington

Carver, Feb. 27, 7pm

The University of Iowa Dance

Space/Place Theatre, North Hall

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa

Check website for showtimes and locations

Faculty/Graduate Concert, Feb. 13, 8pm

The University of Iowa Theatre

David Thayer Theatre, Theatre Building

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa

Check website for showtimes and locations

As You Like It, Feb. 5-8, 11-15 • No Good War, Feb 5-8

WORDS

Barnes & Noble

Coral Ridge Mall, Coralville

Scrabble Night, Feb. 11, 6:30pm • The Writers Workshop, Feb. 12 & 26, 7pm • Coffee and Crime Book Group, Feb. 17, 7pm

Emma Goldman Clinic

Event at Iowa City Public Library

www.emmagoldman.org

The Abortion Diaries film and Conversations on Abortion, Feb. 10, 6:30pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Talk Art Cabaret-Writer's Workshop Readings , Feb. 11 & 25, 10pm

Prairie Lights

15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City

www.prairielightbooks.com

Charles Beck, fiction, Feb. 3, 7pm • DA Powell and Jane Mead, poetry, Feb. 9, 7pm • Andrew Porter, fiction, Feb. 10, 7pm • Stephen Lovely, fiction, Feb. 10, 7pm • Eleni Sikelianos, poetry, Feb. 16, 7pm • Paul Harding, fiction, Feb. 18, 7pm • Lea Vander Velde, nonfiction, Feb. 25, 7pm • Jill Bialosky, fiction, Feb. 26, 7pm • Craig Arnold, poetry, Feb. 27, 7pm

University of Iowa Arts

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa

Check website for locations

Don Reitz, Ceramics, Feb. 5, 5:30pm • Building Fascist Bodies, Terry Kirk Art History, Feb. 23, 5pm • Sharing Processes and Tradition from a Contemporary Navajo Printmaker," lecture by Melanie Yazzie, Feb. 26, 7pm

CINEMA

Bijou Theater

Iowa Memorial Union

www.bijoutheater.org

Check website for 2009 schedule and showtimes

Iowa City Public Library

Ped Mall, Iowa City

www.icpl.org

WALL•E, Feb. 13, 7pm • Taking Root, Feb. 22, 2pm • Iron Man, Feb. 27, 7pm

Landlocked Film Festival

The Senior Center, Iowa City

www.landlockedfilmfestival.org

Encore screenings all begin at 2pm

Alaska Far Away, Collecting Canada, Feb. 1 • Manny, Majnun Layla, Monsters in Autumn, Int's in the Blood, Feb. 8 • Lost Nation: The Ioway, This American Gothic, Feb. 23 • Devil's Oven, Mar. 1

KIDS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org

Check website for locations

The Big Read: Queen Zora, Feb. 7, 2pm • Learning Safari: Dig This!, Jan. 11, 10:30am • The Big Read: Their Eyes Were Watching God, Jan. 27, 6pm • Carver Camp, Feb. 28 10am

Barnes & Noble

Coral Ridge Mall, Coralville

All Storytimes begin at 10am unless noted

Groundhog Day, Feb. 3 • Inside The Slidy Diner, Feb. 6 • Special Guest: Clifford the Big Red Dog, Feb. 7, 2pm • The Day it Rained Valentines, Feb. 10 • Look Valentines, Feb. 13 • American Girl, Feb. 13, 6pm • Penn Elementary Bookfair, Feb. 14 • Dogs on the Bed, Feb. 17 • Always in Trouble, Feb. 20 • Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed, Feb. 24

The Iowa Children's Museum

1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville

www.theicm.org

Cello Concert on the Carpet, Jan. 3, 2pm • Art Adventure, Sock Pals, Jan. 8, 3pm • Art Adventure: Puppet Theatre Art, Jan. 10, 11am • Art Adventure: Crazy Hats, Jan. 15, 3pm • Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, Jan. 19 • Art Adventure: Stuffed Snowman, Jan. 22, 3pm • Art Adventure: A Winter Garden, Jan. 29, 3pm • Art Adventure: Surrealism, Jan. 30, 5pm

MISC

Critical Hit Games

89 Second St, Coralville

www.criticalhitgames.net

Check website for daily gaming events

Lamrim Kadampa Buddhist Center

708 Sunset St, Iowa City

Healing Our Relationships using meditation, Feb. 1,8,15,23, 7pm

Curses, Foiled Again

- When Jeffrey P. Cannon, 20, arrived at Washington's Dulles International Airport from Ireland, customs officers detained him because a check of the passenger list turned up an outstanding DUI warrant. Officers searched his luggage and found "a large amount of tea bags," Border Patrol official Steve Sapp told the Washington Post. The bags' bulky shapes aroused suspicion, and officers found they contained 3.2 grams of hashish and 2.3 grams of marijuana. "If you know you're coming into the U.S. with bad stuff," Sapp said, "be prepared to be greeted rudely by U.S. Customs and Border Protection."
- An Australian man wanted in connection with two home invasions in Sydney tried to evade police by hiding in the attic of his own home. While officers were searching the house, however, the 31-year-old suspect fell through the ceiling into the family room, where police arrested him.

Suspicious Habit

Police identified Randy Lee Shoopman Jr., 33, as their suspect in a string of burglaries across eastern Oklahoma by using DNA obtained from tobacco spit. Stilwell police detective Chad Smith said he noticed a tobacco stain on papers in a ransacked office that had been burglarized. "None of the ladies that worked there chewed tobacco," Smith said. "You could tell that the stains were from the suspect." It and spit found at five other burglary sites all matched the sample police obtained from Shoopman.



It's Always Something

The world's largest passenger jet, the Airbus A380, is so quiet that pilots complain they can't sleep during rest breaks on long-haul flights because sounds caused by passengers, such as crying babies, flushing vacuum toilets and call bells, constantly disturb them. "On our other aircraft, the engines drown out the cabin noise," said Ed Davidson, a senior vice president with Emirates Airlines. Pilots using the crew rest area in the rear of the aircraft have tried sleeping with earplugs, "but the cabin noise goes straight through them," Davidson noted, adding that one solution might be installing lightweight generators to create ambient noise.

Fiery Irony

- After a fire gutted an animal shelter in Oshawa, Ontario, killing nearly 100 cats, investigators blamed the blaze on mice. Shelter manager Ruby Richards said the mice chewed through electrical wires in the attic.
- An Australian woman who donated money to buy her local fire department a new truck lost her rural home to a blaze that thwarted it and five other fire engines. Alan Fraser of the Wartburg Fire Brigade said heat from the fire kept firefighters from the only available water, forcing crews to wait for a tanker to arrive. By then, however, the multimillion-dollar home belonging to Annemarie Geckeler, 79, had burned to the ground.

Self-Interests

- After receiving an anonymous call of a stabbing, police in San Clemente, Calif., found a trail of blood that led them to a 19-year-old man, who was bleeding from his hands and arms. He told investigators a former friend has stabbed him. Police Lt. Ted Boyne told the Orange County Register that officers later determined the man used a shard of glass to cut himself, hoping to get the ex-friend in trouble.
- Kelley Lemay, 29, accused her estranged husband of punching her in the face, but after police in Ocala, Fla., handcuffed the man, Lemay admitted she caused the injuries, trying to get him in trouble, by hitting herself in the face with a frying pan.

Slightest Provocations

- A jury in Scranton, Pa., convicted Robert Kane, 34, of cutting through his neighbor's door with a chain saw because the neighbor's friend parked in front of his house.
- Philadelphia authorities charged James Joseph Cialella Jr., 29, with shooting a man whose son was talking loudly during a screening of "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." Cialella told the boy to hush, then threw popcorn at him and got into an argument with the father that provoked Cialella to pull a .380-caliber handgun and shoot the victim in the arm. He then returned to his seat and continued watching the film until police arrived.
- Two men beat Army Sgt. 1st Class Richard Lopez, 37, to death at a sports bar in Steamboat Springs, Colo., because they objected to his choice of music. Witnesses told the Denver Post the victim's jukebox selection was Jimmy Buffett's "Margaritaville." Police Capt. Joel Rae said Lopez was obviously enjoying the song when the two men disparaged it, and a fight ensued.

Dead Heat

- A town in Sweden plans to conserve energy by using heat from the local crematorium. "After all this talk about the environment, we realized we should take advantage of the heat created during cremation," Halmstead cemetery administrator Lennart Andersson told the newspaper Aftonbladet. He said the city hopes to have its new energy source operating by 2010, adding, "To start with, we're planning on heating our own facilities, but hopefully we can connect to the district heating network in the future."
- The Spanish town of Santa Coloma de Gramenet has transformed its cemetery into a source of renewable energy by placing 462 solar panels atop mausoleums. The graveyard was chosen because there were no other suitable sites in the small but densely populated suburb of Barcelona. Community leaders hope eventually to erect enough panels to triple electrical output. "The best tribute we can pay to our ancestors, whatever your religion may be, is to generate clean energy for new generations," said Esteve Serret, director of a company called Conste-Live Energy that runs the Santa Coloma cemetery and also is involved in renewable energy.

Making His Point

Eugene Michael Falle, 35, admitted stabbing intruder Shane Chalifoux, 18, but claimed self-defense because he feared Chalifoux, a gang member who had tried to kill him before, had returned to "do my ass in." He said he stabbed Chalifoux 39 times because he wouldn't die. "So I keep stabbin' him and stabbin' and stabbin' him and stabbin' him and stabbin' him, trying to slash his throat to get a jugular vein," Falle told police in Edmonton, Alberta. "He wouldn't bleed properly the way he should've bled, according to the movies." The Edmonton Journal reported that after finally killing Chalifoux, Falle leaned out the window to ask his neighbor to order him a pizza. Despite the prosecutor's argument that 39 stab wounds exceed the bounds of self-defense, a jury acquitted Falle.

Compiled from the nation's press by Roland Sweet. Submit items, citing date and source, to P.O. Box 8130, Alexandria VA 22306.

Where Christians really thrown to the lions?

My friend says Christians weren't actually thrown to the lions in ancient Rome, but when I was at the Colosseum, I saw a big cross there in honor of all the Christians martyred at that spot. He insists this was just made up by the church to perpetuate their religion. What gives?

—vbunny

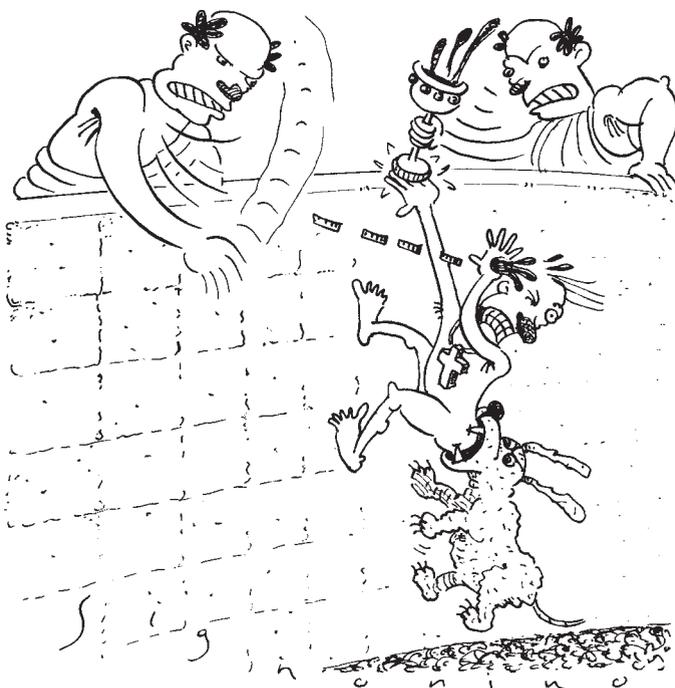
The story has its suspicious aspects, I guess. According to the historian Tacitus, Christians during Nero's time (at least) were mainly torn apart by dogs, crucified, or burned alive—no mention of lions. The Romans did throw people to lions on occasion, and Tertullian, writing later, remarks that the Romans were always ready to exclaim "Away with the Christians to the lion!" whenever times got tough. However, Tertullian doesn't claim he witnessed any martyrdoms-by-lion personally, and anyway he was a Christian himself. Fact is, while the Romans evidently fed Christians to animals, and people to lions, we have no source stating directly that they specifically fed Christians to lions. So theoretically it's possible the whole Christians-lions thing was a Christian ploy for sympathy.

But probably not. The Romans did a big business in mass slaughter by and of animals, showing great enterprise in arranging dramatic forms of killing, so if they didn't throw any Christians to the lions, it was likely an oversight. While record keeping at the time wasn't the best, and many early Christian texts have their implausible moments, here's what we can say with reasonable certainty:

1. During the early Christian era, the Romans executed some prisoners using animals, sentencing them *ad bestias*, "to the beasts." The beasts in question included dogs, bears, boars, and lions.

2. Christians were executed by the boatload during that time, often in cruel and unusual ways, with animals regularly playing a role. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote letters en route to execution in Rome predicting he'd

be thrown to the beasts. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was threatened with being thrown to the beasts but as it turned out was finished off by the sword. Possibly no one saw more animal action than the Christian priest Saturus—reportedly he was first tied to a boar (which turned on its handler instead), then exposed to a bear (it proved too cowardly to attack him), and finally killed by a leopard. Speaking of Nero's persecutions, Tacitus adds the detail that the emperor had Christians dressed in the skins of animals before throwing them to the dogs, possibly to help overcome any perfor-



mance anxiety on the dogs' part.

3. Animals weren't used just for execution in ancient Rome; animal combat, usually ending in the animals' demise, was unfailingly popular. Sometimes armed men fought beasts; sometimes the beasts were made to fight one another. Such games, originally held for religious purposes, became ever more lavish and were staged in amphitheaters across the empire. One well-loved event was the *venatio*, or hunt, often conducted amid elaborately constructed scenery, including real trees, rocky hills, artificial lakes, and the like.

4. Roman executions typically were considered a form of public spectacle. When coinciding with a game day, they usually took place during the midday break between the morn-

ing animal hunts and the afternoon gladiator matches. A favored method was exposing an unarmed criminal to lions or bears. Since it's pretty clear that Christians were at times sentenced to death by beast (see 1 and 2 above), one may surmise that some of them met their end via lion in front of a Colosseum crowd, but we have no sure knowledge of this. The entertainment value of executions was apparently low due to their sheer number—many people found them boring, either leaving for lunch or sticking around and writing letters to friends about the tedium.

5. You have to think the killing of animals might have eventually gotten dull as well—it's estimated that 9,000 beasts were slain during the inaugural games of the Colosseum alone (possibly an exaggeration; another source says 3,500 during 26 events). Over time more exotic animals were introduced to hold the crowd's interest: lions and panthers turned up in 186 BC, bears and elephants in 169 BC, hippos and crocodiles in 58 BC. Pompey brought rhinos to Rome; Caesar wowed 'em with giraffes. The ever-growing number and variety of animals required put a considerable burden on the supply chain. In his *Natural History* Pliny the Elder tells us lions were originally hard to catch (the idea was to chase them into covered pits), but later it was discovered they could be subdued by throwing a cloak over their heads. Elephants were captured

and tamed by beatings and starvation. A major source of animals was the Roman army, which had a special rank (*venator immunitis*) for those in charge of animal procurement.

A sorry business for sure, but Roman animal sports did at least provide an answer to one perennial question: Which is tougher, a bull or a rhino? Answer: Never bet against a rhino, which according to the writer Martial had no problem getting its horn under a bull and flipping it like a flapjack.

—CECIL ADAMS

Comments, questions? Take it up with Cecil on the Straight Dope Message Board, straightdope.com, or write him at the Chicago Reader, 11 E. Illinois, Chicago 60611.

ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR FEBRUARY 2009

FOR EVERYONE—Roll with it. We will all be living and working amidst a blizzard of changes, large and small, high and low, and of all kinds. There are benevolent and healing forces behind these changes and optimism is warranted. One thing there will not be is certainty or clear direction. Even if we wanted to hunker down and safely wait out the changes or wait for a clear direction to emerge, we couldn't. There is no place to hide from the change and none of the old rules apply any longer. And nobody really knows where all this is leading, yet. We are all going to have to participate. This is one of those times when everyone just needs to have faith in the processes of life and pitch in in good faith when and where they are needed. It will be some time before things settle into a new, stable form. But attractive, realistic alternatives will emerge for everyone as the months proceed.

 **ARIES**—Let inspiration and your conscience be your guide. It's impossible to tell how events will turn out, let alone control them. The forces of change are in high gear and working overtime. The problem is you need to make many decisions from day to day to keep things going. Your best bet is to just do the right thing and to be open to real change. Right now, it is more important to be right on philosophical and ethical issues, to understand the deeper meaning of things, than to be in control.

 **TAURUS**—Stargate. You are at a major life turning point. It might still seem only a twinkle in your eye, but it is about to become real. For years, you have been working hard and saving to lay the foundation for a lifestyle that suits the person you really are. For years it was a distant prospect. You might have thought it would never come. Now, in a cascade of changes, it will start to become a reality. February is a portal into the future you have long been working toward.

 **GEMINI**—Know yourself. Events are overwhelming the people with most control over your job and finances. These events are hard to understand, too numerous to count, and completely beyond anyone's control. It isn't necessarily bad. And it's nobody's fault. The result, though, will be increasing pressure on you at work. To succeed, dig deeply and get in touch with who you really are. Know who you are. Be who you are. And do that with calm and dignity. It will bring you a surprising level of control over changeable work circumstances.

 **CANCER**—Cut yourself some slack. An absolute blizzard of changes are going down, very fast, in every important area of your life. And there's scarcely a thing you can do about any of it. The epicenter(s) of change are work, partnership responsibilities and long-term finances. Interestingly, though, you are somewhat insulated from actual events and protected from any really bad outcomes. But the thing is, all this input will wear you out. Your nervous system is on overload. Take advantage of whatever breaks you can get to rest and rebuild.

 **LEO**—Healing. The winds of change are blowing hard through the lives of everyone you know. You are especially sensitive to the pain that change and uncertainty are causing. It's a time of emotional and physical vulnerability for yourself and others, a bittersweet time, but also a time for healing. But events are also bringing you the power to shape the new reality. There is resistance. This resistance will grow, but so will your influence. To truly succeed, though, you must use your influence to benefit others. Self-centeredness will bring problems.

 **VIRGO**—Stay calm and carry on. Change is causing stress among loved ones, at work, and in your romantic life. But don't overlook the gains: a more stable home life and a more resilient, confident you. Prepare for a lengthy new effort to express your real self even more effectively. A benevolent, healing influence is now influencing your work life and your health. Have faith in the benefit of long-term, patient approaches to issues. You will be rewarded generously for following your conscience. Someone who depends on you needs healing.

 **LIBRA**—Step back. Librans have had more than their fair share of uncertainty and frustration. They've faced too many questions that nobody can answer yet. The issues won't suddenly go away. But Librans will now have more help dealing with them. Friendship, romance, creativity, play, etc., will bring relaxing distractions and needed rest. Make that extra effort to heal yourself, to reduce stress and renew yourself. Seek out people who are into healing things. You need to help yourself before you can help others. The financial situation will ease.

 **SCORPIO**—Home sweet home. In recent times, home has been a place of unusual stresses and strains. Invisible pressures, hard to define issues wore you down. It was tough to maintain inner calm, also. Home is now becoming a place of sanctuary and healing. Your mind will also be more at rest. The planets are clearing out issues like old cobwebs. You'll be able to think through deep personal issues with greater clarity. Be sure to maintain proper boundaries as you also branch out into the community and meet new people.

 **SAGITTARIUS**—Pick and choose. Be especially alert to make the proper changes in your economic life. There is enormous potential for success. You will find members of the community both sympathetic and helpful in your efforts. This is a long-term project. You are not just adjusting your budget, but transforming your finances to allow a different, better kind of life than you have known. It will take will-power and patience to finish the job and get it right. You are uniquely situated to offer guidance and direction to those caught up in change.

 **CAPRICORN**—Downshift. You are facing a more complex financial situation than you expected. There is big potential, despite the tough decisions that are necessary. Amidst the chaos, powerful supportive and healing forces are at work. Events will soon simplify your choices, too. Embrace the slow pace at which decisions are being made. You need the time to sort things through properly. The delays and postponements frustrate you. But they help ensure that plans won't firm up before they are truly ready. You don't want something essential to get lost in the shuffle.



Aquarius

Don't be swept away. You are starting to see the benefits of a new 12-year cycle of growth and prosperity. At the moment, you are also subject to intoxicating and unrealistic vibes. You are the expert in boundless possibilities. And you wrote the book on optimism. Pay some attention to those who want to set limits or who see the possible downside. Don't get lost in an infinity of possibilities. To benefit yourself and others you need to accept limits. But you are the best judge of which limits to accept.



PISCES—Negotiate. Pisceans are betwixt and between. Inwardly, you sense all the potential. The optimism and confidence are there, inside. Outwardly, life seems too much about limitations and not enough about possibilities. You cannot quite achieve lift off. The resources you need to branch out are not quite within your grasp. Soon, you will have no choice but to submit to those who want you to be "practical" and "realistic." But they are more flexible than you think and you can negotiate. By this time next year, you'll see real benefits.



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