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May 09



Should We?


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Friendly

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Iowa Barn

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Resistance!

Ahhh! My condom!



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UI Theatre's New Play Festival takes the stage early this month

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT TORTURE

NOW THAT THE BUSH TORTURE MEMOS HAVE BEEN RELEASED, SENSIBLE CENTRISTS AGREE--IT'S TIME TO FORGET ABOUT THE WHOLE THING! IT IS TIME TO MOVE FORWARD RATHER THAN BACKWARD!

MISTAKES WERE MADE, BUT THAT'S ALL BEHIND US NOW--

--AND THAT IS A DIRECTION IN WHICH IT IS NOT TIME TO MOVE!

THE ARCHITECTS OF THAT POLICY MAY SOMEDAY FACE AN INQUIRY... BUT THE PRESIDENT OPPOSES THE PROSECUTION OF ANYONE WHO TORTURED DETAINEES IN "GOOD FAITH"... AND RIGHTLY SO! AFTER ALL--THEY WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS!

YOU CERTAINLY CAN'T PROSECUTE ANYONE WHO WAS JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS!

YOU KNOW, I'M NOT EVEN GONNA TAKE THE BAIT.

MANY CONSERVATIVES DENY THAT THE BARBARIC TREATMENT DETAILED IN THESE MEMOS (AND ELSEWHERE) CONSTITUTES TORTURE AT ALL...

HAR HAR! ANYONE WHO COULD BE WATERBOARDED SIX TIMES A DAY MUST HAVE BEEN ENJOYING IT!

YOU WANNA KNOW WHAT'S REALLY TORTURE? LISTENING TO NANCY PELOSI ON THE NEWS! HA HA!

HA HA! NOT TO MENTION RAP MUSIC!

YET AT THE SAME TIME, DICK CHENEY SAYS THE RELEASE OF THE MEMOS HAS PUT OUR COUNTRY IN DANGER!

NOW THE TERRORISTS KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TORTURE METHODS WE MIGHT USE ON THEM! OR NOT USE!

OR THAT THEY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR BUT SOME HARMLESS FRATERNITY-STYLE PRANKS!

ALL I KNOW IS, I'M TERRIFIED!

ONE THING'S FOR SURE--AMERICANS MUST NOW GRAPPLE WITH SOME EXTREMELY PERPLEXING ETHICAL DILEMMAS...

CAN HANDCUFFING A PRISONER TO THE CEILING FOR DAYS ON END UNTIL HIS ANKLES AND FEET SWELL TO TWICE THEIR NORMAL CIRCUMFERENCE AND HIS LEGS ARE COVERED WITH WATERY BLISTERS... REALLY BE CONSIDERED TORTURE?

HECK IF I KNOW!

YA GOT ME!

ANYTHING GOOD ON TV TONIGHT?

www.thismodernworld.com

Fitness, meet food

The Obama's are doing it, so shouldn't we do it too? In case you're in the dark and missed the First Lady digging around on the White House lawn in March, gardening is the thing to do this year.

Of all the reasons to grow your own food, health of the environment and your own body top the list. Veggies are essential for a healthful diet. There's a common analogy that the body is a lot like a car, you have to give it the right kind of fuel if you want it to run the best. The fuel your body wants is whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and lots of vegetables.

When it comes to eating, the U.S.D.A. tells us to "vary your veggies." Not only is this a good way to pick the foods for your plate, but this principle can help you decide what to grow.

There are five groups of vegetables, according to Kathy Mellen, a registered dietitian with The University of Iowa. She suggests growing a veggie from each group to fill your diet with a variety of good choices. The groups are green and leafy, orange or deep yellow, dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables and all the other vegetables.

As far as planting goes, there are two types of crops, according to Richard Jauron, a horticulturist for the Iowa State University Extension. Cool season crops grow best in cooler temperatures (around the 60s) and they are hearty enough to withstand a frost. These plants go in the ground first, usually in April, and can be harvested first. This group includes spinach, broccoli, lettuce, peas and turnips.

Warm season crops like tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and melons won't do well after a frost and thrive in the warmer temperatures. These are the

plants to be getting in the ground once all the nasty winter weather has finally decided to subside. The later planting will allow you to enjoy them after the cool-season crops are harvested, meaning not everything will be ready to eat at once.

Another reason to tend your own garden: Just a half-hour of gardening can burn almost 160 calories for the average person.

Another tip to keep you eating well all summer is to plant a couple of different crops of the same plant. Space out the planting by a week or two and enjoy the fruits of your labor a bit longer.

Maintaining a garden is a commitment. It requires weeding, watering, making sure plants are properly supported and more. This work pays off in a couple of ways: all the food you get to enjoy at harvest time and the calories burned from all the activity of

gardening! Just a half-hour of gardening can burn almost 160 calories for the average person. Getting a little activity in for some good food is not a bad deal!

Unfortunately, growing a garden isn't an option for everyone. If you're into the idea, but lack the space to make it happen, consider a potted garden. Try growing tomatoes, peppers or herbs in a pot.

Potted vegetables generally have a shorter season and ripen all at once. Look for determinate varieties of your plant of choice, Jauron recommends. These will grow to a shorter height, and thus survive in their smaller space. Also, make sure they can still get enough sunlight, or else the whole plan is a no-go.

Most importantly, grow what you will eat. And if you eat it, your body will thank you. Trust me. **lv**

Kelly Ostrem lives in an apartment, so her veggies will have to be grown in a pot.



Carrots are orange

Looking for something to plant? A balanced garden leads to a balanced diet. Kathy Mellen, a registered dietitian with The University of Iowa suggests planting one vegetable from each of these five groups.

Green & Leafy	Orange or Dark Yellow	Legumes (dry beans & peas)	Starchy Veggies	Other Veggies
Broccoli	Acorn squash	Black beans	Corn	Asparagus
Romaine Lettuce	Carrots	Garbanzo beans	Green Peas	Beets
Spinach	Pumpkin	Split Peas	Potatoes	Cucumbers
	Sweet Potatoes			Green Beans
				Peppers
				Onions
				Tomatoes

Looking for more info? Check out mypyramid.gov for help with picking the right foods to eat and tailoring a diet plan that's perfect for you. Go to www.extension.iastate.edu for all the gardening help you can ask for.

Morel Me, Please

Awalk in the woods in the heartland's early spring is intrinsically rewarding, but while you are enjoying those first few sunny days after a nourishing spring rain, why not look for things that can feed your belly as well as your soul? The woodlands of the upper Midwest are teeming with gourmet goodies in the spring, and this abundance is there for the taking, if you just know where to look. Tops on most hunter/gatherer lists this time of year? Morels.

Gathering wild foods is probably the most sustainable, and certainly the most ancient way to provide delicious and nourishing food for your family. It dates back to before the dawn of our species, and continues to this day (how's that for sustainable?). Archeologists have uncovered the remains of a 6000 year old man, and in the pouch found with him were several mushrooms. The arrow in his back may have indicated that he was foraging in someone else's territory. Such severe penalties are less likely today, but it is still a good idea to make sure you have the landowner's permission.

Although today our innate instinct to gather has been redirected toward grocery stores and shopping malls, it is still there just as surely as



Photo courtesy Carly and Art

it was with the "Mushroom Man." Sadly the tools and tricks our ancestors used to find wild edibles have been replaced by knowing which coupons to clip and which grocery has the best deal on frozen pizza. It need not be so, and learning a little bit about how to find the elusive morel is a good place to start.

The Truffle of the Heartland, the King o' the Midwest Woods, the mushroom that put the "fun" in "fungus" is the wildly popular - and just as elusive - Morel (*Morchella esculenta*). Of course it should always be emphasized that you should have some expertise when hunt-

ing mushrooms because if you're not dead certain, you might be just plain dead—so consult experts such as those at the Prairie State Mushroom Club (www.geocities.com/iowa-mushroom) before you taste anything.

Theresa Marrone starts looking when the lilacs are in bloom. Her book, *Abundantly Wild: Collecting and Cooking Wild Edibles in the Upper Midwest*, (published by Northern Trail Press and available at their website—www.northerntrail-press.com) Marrone reveals all the secrets to finding all these and 70 other wild edibles of the region, complete with recipes like fiddlehead pie,

asparagus with garlic grits, and morel pizza.

So now that the days are a little longer, and a little warmer, why not plan a trek through the woods? You'll get some great exercise, and you can find some wholesome goodness along the way. **lv**

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.

Sautéed Morels with Lemon

- 20 fresh morels
- 3 each eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup flour, seasoned w/ salt and pepper
- 3/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 lemons
- salt & pepper, to taste
- 24 each baby lettuce leaves, for garnish

Split the mushrooms lengthwise and rinse them thoroughly. Look out for bugs that sometimes live in the hollow insides of the fungus head. Pat the mushrooms dry with clean terry cloth. Toss in the seasoned flour until thoroughly coated, then set aside.

Split one lemon and juice it. Mix this juice with the wine. Cut the other lemon into 8 wedges. Heat 1/4 cup of the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Test the oil with a drop of the egg. If it browns quickly (but not immediately—that's too hot), it is ready. Dip the dusted morels into the egg, let the excess drip off, then place them carefully in the pan. Do not overfill the pan. Sauté a couple minutes on the one side and then gently turn them

to cook on the other side for 2 more minutes. Remove to a clean terry cloth, and proceed in the same manner with the remaining mushrooms. Be careful not to let the pan get too hot.

When all the mushrooms are finished, deglaze the pan with the wine-lemon mixture, then strain through a fine mesh sieve or through cheesecloth.

On clean plates, using teaspoons or squirt bottles, drizzle some of the olive oil, and less of the balsamic vinegar. Place 5 mushroom halves on the plate in a star pattern. Garnish with a lemon wedge and the baby lettuce leaves. Drizzle with the lemon-wine mixture and serve immediately.

LIVING IN A DISPOSABLE WORLD

Photo courtesy D'Arcy Norman



Isit with John Solow, an associate professor of economics, to chat about DVD players. Five years ago, his broke. It was a hulking, silver box, a relic of early-era digital technology. Motors whirled in an *eh-eh-eh* sputter, but, try as he did, Solow couldn't get the disc tray to open.

Where I would have reached for a user's manual, or, quite likely, the trash bin, Solow grabbed a screwdriver.

"I took the damn thing apart," he tells me in his University of Iowa office. "It was this I'm-not-gonna-let-the-bastards-grind-me-down kind of thing."

Solow liked the challenge. He liked the novelty of fixing what he owned, like some mythical handy-man great uncle. He found the problem—a loose gear—and repaired it with a few turns of his wrist. Satisfaction ensued.

A year later, Solow goes on, he garbaged the thing when its insides started wheezing again. Solow, like many of us each day, came to an

unspoken conclusion: Time is money, and as our days become busier, it's simply "cheaper" to buy new products than to fix existing ones.

This means cheap stuff and lots of it, but it also portends millions of tons of trash—rotting in landfills, emanating methane, contributing to climate change.



The average U.S. citizen will produce 1,700 lbs. of waste in a single year, approximately 10 times the average body weight.

Americans generate 4.6 pounds of trash per capita a day—roughly the weight of an older-model DVD player. Three hundred sixty-five of those and you get 1.3 tons of trash per person per year. Those numbers dwarf those from our peers: the Swedes produce 2.8 pounds a day, the Canadians 3.7, the Germans 3.9.

Of course, richer countries generate more trash almost as a given. The more one produces, the more one purchases, the more one creates waste products. But our disparity in waste creation is too extreme to stem from natural economic growth; America's GDP per capita is only slightly higher than the U.K.'s, yet Americans produce almost a pound of trash more per person per day.

THE STORY OF STUFF

Cheap products, planned obsolescence and easy dumping are just some of the reasons Americans are piling trash at an astounding rate.

Environmental activist Annie Leonard was alarmed at our culture of consumption and got to asking "Where does all the stuff we buy come from, and where does it go when we throw it out?"

That question inspired *The Story of Stuff*, a 20-minute animated film written by Leonard that examines the real costs of extraction, production, distribution, consumption and disposal, and attempts to isolate the moment in history where she says the trend of consumption mania began.

Watch it for free online at www.storyofstuff.com

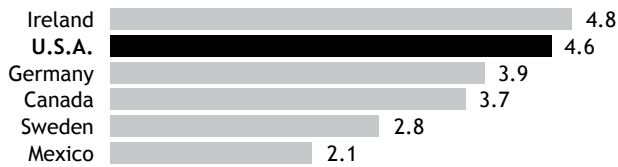


At least two factors contribute to our national shift toward purchase-and-pitch culture. First, devices

have become more complex. The mechanical has turned technological. Where it was once conceivable to fix a Walkman, a fritzed iPod is lifeless without a trained specialist. That such devices—mp3 players, cell phones, laptops—cyclically crash doesn't help matters. All this means mounds of defunct electronics in

Where it was once conceivable to fix a Walkman, a fritzed iPod is lifeless without a trained specialist.

Waste generated per day per capita in pounds



our landfills, and, on a more esoteric level, a warped definition of newness that makes devices sold prior to 2005 "old school."

In America, a second factor is at play. Our obelisks of waste result from our workhorse nature. Since the '70s, Americans have worked longer hours than Europeans. With decreased free time and increasing wages, our time has gained enormous value. As such, time efficiency—a.k.a. convenience—can undercut environmental and even economic gain. Idiotic on-the-go products have thrived on this mentality for years. Most of us, for example, know bottled water is more expensive than filling a Nalgene in the morning, yet we continue to purchase Aquafinas and Smart Waters every day. Why? Somewhere inside us, we've decided the time it takes to fill and wash a Nalgene has greater value than the dollar it takes to purchase and pitch a plastic bottle. We act against our clear economic interests for a more dogmatic currency: time.

So how do we solve our mounting waste problem? Here are some ways we can't:

- Consumer self-control. We will always want what's cheapest and/or most convenient, period.
- Fix what you own. To an extent, sure, but time remains valuable, and most of us can't fix today's technological products.
- Work fewer hours. Good luck sapping

changing consumer behavior, the most promising solutions lie in regulating environmental damage from producers and citizens. At present, dirty products remain inexpensive because their prices don't reflect the environmental degradation they cause.

"Things are cheap because we can dump stuff for free," Solow says. "[Prices] reflect the cost of the labor ('cause you gotta pay the workers), the cost of the raw materials ('cause you gotta buy those from the people who own them), and the price of the capital services ('cause people aren't gonna let you use their machines for free). But they don't include the price of dumping stuff into the air."

In April, the Environmental Protection Agency classified CO₂, methane, and other heat-trapping gases as pollutants, a major step toward greenhouse gas regulation. This would ostensibly force companies to decrease fossil fuel use—otherwise, they'd face higher production costs and higher prices for consumers. Ideally, price hikes for unsustainable products would be great enough to counter their convenience appeal. On a smaller scale, cities could reduce their waste by charging households per barrel of curbside trash, rather than a flat weekly or monthly rate. Like many incentive programs, such a policy could foster reform without mandating it.

"If you had to pay a price to dispose something—a price that reflected the injury it did to other people and society—you would do less of it," Solow says. "Not because you're particularly caring about other people and society, but because people do less of things that are more expensive."

Cynical pragmatism doesn't sound pretty, but it will prod us away from complacency and toward progress. **lv**

Soheil Rezayazdi is a masters 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.

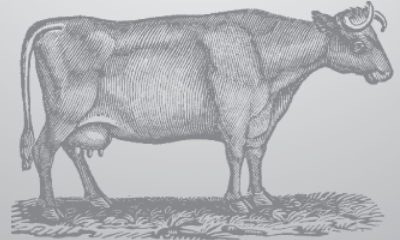
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Pop Summit

Springtime is here, and I'm ready to rock: in this case, at the Experience Music Project's Pop Conference, held last month in Seattle. It's one of my favorite places to be, for a variety of reasons. The event attracts a diverse mix of music-obsessed scholars, journalists, critics, musicians and other misfits—a strange brew that injects this annual event with an odd energy. Those who have no need to stuff their résumés regularly attend, including widely respected critics like Greil Marcus, Ann Powers, John Rockwell, Lucy O'Brien and Robert Christgau. Also, it's refreshing to go to a conference that is relatively balanced, in terms of the racial and gender makeup of the participants (especially when you consider the white male dominated world of music).

Now in its eighth year, the EMP Pop Conference was founded—and still organized—by former *Village Voice* music editor Eric Weisbard, who himself straddles the academic-critic divide. I've long believed that people in the academy need to find better ways to engage with other publics, and this venue helps make this goal possible. Also, the quality of the panel presentations is high. This is due to the fact that the journalists and critics intimidate the scholars—pushing us university types to think carefully about the clarity of our prose—and, inversely, the professional writers likely feel pressured to make smart arguments.

The journalists and critics intimidate the scholars—pushing us university types to think carefully.

This year's conference—titled “Dance Music Sex Romance: Pop and the Body Politic”—kicked off with an interview with Nona Hendryx. She rose to fame in the early-1970s as one-third of Labelle, the all-female glam-funk group whose silver space suits and freaky onstage personas influenced everyone from Parliament-Funkadelic to Ziggy Stardust-era Bowie. Labelle is perhaps best known for their 1974 hit, “Lady Marmalade,” and after the group broke up

Hendryx went on to perform with *Remain in Light*-era Talking Heads and collaborated with artists as diverse as Prince, Yoko Ono, Brian Eno, Peter Gabriel and Keith Richards. Scholars Daphne Brooks and Sonnet Retman directed the conversation, covering everything from Hendryx's obsession with sci-fi to her time spent in the early-1960s on tour with Dusty Springfield and the Rolling Stones.

All three of the musician keynotes were fascinating, especially the iconoclastic Indian singer Asha Puthli—who will be the subject of a future *Prairie Pop* column. Another compelling artist interview was Diane Warren, the queen of the power ballad who has charted dozens of hits over the past quarter century. Warren wrote one of my all-time favorite songs, “Unbreak My Heart,” made famous by Toni Braxton and made annoying by me, who surely tortured his grad school roommates by playing it over and over and over again after it was released in 1996.

Photo courtesy EMP. Rick Barry

Warren also penned Aerosmith's biggest hit, "I Don't Wanna Miss a Thing," a song that melodramatically begins, "I could stay awake just to hear you breathing"—and then gloriously soars into the stratosphere on a cheese-fueled rocket.

It was interesting to see her interviewed in a room full of music critics—a demographic that one would assume would be the first to burn Warren at the stake for her supposed crimes against music. Nothing could be further from the truth. There were several prefatory comments like "big fan!" during the Q&A session, and even those who didn't necessarily like her music were charmed by this quirky individual. Dressed in a striped shirt and a sweater vest—and sporting a boyish haircut—Ms. Warren turned out to be alternately sarcastic, insecure and hilarious while answering questions from *Los Angeles Times* music critic Ann Powers, and the audience. When Warren was asked about the clear disconnect between her demeanor and the sentimental songs for which she is known, she mockingly quoted one of her own songs: "I Don't Wanna Miss a Thing." Warren groaned, and noted that the opening line was a bit creepy, adding that she wouldn't want someone to stay awake listening to her breathing.

One more reason to love the EMP Pop Conference is that, along with scholarly papers and multi-media presentations, you also get performance art! Immediately following two presentations during the last Friday afternoon session, Holly Bass—who coined the term "hip hop theater" a decade ago—stood in silence behind a curtain close to where the other panelists sat. Meanwhile, George Washington University English Professor Gayle Wald solicited mon-

ey from the audience in exchange for a peek. After an acceptable amount of cash was collected, Bass would emerge, moving to various songs dressed in a shiny gold lamé costume that clung to her body—augmented with two golden globes attached to her derriere. The conference program referred to this costume piece as a "bootyball."



Matmos deejays at a conference after party

Photo courtesy Ann Powers

The performance, titled "Pay Purview," was a commentary on the commodification of black female bodies in popular culture, and there was a charged tension in the room as dollars were coerced from wallets. About half a dozen times, Ms. Bass performed a somewhat mechanical, not-quite-sexy dance outfit to a soundtrack that ranged from Rodgers & Hart's "Ten Cents a Dance" to Sir Mix-A-Lot's "Baby Got Back." My friend (and *Best Music Writing* series editor) Daphne Carr whispered to me: "It's like Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*," which similarly dealt with the male gaze and ethnic stereotypes. Holly Bass made me uncomfortable, which was the point—and, like Ono, she injected the performance with subversive humor

and thoughtful critique that resonated long after.

Another charm of this music conference is how actual musicians and other creative types are welcomed into the fold; after all, it seems obvious to make room for artists at an event such as this. I'm also impressed how they met our nerdy analyses of popular culture halfway, accepting our analytic approaches and occasionally esoteric terms. Among those who sat in the audience throughout many of the panels were the pop-experimental group Matmos, David Thomas of the influential proto-punk band Pere Ubu, and the *sui generis* Asha Puthli—as well as indie-darlings/cult figures David Grubbs, Franklin Bruno and Sarah Dougher.

At the Saturday night after party, a few of the conference participants performed at a local club. The evening featured a deejay set by Matmos and brief performances by Bruno, Dougher and Thomas—who stole the show with acerbic quips like, "Don't applaud. I despise your gratitude." There were also some great fly-on-the-wall moments, like the following conversation that took place between David Thomas and Matmos's M.C. Schmidt. "I'm sick of all this talk about democratizing music," the large, intimidating Pere Ubu frontman complained. "Music isn't a democracy—it should be a secret Masonic society." Turning to Schmidt, he asked, "What do you think music should be?" Schmidt said, "I just think of music as a pastime," which seemed to satisfy Thomas. **IV**

Kembrew McLeod is currently rehearsing with the Killer Apps, Iowa City's only all-mobile-phone cover band.

"Music isn't a democracy—it should be a secret Masonic society."

-David Thomas, Pere Ubu frontman

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Closing Arguments

story by
DAVID HENDERSON
photos by
DAVID HENDERSON
and **ANDREW SHERBURNE**

“ It's the equivalent of taking an inner-city school and moving it out to the suburbs, and that will marginalize us even more. ”
-ROOSEVELT PARENT

SUPERINTENDENT LANE PLUGGE'S OFFICE ON DUBUQUE STREET IS IN THE THREE-STORY brick building that used to be Henry Sabin Elementary School. The elementary school closed in 1979. Now it's the Iowa City Community School District's administration building, and the site of increasingly fractious school board meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Plugge has a big map of the entire district on his office wall, a map encompassing all the schools serving students throughout Iowa City, University Heights, Hills, Coralville and North Liberty. Keenly aware of budget constraints during this economic downturn,

Plugge must see everything in a single vision to achieve equal educational opportunity for every student in the district. He mentions “efficiency” several times during our hour-long conversation.

We’re talking about Roosevelt Elementary, 611 Greenwood Drive, a 68-year-old school bursting with students and in need of repairs and updates. Some of the parents and neighbors and supporters of Roosevelt Elementary may have gone through all five of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s famed stages of grief since the Iowa City Community School District announced a plan to close the school back in January. But of the stages in the sequence—from the initial shock, to anger, bargaining, denial and finally acceptance—not so many seem to embrace acceptance. Plugge has heard the rancor and accusations, condemning him as a “suburban-

Ruth Baker was tired of the city treating Miller-Orchard like a blank slate for development projects, like it wasn’t a neighborhood with people who had a stake in its fate.

ite,” insensitive to the damaging effects of sprawl, among other things. But for the most part, he says, people have been civil.

The reason Roosevelt should be closed, he says, is to make way (and budgetary space) for a new elementary school on 13 acres in the middle of a SouthGate Development subdivision called The Crossings. He insists that the board doesn’t dictate growth, but it must respond to it and try to anticipate it, using projections in conjunction with The University of Iowa’s geography department. A decision about the fate of Roosevelt is expected at one of the next school board meetings.

“There are so many different audiences and their interests are different in this,” says Plugge. “You look at the teaching staff—they certainly have a perspective. The parents do. And some of the parents don’t have the same perspective. Some care passionately in specific ways, and some of the parents haven’t weighed in. And then you’ve got the neighborhood concerns. One of the things that I picked up through this is—and I knew it before—that

people care passionately for their schools and most people would not want to see a change, a major change. I think the thing that as a school district we have to stay focused on is how best can we serve children. It starts with the children at Roosevelt, but also Roosevelt fits into the larger picture of the entire school district.”

Vested Interests

Ruth Baker has lived in the same house on West Benton Street for 30 years, just down the hill from Roosevelt Elementary, in the heart of the Miller-Orchard neighborhood in southwest Iowa City. From her backyard you can hear both birdsong and the near-constant roar of traffic on Benton, zooming up and down the steep hill. Her 11-year-old rescued dog



Ruth Baker and her dog Kooper with Roosevelt School in the background

Kooper waits patiently for his walk while she talks about when the city wanted to accommodate the traffic by widening Benton—rather than funnel it toward nearby Highway 1—and the only option on the table was whether to expand it to three or four lanes. She rallied neighbors to help stop it, filling the hall during city council meetings and work sessions. Baker said she was tired of hubcaps (and even an errant car) rolling into her yard and tired of the city treating the Miller-Orchard area like a blank slate for development projects, like it wasn’t a neighborhood with people who had a stake in its fate.

“They finally took us seriously as a neighborhood after that,” she said. “But we have always had to be on guard and reactive to everything, and it’s a distressing thing in your life when you can’t just sit back and say, ‘OK, the city’s behind us and is going to be supportive.’”

Baker breathed a little easier after the city stressed the value of neighborhoods, in-fill de-

velopment and limiting sprawl in their most recent strategic plan. And there have been other small victories in the recent past. After a more than 20-year struggle, a neighborhood park was opened on land that might have easily been another huge apartment complex. But then, early this year, came The Plan from the School Board.

Signs of Support

The green “Save Roosevelt School” sign planted in Ruth Baker’s lawn on Benton and other lawns on Miller and Orchard and Hudson Streets might lead you to expect that Superintendent Lane Plugge would face a chorus of hisses and boos when he showed up for the Orchard-Miller neighborhood association meeting on April 8 in the Roosevelt

Elementary gym. After all, Plugge is the point man for the school district’s “Strategic Facilities Improvement Plan” that would build an \$11.5 million new school on the western edge of town, build additional classroom space at Ernest Horn Elementary and close down Roosevelt, which some value as the linchpin of the surrounding Miller-Orchard neighborhood. The district’s estimates say repairing Roosevelt will cost over \$5 million, money it says is better spent on a new building that will accommodate mushrooming enrollment on the west side of town.

Back in February, after the plan’s announcement, scores of distressed Roosevelt parents and other concerned residents flocked to school board meetings, sitting through more than two hours of PowerPoint presentations and discussions among the board members before the board took questions and comments from the audience. When they finally spoke, they peppered the board and Plugge with mostly civil but sometimes caustic denunciations of the proposed shutdown or “decommissioning” of the nearly 80-year-old school, and the meeting extended far into the night.

At the February 10 meeting, Mary Knudson-Dion, a parent of a Roosevelt student, said she worried that the Miller-Orchard neighborhood and its less-than-affluent residents had been given short shrift for years by school boards and city councils, subject to a series of shortsighted zoning schemes that put the interests of developers and absentee landlords ahead of

people in the neighborhood. She said the new plan seemed like “the nail in the coffin.”

“I feel like it’s the equivalent of taking an inner-city school and moving it out to the suburbs,” Knudson-Dion said. “And that it will marginalize us even more.”

Roosevelt was a focal point for the southwest Iowa City neighborhood after its construction, a way to lure homebuyers to a new subdivision. Affordable single family housing boomed in the area during the World War II era. But a trend toward high-density apartment complexes and commercial development in the area pushed more upscale single-family development further west to more suburban pastures. Now taking a stroll through the Miller-Orchard neighborhood isn’t always easy. Never mind the busy traffic on Benton Street and the fast food emporiums and check-cashing places on Riverside Drive that prey on the chronically cash-strapped—census data reveals a mostly low- to middle-income demographic, with about 27 percent of residents living beneath the poverty line. If you’re on foot, the most obviously lacking amenity in this neighborhood is sidewalks. There’s no walk to shovel—easy on the the lower back perhaps, but a challenge for kids walking to school, especially if they have to walk to Ernest Horn, several blocks west of Roosevelt.

Both Plugge and school board President Toni Cilek stress that their goal is not merely the well-being of this or that neighborhood, but a strategic vision for the school district as a whole, looking out for the well being of every child. It would be fiscally irresponsible to throw too much taxpayer money at a cramped, crumbling building in need of many expensive repairs.

In February, former city council member Bob Eliot wrote an opinion piece reminding readers that the school board must serve the interests of students first. Schools, he wrote, are not supposed to be a “tool to prop up neighborhoods or neighborhood associations.”

Ruth Baker chafes at the implication that resistance to the board’s plan is a not-in-my-backyard brand of crusading that doesn’t put the interest of Roosevelt students first. She fears the school board is minimizing objec-

tions, classifying them under the rubric of “feelings,” “concerns” and “sentiments”—touching emotional effusions, but without much value compared to the board’s statistics and more presumably more enlightened regard for children.

“It isn’t just neighborhoods,” says Baker, remarking on increased difficulties low-income families have participating in schools that are farther away. “A neighborhood is not just a word, it consists of *children*, for crying out loud. There are people in that neighborhood. It isn’t just a word that you use. It’s actual people.”

But walking around Roosevelt with Principal Mindy Paulsen, it’s obvious that



Walking around Roosevelt, it's obvious that space is scarce, and something needs to be done.

space is scarce, and something needs to be done. The original 1931 building, the 1950s-era addition and the seven portable, trailer-style classrooms are all full of students. There are accessibility issues, the small classrooms in the main building lack modern amenities like air conditioning and some brick walls need tuck-pointing.

Beyond the limitations of the building, Paulsen appreciates Roosevelt’s multi-racial and international student body. “I’ve had parents tell us that they like the fact that their kids interact with kids that are different from them and from other countries,” said Paulsen. “So when they go to Northwest Junior High and West High, that’s just what school is [for them]—seeing kids that don’t look like them

and have different beliefs.”

Was this voted for?

The local option sales tax that passed in February 2007 was projected to generate over \$100 million over the next decade. At the time, many who voted for it believed the money would be equally applied to refurbishing older schools as well as to the construction of new schools, as needed. Now many feel they have been sold a bill of goods. Roosevelt had to go, said Plugge’s strategic plan, because it was old, overcrowded, inaccessible and inefficient; because the school’s low test scores and high percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced-price lunch (57 percent at the time of print), the State Board of Education

had deemed the neighborhood unacceptably “socio-economically and racially isolated.” That board’s vision of equity demanded Roosevelt be closed in favor of a new school further west. The superintendent’s PowerPoint presentation made an emphatic point: “All children deserve access to the best possible education in a state-of-the-art school.”

Right now, according to the Roosevelt Principal’s office, the school has 340 students, with an ethno-demographic breakdown of about 42 percent white, 40 percent black, 10 percent Latino, and seven percent

Asian and Asian American students. Along with Grant Wood and Mark Twain Elementary Schools, Roosevelt has been identified by an Iowa Department of Education equity report for having a students-of-color percentage 20 or more percentage points higher than the percentage of students of color in the district as a whole. Of the district’s 18 elementary schools, 14 have fewer than 10 percent enrollment of black students. Overall, the district has a minority enrollment rate of about 30 percent, with African Americans making the largest contingent at around 16 percent.

The Department of Education report cites racially and socio-economically isolated enrollment patterns as demonstrated predictors of achievement disparities by race. Citing Iowa’s Administrative Code, the department writes, “It is important that racial and socio-economic integration be one of the primary criteria utilized when making decisions related to the placement of new buildings, the closing

of buildings, the drawing of boundary lines, the design of feeder patterns, and the placement of specialized programs. Decisions made in the next few years will have a big impact on how segregated/integrated the district and the community will be in the future.”

Segregating Integration

Many at the school board meetings were from the Miller-Orchard neighborhood, but people from other neighborhoods with older elementary schools, such as Longfellow and Horace Mann, were also alarmed. No matter that the council assured them that the plan was merely a working document, subject to change throughout the process. They had launched a website—WeLoveOurNeighborhoodSchools.wetpaint.com—to help organize their concerns and had a battery of questions for the board. Were they ignoring the city charter’s emphasis on in-fill development and reducing suburban sprawl? Was there a developer-friendly bias built into the metrics of evaluating older schools? Had the district been manipulated into building a new school in the midst of Southgate Development’s 400-some acre holdings near Camp Cardinal Boulevard? Was maintenance and repair at older schools being deliberately underfunded to make a better case for building new schools?

And if equity was a prime consideration,

Why the concern over “disproportionate concentrations” of poverty but not with concentrations of affluence in other neighborhoods?

why were around 75 students from low-income families who lived in federally subsidized Pheasant Ridge apartments being bused past nearby Ernest Horn Elementary to attend Roosevelt? (Ernest Horn students score high on standardized tests and the school is still under its enrollment cap, while Roosevelt has been over capacity for several years, making do with portable classrooms outside the main building.) Why the concern over “disproportionate concentrations” of poverty but not with concentrations of affluence in other neighborhoods?

The students from Pheasant Ridge—who are mostly black—seem to have been treated like a demographic hot potato, bussed not to the newer, predominately white Irving Weber Elementary along with other kids in the area, nor attending the predominately white Ernest

Horn Elementary, which is also closer than Roosevelt Elementary. Looking at the map in his office, Plugge notes some of the peculiarities of the school boundaries and the Pheasant Ridge “wraparound.” The decision to send Pheasant Ridge students to Roosevelt and not Horn was made long before Plugge arrived in Iowa City nine years ago.

A perhaps neglected factor in this demographic calculus is a scandal dating back to 2005, when The Des Moines Register’s Lee Rood discovered that scholarship athletes from The University of Iowa, including the son of multi-millionaire head football coach Kirk Ferentz, were exploiting a loophole to qualify for subsidized low-income housing. Once this loophole was closed and truly in-need families occupied the housing units, what had been a contingent of around 45 students from Pheasant Ridge attending Roosevelt doubled within a few years, and a stopgap measure intended to reduce crowding at Horn (before Weber Elementary was built) suddenly burdened Roosevelt beyond capacity.

In the Roadrunner’s Den

On April 8, Plugge sat in a gray suit and lavender tie at the Miller-Orchard neighborhood workshop held in the Roosevelt Elementary gym. Mary Knudson-Dion had invited Plugge to the meeting. The superintendent chatted amiably with her and Mark Cannon and other neighborhood association leaders before the meeting began in the elementary school gym. The workshop, too, was pleasant and civil. Plugge sat attentively in a blue plastic chair near the intersection of the two lunch tables where everyone was sitting in the middle of the gym—and listened, just listened and thumbed through the document along with the rest of audience during the presentation. The mood in the room was positive, with no visible or audible acrimony despite the prospect of impending doom. Even “Roosevelt the Roadrunner,” the school’s red-sneakered cartoon mascot painted huge high on the south wall, looked down and smiled on the occasion.

University of Iowa urban planning graduate students Doug Ongie, Milton Thurmond, Nate Kabat and T.J. Patton’s final project, “Planning for Action, Neighbors for Improving Miller-Orchard,” outlines a strategy for “neighborhood recovery” that they had developed with the community over the past nine months. The urban planning students did such a good job the neighbors didn’t want them to leave, despite graduation looming.

“We don’t have all the knowledge about

ROOSEVELT CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 >>

IOWA NEW PLAY FESTIVAL 09

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by Jen Silverman

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Eco Ridin'

Iowa City's own Broken Spoke rides its way to Bicycle Friendly Business distinction.

As of 2009, there is only one Bicycle Friendly Business (BFB) in the state of Iowa, and it is located in our very own Iowa City.

The League of American Bicyclists named the Broken Spoke as a bronze level BFB last March. According to the League, which has 300,000 members, only 47 total businesses in the United States have been designated as Bicycle Friendly Businesses, and only 17 have been given the bronze award.

"I guess I felt as though [having a cycling friendly business philosophy] was just a part of my overall philosophy towards bicycles in general," said Broken Spoke owner Michael Chamberlain during a recent interview with the Savvy Cyclist. "It was a way to put bicycles in the spotlight as transportation."

The League defines a BFB as one that promotes bicycling as well as "practices social responsibility by weaving bicycling into the business culture and gives employees the opportunity to be active stewards of their personal and environmental health through bicycling."

Though this definition may sound vague, according to Meghan Cahill, director of communications for the League, the selection process is quite clear.

"A committee of specialists reviews and scores each Bicycle Friendly Business application and considers feedback from cyclists in the workplace in order to determine an organization's level of recognition," she said. The applications focus on what the League calls the four E's: engineering, education, encouragement and evaluation. Depending on what score a business receives, it receives a platinum, gold, silver or bronze status or an honorable mention.

Cahill said that award winners can submit a renewal form ever two years. At this time, business owners can supplement their original applications, note progress, move up to a higher award level and set new goals.

To give some perspective on how steep the competition is for BFB awards, the Broken Spoke beat out the Redmond, Washington, branch of REI (an outdoor gear retail giant), and ProCycling (an online warehouse of bike products), which both received honorable



Pete Hartley fixes a bicycle at the Broken Spoke.

mentions. The Iowa City store tied with World Bank Group (yes, that World Bank), the U.S. Open Cycling Foundation, and the National Park Service's Midwest Region.

What makes the designation notable is that there are only two workers at the Broken Spoke (four if you count the cats!), Chamberlain and his employee Pete Hartley.

Chamberlain said that one of the reasons his store was designated as a BFB was the amount of respect he has for cyclists: "we focus on bicycles as a lifestyle choice and they are promoted as a credible means of transportation. Employees of past and present have always ridden to work and common everyday tasks are completed using our bicycles."

But it seems safe to speculate that most owners of small bike shops in Iowa might say that he or she respects bicycles and promotes their use. To better understand what makes the Broken Spoke stand out, a close inspection is needed, as the details are what make the shop's case.

For example, Chamberlain has taken special pains to operate the Broken Spoke in an environmentally conscious way.

"One thing that immediately comes to mind is my lack of air conditioning," said Chamberlain. Instead, they use ceiling fans to keep the shop cool. The verdant grape vines growing on the shop's porch also provide

some protection from the sunlight (as well as a pleasing frame for the store's front door). All lighting in the store uses energy-saving fluorescent bulbs, and the employees regularly use their bikes to haul cardboard (lots of bikes come in giant cardboard boxes and, without recycling, waste adds up fast) to City Carton.

Chamberlain and Hartley also recycle bikes—though not at City Carton. The store sells used bicycles, mostly acquired from trade-ins and visitors to the store. Each bicycle is fixed up by one of the two mechanics, photographed and advertised on the Broken Spoke's blog.

"A good used bike is a great way to save money over a new bike," said Chamberlain. "Plus, it keeps the used bike around longer instead of going to the landfill or scrap yard."

Recently listed on the blog were used bikes available ranged from a Kona Unit 2-9 to a Columbia Commuter II "folding" bicycle to a pink and white Schwinn 1950s era cruiser. The used bikes Chamberlain accepts are generally high quality (sturdier frames, more durable parts), newer (a 2009 Kona Unit 2-9 retails for over \$1,000) and thus make fairly high quality used bikes. Though cost slightly more than other used bikes that can be found in Iowa City, their a better choice for a serious commuter, frequent rider or one interested in specialty cycles.

Broken Spoke also sells a variety of new bikes, including mountain bikes, commuters, retro cruisers, cyclocross, trikes and recumbents, folding bikes and kids bikes.

Chamberlain also makes custom “snowflake” wheels, for which he bends, twists and crisscrosses spokes to create unique designs. Since he got the idea after seeing a photograph of such a wheel, he learned the process through trial and error. It took him about four years to figure out the exact formula for calculating spoke lengths. Though the process was long, it was not unpleasant.

“I always get a great sense of satisfaction from building a good wheel, since it is certainly a mixture of skill and art,” said Chamberlain. “Plus, the end result is something very tangible that you can hold in your hands and spin!”

A pair of three-cross wheels (the spoke pattern found on most modern bikes) takes him about two-and-a-half hours to finish, to lace a pair of snowflake wheels takes twice that.

Each time Chamberlain builds a pair of snowflake wheels, a bike frame, or any other particularly notable bike part, he posts a photo of said object on his blog. He also often posts information about bicycle activism and politics in Iowa. One topic he focuses on frequently is

the Johnson County Council of Government’s (JCCOG’s) development of the Metro Area Bicycle Plan.

In 2007, Iowa City officials applied for Bicycle Friendly Community status from the

“I always get a great sense of satisfaction from building a good wheel.”

—Michael Chamberlain, Broken Spoke owner

League. The city’s status was denied because it did not meet a few basic requirements—even today there is only one bike lane in Iowa City (it is on Melrose Avenue, near The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics). The Metro Area Bike Plan was created with the purpose of rectifying such problems, through the use of educational programs, new road lanes and markings (such as sharrows and route markings).

“I don’t think sharrows and other traffic markings will keep downtown safer for bicyclists from motorists by themselves,” said Chamberlain. “I hope that sharrows and signs will get more bicycles on the streets. That will make things safer for all bicyclists—once more bicycles are on the roads, cars will get

used to dealing with them and learn better how to interact with them.”

The Broken Spoke qualifies as a Bicycle Friendly Business for all the formal requirements; Chamberlain practices social responsibility through recycling, conservation and community activism, encourages his employees (past and present) to use cycling as a primary form of transportation and so on. But the thing that truly differentiates this store from other BFBs is something less tangible: a thoughtful compassion for and dedication to bicycles and bicycling.

“Owning a bike shop is basically choosing to do something for a living that I love,” said Chamberlain. “I feel as though the cycling industry is a fairly good one in the way that it is for the most part ‘good.’ Especially when the focus is placed on using bicycles as viable alternatives to transportation. No vehicle is cleaner & quieter than the bicycle.” **lv**

Andrea Parrott is an Iowa City native, blogger behind www.TheSavvyCyclist.com, and has just received her master’s degree in Journalism from the UI. This year will she will bike on her 13th complete RAGBRAI. You can find her cycling around town on her pink one speed.

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Terry Johnson remembers an ambitious man coming out to strip his barn for scrap wood. He made it through a few rows of shingles on the roof then quit, saying it was too much work. "Every time we get a big wind storm I look out at the old barn and hope it's blown over," said Johnson. "Then I won't have to pay anyone to come do it for me."



Deconstructing the Iowa Barn

The Johnsons kept eight or 10 milk cows in the barn. They sometimes kept pigs, too, but cows suited the barn best. They milked the animals by hand. Later, they skimmed the cream and sent it to the local creamery for butter or ice cream, saving the remaining milk for the hogs.

That was 1950.

Farm life has changed radically since those days of hand-milking. Census of Agriculture data shows the number of farms, especially the

number of family farms, is steadily shrinking. Iowa has fewer farms, and fewer farmers who can make their living solely from their land.

Today, three of the four walls are almost entirely gone. A patchwork pattern of sunlight shines through the holes in the roof, and the second floor is no longer safe for the play the current owner, Terry Johnson, remembers occurring there.

The barn—previously the archetypical American farm's most important structure, often built before the house because of its essential role in securing the homesteaders' livelihood—is having a bit of an identity crisis.

Massive prefabricated steel structures that fit today's industrial-sized agriculture have replaced hand-built wooden structures as the functional building of choice, and farm owners like Johnson are left not knowing quite what to do with that crumbling building in their backyard.

"If you look at that side," Johnson says, pointing, "that corner's gone, and the next two posts are gone, that corner's gone, and yet that roof is still there. Why this whole thing hasn't fallen, I don't know."

Johnson, 66, has lived on his family's farmstead near the small town of Oasis, just off of



story by Maggie Anderson | photos by Whitney Warne

“We can’t afford to make all barns museum pieces. Hardly any of us even have any use for them at all.”

—Ilene Lande, farmer and scientist

the Herbert Hoover Highway between West Branch and Iowa City, for all but six of the last 54 years. Retired from his engineering job, he continues to farm his family’s 160 acres while living in the same house that his grandparents did. But Johnson says the barn just couldn’t withstand the changes in farming.

“This was a very usable barn when I was

growing up, and I still used it until about 1991,” Johnson says. “Once I quit raising livestock there was no use for it really, even for storage, because it was small. Machinery’s bigger now. It would have been nice to restore the barn, but there’s a lot of expense. If there’s not livestock, there’s not much use for it.”

“CULTIVATORS OF THE EARTH ARE THE most valuable citizens,” wrote Virginia landowner Thomas Jefferson, the founding father most often linked to strong support of agriculture, in a 1785 letter to John Jay, the country’s first Chief Justice. “They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands.” In another letter, dated 1787 to James

Madison, Jefferson again expressed his views on agriculture: “I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural.”

Since the nation’s founding, Americans have always believed that the success of their country is intrinsically linked to the success of its farmers—and, Iowa Barn Foundation founder and President Jacqueline Andre Schmeal would argue, to their buildings.

“Barns are about people—the people who worked in them, the people who built them, the people who visited them,” Andre Schmeal says. “Just imagine Iowa without any barns. To me, they are our heritage, and they are



The inside of Lande's barn houses years of leftover storage items—old cans filled with nails and screws, piles of scrap wood, vintage signs and an old oar with no logical explanation.

symbols of hard work, the American dream, integrity.”

The Iowa Barn Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of Iowa's rural buildings, offers matching grants to owners who wish to restore their barns. Schmeal estimates the foundation has awarded roughly a million dollars to barn owners throughout Iowa since it began in 1997.

But some feel the Iowa Barn Foundations grants can be restrictive. Ilene Lande and her husband, John McNutt, live on a farm less than a mile from Terry Johnson's. Like Johnson, the McNutt farm has been in the family for many years. McNutt's great-grandfather, a stonemason, built most of the farm structures at the turn of the 20th century.

When the foundation on Lande's older barn began to give out, she applied for an Iowa Barn Foundation Grant to repair it. She withdrew when she found out she would have to shingle the roof with wooden shakes—the traditional material—rather than use the steel she preferred.

“Shakes are hideously expensive, a terrible fire hazard, and they don't last,” she says. “If you go up there every five years and swap linseed oil, they'll last maybe 25 years, whereas a steel roof can last for 50 years, and even if you don't do anything to the barn, a steel roof will protect it for a generation or two.”



In Lande's mind, there is a distinction between historical conservation and practical restoration. Her barns, she says, are interesting, but she wants to be able to use them—full-blown historical accuracy is not her top priority.

Lande, who has a Ph.D. in microbiology, runs a small biotech business out of her two barns, which now house a small flock of between 20 and 50 sheep. By injecting the animals with a protein that prompts the generation of antibodies, Lande manufactures antiserum in the sheep's blood. She draws the

▲ Amy Eagle's family has lived on this property for over 200 years. Her grandfather had three burros, which he tied outside the barn to graze. Instead, the animals grazed on the wood on the structure, stripping away as much of the barn walls as they could get their greedy mouths on.

blood and sends it to research centers, where it serves as a tool in experiments to study diseases and search for their cures.

“When I started this business, I was looking for something that I could do at home, with the facilities I had on site, without a lot of capital outlay to get them ready,” she says. “We can't afford to make all barns museum pieces. Hardly any of us even have any use for them at all.”

DESPITE EFFORTS OF THOSE LIKE Andre Schmeal and Lande to preserve or repurpose barns, the vast majority of Iowa farm structures simply sit like Terry Johnson's barn, dilapidated and slowly decaying.

Iowa State students Zach Brown, Dustin Harford, Nick Lindsley, John Wachtel, and Kurtis Wolgast are deconstructing such a barn

near Boxholm, Iowa, a town of about 200 people less than an hour northwest of Ames, for their senior project.

But in the process they are illuminating to the structure's history and the human activity that

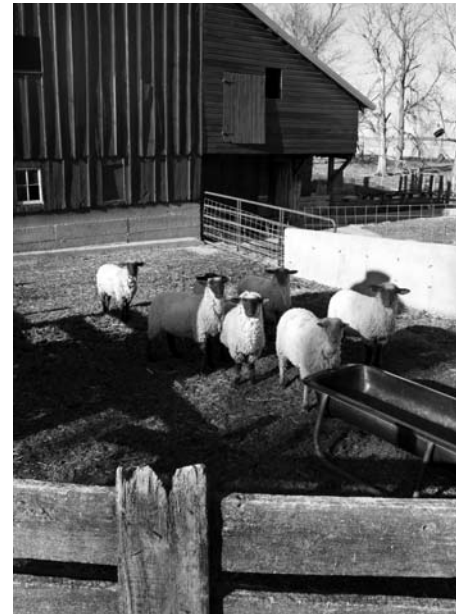
occurred in the barn—in essence, preserving the barn through photographs, film, written histories, and personal engagement.

Lindsley says that the idea for the project

There is a distinction between historical conservation and practical restoration.



▲ New steel barns, like this one on Larry and Tami Murphy's farm, rise up in replacements of wooden livestock barns with a motorized door opener, plenty of storage space and an enormous tractor.



▲ Lande's sheep charged in and out of the building, staking their claim on the territory.

began when the group spent last spring abroad in Rome.

"We are looking at the barn as a ruin of Iowan culture, similar to the way aqueducts serve as a reminder of past Roman culture," he says.

With this basic idea established, Lindsley posted an ad on Craigslist for a farm building or corn crib that needed to be torn down. Andy Ross replied the next day.

Ross, a self-employed jack-of-all trades (he owns a towing company, tills gardens, has a team of horses for parades and is raising turkeys this year), bought his Boxholm farm in 1995. For the first five years he and his family lived there, Ross kept a small flock of sheep in the barn. In 2002, the structure sustained wind damage, and in 2004, when Ross noticed it had begun to lean, they stopped us-

ing it. The foundation was rotten, and the cost to fix it would be comparable to erecting a new steel building.

"We've been talking about getting rid of it for about five years," he said. "It wasn't really

"We are looking at the barn as a ruin of Iowan culture, similar to the way aqueducts serve as a reminder of past Roman culture."

- Nick Lindsley, barn deconstruction artist

unsafe; it was just kind of in the way."

Rather than simply bulldozing Ross's barn, the students first carefully prepped for its demise. Treating it like an archeological excavation site, they scraped the layers of dirt and manure from the floor to reveal the tools and artifacts from the past.

"The way I approached this was very simi-

lar to the way I would have done it when I was a kid," says Watchtel. Everything they found was a treasure—tobacco tins, farm tools, whiskey bottles. As the group members dug, their understanding of the barn's original use grew, as did their kinship with the men once used it.

The group displayed their excavation spoils in a March exhibit alongside photographs and fictional writings that revealed the depth of the group's investigation into the barn's history (they researched the property at the Boxholm Museum and conducted telephone interviews with its original owners).

After cleaning, the students began destructuring the building piece by piece. By mid-March, they had dismantled most of the side paneling,

BARNs CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 >>

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>> ROOSEVELT FROM PAGE 13

what can be done. We've got jobs, families to take care of," said Ruth Baker. "I was so pleased to hear the students chose our neighborhood as their project. They have been absolutely great. They did surveys of the neighborhood. They walked it. They've spent quality time and have really sparked our hope."

Cedar Rapids native Milton Thurmond went back to school to study urban planning after driving a city bus for a few years and spending some time living in Las Vegas, learning first-hand the impact built environments can have on peoples' lives. Before Thurmond launched into his presentation, he held up a copy of Charles Dobson's *The Troublemaker's Tea Party: A Manual for Effective Citizen Action*, recommending its activist approach to community-building. Thurmond spoke methodically and with conviction; he hoped the neighborhood would use the plan they had worked on together to pursue their goals for the neighborhood. Whether they wanted to improve sidewalks, beautify neighborhood entrances or create a "nuisance and rehabilitation task force," Thurmond said, "this will tell you where to go, who to call, and how to get at least a good solid start."

Even if Roosevelt is eventually decommissioned, the document makes clear that the neighborhood wants a say in what comes next, and a candid relationship with the school board.

"The document is impressive," wrote Superintendent Plugge in an email exchange after the workshop. "It is a comprehensive document which can be used as an ongoing action plan. The document provided me with a variety of insights to the community."

Plugge also acknowledged that the administration could have done a better job communicating with the recently formed neighborhood association. Knudson-Dion wanted him to appreciate that the community and the school reinforced each other for the better, despite all the neighborhood's challenges, and that the decision to close Roosevelt shouldn't just be one of numbers on a spreadsheet, PowerPoint presentations, square feet ratios, state of the art facilities and efficiency. It seemed a cruel irony, she said, that the plan to close Roosevelt was announced just when the neighborhood was starting to stabilize. Though the an-

nouncement was a devastating blow, she says having the urban planning students working with them and having a regular schedule of meetings in place helped the neighborhood regroup.

The Anvil Overhead

Since those contentious meetings when the Strategic Facilities Improvement Plan was first on the agenda, there have been community forums and Superintendent Plugge has proposed additional scenarios, some of which might



Miller-Orchard neighborhood residents vote on improvement projects.

save Roosevelt—if only as an administrative building. But even so, and even with all of this neighborhood solidarity, Plugge remains convinced that constructing a new school at The

Plugge offers no false hope about the future, referring to the Roosevelt building. Not school.

Crossings subdivision near Camp Cardinal Boulevard can't wait. While Plugge writes that he cannot speak for the board, "I can state that the board will work with the City of Iowa City regarding the future of the Roosevelt Building. I anticipate that they will also work with this newly formed Neighborhood Association."

The respect for the Miller-Orchard neighborhood's input may hearten association members, but Plugge offers no grounds for false hope about the future, referring to the Roosevelt building. Not school.

Plugge quietly left the neighborhood workshop after about a half-hour to make a meeting at City Hall between the school board and the city council (he apologized in advance for his early departure). Meanwhile, Mary Knudson-Dion, Ruth Baker, Mark Cannon and the rest were still at the Roosevelt gym talking over options and circulating underneath a basket-

ball hoop looking over neighborhood improvement options scrawled with magic markers on big sheets of paper and taped to the south wall. Votes were cast by affixing stickers next to a handful of their favorite plans among the dozens that had been floated at earlier meetings. But for all this grassroots democratic activity, the neighborhood association's goals and the grad student generated-document can't trump the Strategic Facilities Improvement Plan or stop the school board from shutting down Roosevelt when they make their final decision.

Still, the neighbors say, the effort doesn't seem wasted. If nothing else, they want the school site to become a public space, community center or meeting place, not merely another high density student apartment complex.

"We're saying we're tired of fighting all these people, spending hours and hours, months and months fighting these people every year," Knudson-Dion said just after the workshop. "We finally have to show them that we have pride in our neighborhood and we're not marginalized at all. And we want to improve the neighborhood—show that it is a neighborhood—

even though we have all these people driving through, and driving through it fast. This is a neighborhood that represents a lot of different people that we're all quite proud of. And so it is challenging and we're tired. We have a lot of battles, but we have a lot of pride."

Impossible Neutrality

In a town full of do-gooders, everyone wants to get this right. No one wants to be a reactionary, standing in the way of positive change for ignoble reasons. But in this case, what is the true north?

The board is making a precedent-setting decision. A particular approach toward growth and equity in the district must be affirmed or reworked, but the final choice will inevitably alter the options available to students and the texture of life in the neighborhoods. It's a change that means new lines on Plugge's map, shifting boundaries, new divisions—and new allegiances. **IV**

An alumnus of Iowa City's Longfellow Elementary, Southeast Junior High, and Community Education Center (forerunner to Elizabeth Tate High School), David Henderson is now pursuing a master's degree in journalism and mass communications at The University of Iowa. He can be reached at David.Henderson@LittleVillageMag.com.

COPPING OUT

Jody Hill's *Observe and Report* is one weird movie. I'm pretty sure this dark comedy is meant to provoke reflection: The title suggests that the movie is holding the mirror up to our reality. In a sense, it is; the worst parts of the movie are the most interesting, and the best parts are pretty bad. Like I said, one weird movie.

The two movies every critic likens *Observe and Report* to are *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* and Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*. The first, because it's a silly comedy about a mall cop; the second, because it's a grim story of a troubled man who's obsessed with an oblivious blonde and suffering from delusions of cleansing a fallen world. Seth Rogen, by far the most interesting thing about the movie, plays Ronnie Barnhardt, the dim-witted, disturbed head of security at Forest Ridge Mall, where a chubby pervert has been flashing women in the parking lot—in particular, Brandi (Anna Faris), Ronnie's dream girl, a crude, Britney-Spears-like beauty who works at a make-up counter in the mall. The incident fuels Ronnie's delusions of being a hero. A real cop (well-cast as Ray Liotta) comes in to investigate, and he and Ronnie become rivals. Lots of energy, much

idiot who goes on his gut instincts and sees the world in overly simplistic good-versus-evil terms. You get the picture.

Comedies have the right to simplify in order to amplify. My complaint is that there's a spiritual deficiency in the satire, which is a large part of why this movie is so bizarre. Let me use one scene as an example. In the middle of the movie, Ronnie manipulates Brandi into going on a date with him. She ends up getting completely hammered, and as he moves in for a kiss on her doorstep, vomit bubbles out of her mouth. He wipes it away and kisses her anyway.

While everyone in the theater is still chuckling at this gross display, the movie cuts to Ronnie having sex with a passed-out Brandi. All of a sudden, we're witnessing a date rape. The laughter in the theater chokes—suddenly Ronnie pauses and notices that Brandi is completely passed out, and just then she miraculously regains enough consciousness to say, "Don't stop, motherfucker." Then everyone laughs a little again, this time without any spirit, simply to let off steam: It's not a rape, after all. There are several scenes that

It's the preachiness between laughs that puts me off. I'm happy to drift off into the narcotic haze of a funny story. I'm even happy to have my humor subverted into wisdom. But if we head down the road of knowledge, we have to go further than a facile allegory and a shrug that everything is OK after all. The jumpy quality of the humor—like someone had poured a bottle of water into my gas tank—jolted me out of the comedy and got me to reflect on how simplistic and even condescending the movie is. I walked out thinking, I really do want someone to observe and report on who we are and how we live.

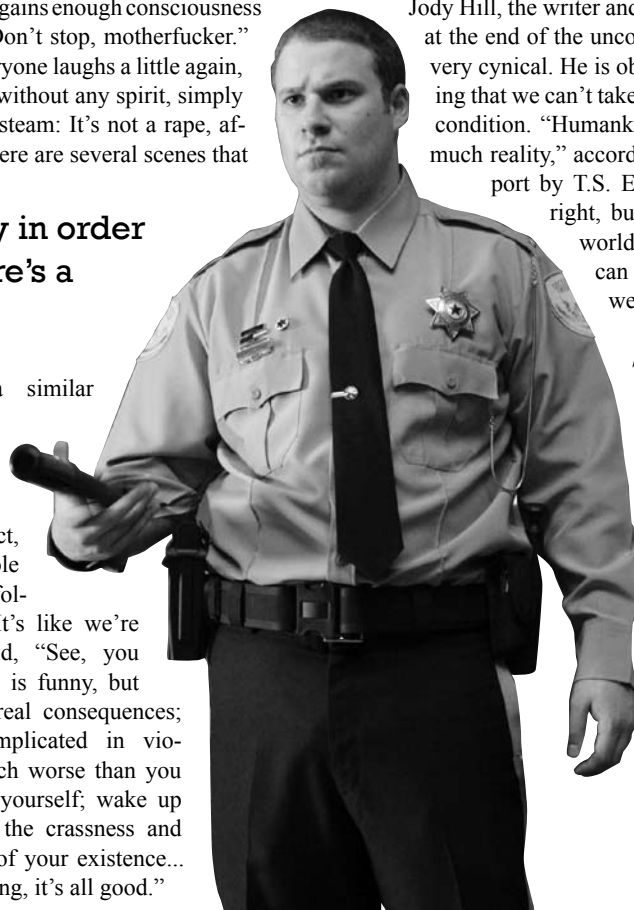
There are a few moments of awkward tenderness between Ronnie and his mom, or between Ronnie and a woman who gives him free coffee—these moments come closest to the reality I'm hungering for, but they are, in fact, the lamest things in the movie: sentimentalism of a fairly low variety. The "it's all good" that Jody Hill, the writer and director, says to us at the end of the uncomfortable laughs is very cynical. He is observing and reporting that we can't take a real report on our condition. "Humankind can't bear very much reality," according to a famous report by T.S. Eliot. He's probably right, but the real hero this world needs is one who can give us more than we're getting. **IV**

Comedies have the right to simplify in order to amplify. My complaint is that there's a spiritual deficiency in this satire.

of it disturbingly destructive, is expended by Ronnie in service of the mall, but no progress is ever made towards capturing the pervert.

Thematically, the movie is about what it currently means to be an American, and a rough allegory of the George W. Bush years is discernible behind the drama. (The pervert is a kind of terrorist.) There is a mall salesman by the name of Saddam who's a thorn in Ronnie's side, and who's unfairly accused of being the flasher. Ronnie at one point talks about the necessity of using "black ops" and putting the rules aside to pursue and capture the villain. The attempt to apprehend the villain leads to all sorts of unnecessary violence—meanwhile, one of the mall cops is looting the treasury. The whole point of the violence is ostensibly to protect consumerist culture. Ronnie is an

follow a similar comedic arc, including the finale. In fact, the whole movie follows it. It's like we're being told, "See, you think this is funny, but this has real consequences; you're implicated in violence much worse than you admit to yourself; wake up and face the crassness and brutality of your existence... Just kidding, it's all good."



Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College. He is also sometimes a moderator on KCRG's "Ethical Perspectives on the News" and sometimes a cook at Simone's Plain and Simple, the French restaurant in the middle of nowhere.

Screening Evil

One morning in April, I went to take my dog outside before I had to leave for work. I stepped onto our porch on Iowa Avenue and saw a young skinny man standing still on the sidewalk across the street. A woman with a video camera stood at a distance from him. Moments later, the man began running and, with the appearance of fright on his face, looked behind his left shoulder. A car came (at a speed I imagined was intended to seem fast but was relatively safe in a 25-mph zone) and stopped abruptly by the entrance to an apartment complex's parking lot. Two other young men got out—dressed in what might have already been in their closets, plus a couple of purchased accessories—and split in different directions following him. The chase was on. And then it stopped. And then it was on again. And then it stopped.

It's spring in Iowa City, and film projects are in bloom. That was my explanation for the what I was witnessing, anyway. In this city of creatives, it's the kind of thing that sparks if two ambitious folk just happen to work in the same video store, have the same love of B-horror movies, and have the same hair-brained scheme and enough friends to help them pull it off.

That's the hyper-abbreviated history behind *Dropping Evil*, the first installment in the duo's *Resist Evil* trilogy. Director Adam Protector and screenwriter Louis Doerge met each other while working at That's Rentertainment, they told Little Village via email. The pair started working together in the creative capacity in 2007, pulled together some Hollywood pros and some downtown Iowa City recognizables, and by Spring 2009, they had themselves their first full-length feature.

Dropping Evil portrays three creature-babies turned high school seniors who are unaware of their power within. There's a fourth with another sort of inner power, which comes out when he morphs from a devout Christian to a Christian terrorist. Was it simply because he was slipped a little bit of LSD? The filmmakers shared their thoughts about the production



Tom Taylor in a scene from Adam Protector and Louis Doerge's *Resist Evil Part One: Dropping Evil*

with us at Little Village...but to find out the answer to that previous question, you'll have to check out the free screening of the film on May 16 at the Englert Theatre.

Little Village: Question for Louis, what was the inspiration for the script?

Louis: *Dropping Evil* was an idea I had been toying with since my freshman year of college. The idea was to play with different perspectives and pay homage to anti-drug propaganda films. Stereotypically bad kids would give a stereotypically good kid drugs. The drugs would cause the stereotypically good kid to hallucinate and see the bad kids as monsters. So we have a movie where one point of view is a hero killing evil creatures, and the other is a group of teenagers running from their crazy friend. While writing the script I became very invested in these stereotypical characters and wanted to flesh them out and expand their universe. Essentially I wanted to take them out of the horror movie and put them in a different movie. A more serious movie. That movie became three movies.

LV: What was your introduction to the horror genre?

Adam: I've been in love with horror since I first saw the Gmork the wolf scene in *The Neverending Story*. Some of my fondest mem-

Resist Evil Part One: Dropping Evil

World Premiere

May 16, 8pm

Englert Theatre

Starring Armin Shimerman (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Star Trek Deep Space Nine*), Tiffany Shepis, Edwin Neal (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*), Tom Taylor, Rachel Howell as Samantha, Cass Powell, Devin Smith, Kerry Lane, Esack Gruesken, Alex Milton, Kristy Hartsgrrove, Paetra Hardy, Angie Toomsen, Kate Thompson and Coolzey as Nancy

Original Score by Ian McKinney (from the *East Side Guys*), featuring music by Lipstick Homicide and Timothy John Krein

ories from grade-school are going to the video store with my mom, perusing the horror selection to find a movie that was rated PG-13 or less. Back then nobody knew what "unrated" meant, so my friends and I got to see a lot of cool stuff under the parental radar. By the time I got to junior high I could handle it. One day I stayed home sick from school in 10th grade and my mom rented me every single entry in

the Freddy canon. Soon after came Sam Raimi and Peter Jackson, and I was done.

LV: Many of your actors have a lot of work under their belts. How did you land them?

Louis: I'm a huge fan of both Armin Shimerman and Edwin Neal. I think they are both incredible actors with incredible range. Despite that range, though, they have had an unfortunate history of getting pigeon-holed into roles. Due to Armin having played both Quark on *Star Trek*, and Principal Snyder on

All of this was really a time of "Oh my God we can actually do this?"

—*Dropping Evil* director Adam Protextor

Buffy, people seem to want to cast him as a jerk. And because of Edwin's notorious role as the hitch-hiker in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre...* many still insist on casting him as a psycho pervert. I think offering Armin the part of our charming lead villain, and Edwin the part of the noble United States President, helped us in getting them more interested in our little project.

Adam: Louis approached me one day and said "I think we might be able to get Felissa Rose, the main character in *Sleepaway Camp*, in our movies." This was crazy to me—I simply hadn't thought that it was possible to get name actors in the cast. Sure enough, Felissa was interested, and after that we were able to get Tiffany interested too. With both of those experienced horror actresses in the cast, we had a bit more credibility, and Louis next emailed Fred Williamson's agent, who I talked to on the phone, and Fred signed on. All of this was really a time of "Oh my God we can actually do this?" We felt like huge outsiders being given amazing chances to work with all these people.

LV: What was your favorite place to shoot in Iowa City? Did you have pictures in your head years in advance of what Iowa City settings would be great to film it?

Louis: My mom's house. She's a nice lady.

Adam: I was once told by a teacher in a 16mm class to drive to Cedar Rapids to shoot my project, so that the movie didn't look like Iowa City, as everyone would recognize it. I

took that to heart. So I made a very conscious effort to try and avoid locations that looked too familiar to an Iowa City crowd. Hickory Hill park is always a goldmine for outdoor scenes, and we used that a lot. But I guess the overall goal was to make the *Resist Evil* world look like its own distinct place, something familiar but not recognizable.

LV: Finally, tell me about what you loved most and least about putting all this together. Was it having a makeup artist create the effect of a gun bursting from your hand, or attending to the minute and essential details of casting and editing? Any joy in raising the funds to produce it or seeing it from start to finish and reliving all the hard work? (I can never look at an issue after pouring over the editing and production of it.)

Louis: A few days ago, Adam and I watched a work print of the movie at our friend's place so that they could see it. It had been weeks since I had actually sat down and attempted to watch *Dropping Evil* in its entirety. When it was finished, I was relieved that I actually enjoyed myself. *Dropping Evil* is the first movie that I've worked on that I actually like.

Adam: Raising the funds was probably the most stressful aspect of the movie, in that you're going to people and asking them to give you money for something you can't guarantee a return on. I'd say that with the exception of the craziness of scheduling conflicts, etc., my favorite aspect to making these movies was really the entire production process. When you're working with these really talented and giving actors, and with a make-up man like Corbin Booth who can literally turn a Coke bottle into a severed arm, you kind of just sit back and let everyone do their thing. From a directorial standpoint, if everyone's on their game, you just watch it all come together. We have Ian McKinney providing us a killer soundtrack and Steven Degenarro completely transforming the movie with his sound design. Editing's been very fun too, but way more stressful in the sense that Louis and I sat down and said, "Okay, it's all on us now. Hope we don't screw everyone!" That said, I can't believe that some of our actors and crew stuck with us so long, especially after seeing that short. We got really lucky to meet such cool people who were willing to share trust and really prove the auteur theory dead wrong. **IV**

Melody Dworak is the editor of Little Village.

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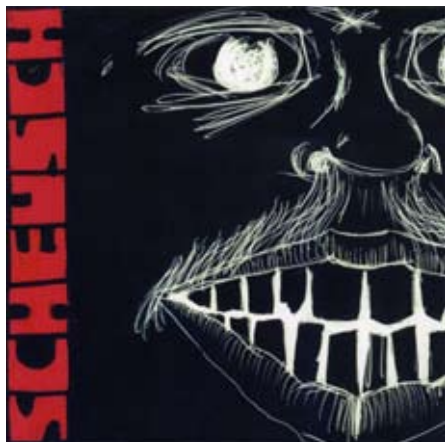
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Scheusch

Self-Titled

www.myspace.com/scheusch

Self-released

CD Release May 9, The Mill

Consider now, the guitar-drum duo, of which persuasion is Scheusch. If you leave out the bass player, you only split the door two ways. You don't have to load a heavy bass cabinet, and you don't need to deal with the guy who always gets basil when you send him out to buy weed. Some bands, like White Stripes fill the low end with an exaggerated kick drum, but Scheuss are purists—nothing here below 150 hertz. This thinnish, midrange-heavy sound is an interesting choice, especially coupled with Scheusch's obvious affection for '60s heavy rock like Led Zeppelin, The James Gang, Mountain and Cream.

There's some obvious humor here, as on "Blood On My Shoes" which ends with prog-metal-esque falsetto harmonies. But they sell it—it's parody and homage rolled into one. "Georgia" leans on blues gestures, not unlike White Stripes, but noisier, and without Jack White's faux-Robert Plant screech. "Georgia" owes more to locals like Coyote Blood and Liberty Leg than it does to the Stripes; it's rock forged in moldy Iowa City basement shows. Like beer, it's always going to be fresher when it's local.

While Scheusch wears their affection for '60s rock on their sleeves, they implement it in a curiously innocent way. They seem to have picked up aspects of that sound, particularly in their vocal style, that can't possibly be conscious homage—even kids who raid dad's record collection aren't likely to pick up on bands like Quicksilver Messenger Service, or

Sons of Champlain. You can hear in Scheusch that they know their Dio and Zeppelin, but there're sounds that show up that they must have learned subliminally, as though dad was rocking it on the cassette deck in the car when they were still in car seats. It's a rockist cliché to demand authenticity, and I don't think Scheusch give it a second thought—they're as ironic and meta as any other punk kids their age. But they are the real deal, in ways they might not even know.



The White Tornado

Seek Shelter

www.white2mtnado.com

Self-released

CD Release May 7, Yacht Club

The White Tornado is keyboardist Bill Peterson, who's been playing shows around Iowa City for some time. *Seek Shelter*, his debut record, showcases his facility with the piano and organ, not to mention his puckish sense of humor. Stylistically he's not stuck in any one genre for long, but two styles dominate the CD—more funk-tinged on tracks like "Cop Show," featuring his horn section The Horns of The Apocalypse, and talky, rolling pop songs. I'd compare him to Ben Folds if I was qualified to do so, but I've avoided listening to Ben Folds this long, why start now?

A more apt comparison might be to Billy Joel, in that his piano dominates the arrangements, and he's got a knack for writing songs whose accessibility belies their underlying rhythmic and harmonic complexity. But he stays away from the bathos and irritating cheesiness that mars Joel's worst (and naturally, most popular) songs. "Lost Planet" stands out for me, a space operetta in waltz time about a marooned astronaut. From its intricate, wistful melody to the bombastic chorus, it keeps

enough whimsy in the mix to save it from going over the top. Or rather, it goes over the top and makes you like it.

What with the fluid, appealing keyboard skill and first rate horn arrangements, the weak leg of the tripod is Peterson's singing. Mostly he sounds fine, but from time to time he seems to struggle to stay on top of difficult melodic turns. But that's something he can get past with practice, and tuning his songwriting to the peculiarities of his voice. At least he's musically ambitious—I'd rather hear musicians try something risky and wipe out than play it safe.

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



Miracles of God

O' What a Wonderful Day/
No Refunds

Self-released

www.myspace.com/miraclesofgod

Iowa City's Miracles of God have waited long enough in obscurity. After years of play-

ing dusty power-pop, the indie underground has finally caught up. A glut of new fuzzed-out pop purveyors like Times New Viking and Vivian Girls sing about the saccharine love and bitter breakups that comprise Miracles of God's material. Dusted Magazine once decried Miracles' "crunchy, clipped, over-modulated digital production" and now that's a compliment. Despite prior complaints, it's the messiness of both the music and the subject matter which make the group interesting, and more importantly, enjoyable.

Miracles of God double that pleasure with a pair of new releases. *No Refunds* is an odds 'n' ends collection built from songs left over after departure of bassist Clayton Shuneman. *O' What a Wonderful Day* is a proper full-length LP of songs written after the departure of Shuneman. The new line-up now includes Alex Body on Fender Rhodes and synthesizer.

Miracles bury delicious melodies and hook-laden choruses beneath layers of overdrive and analog hiss. *No Refunds* is a superlative example. Half of the record was taped at the Picador in the fall of 2007, and amid the ambient audience noise and reverberations of the venue the punk-bitten, rave-up of "Calling My Name" is still a stone-cold classic, ridding a heavy stream of power chords and bursting with falsetto coo's. The peaked-out hiss on the basement recordings that comprise the other half of *No Refunds* doesn't mask their infectious energy and quality tune-smithing. Though the lyrics of "Faith" are indecipherable, it's impossible to hear without try to yell along.

When you can make out the lyrics it becomes clear that Miracles of God are dealing more subtly with inter-personal relationships. The group is still clings to the tropes of Spector-produced kitsch, but their girl troubles and successes are imbued with disarming humor. Songs like "Room 4-2" off *O' What a Wonderful Day* exemplify the comi-tragedy of loneliness: "There's room in this bed for two... this is a king-size dilemma I'm in / I need a queen who can jump right on in / and double my twin."

The group cracks wise about relationship troubles and hides behind layers of feedback and overdrive. But beneath the roar of guitars and laughter are still well-balanced pop tunes built around good old fashioned heart-break and classic chord progressions.

John C. Schlotfeld is a graduate of The University of Iowa who wears blue jeans to spite George Will.

>> BARNs FROM PAGE 19

leaving the roof to float on the building's bare bones. Looking upward, bits of sky were visible through the gaps in the roof's shingles—planned to create an appealing pattern of light on the floor. ("We know it's got to come down, but before we do that, we're playing," Watchtel says. "There are lots of possibilities.")

They peeled it apart like an orange, arranging the boards on the ground in order, the skin broken but the original shape still discernible. They cataloged each piece, marking it with a piece of white tape and a number/letter code.

As of late April, the barn still stood, though it was more skeleton than enclosure. The students intend to keep their promise to completely dismantle the barn, but right now they are focused on finishing up their individual projects before graduation.

They are tackling myriad topics: spatial re-

At the same time that they are killing the barn, however, they are reincarnating it.

lationships, historical discovery, the barn within the landscape, the barn as a container, interior space versus exterior space. But Mitchell Squire, an Iowa State University architecture professor and the group's advisor, says that the students' physical engagement with their subject is perhaps the endeavor's most important aspect.

"The amount of labor that they have had to engage brings them into parallel with the kind of labor that existed around this barn in the first place," he says.

Wolgast says their labors have given a voice to the barn, personifying it.

"From the beginning," Wolgast says, "I've kind of seen this as if we're almost prolonging the death of this barn."

At the same time that they are killing the barn, however, they are reincarnating it. Their deliberate dismantling has led to a detailed history of the barn that would have been lost had it simply continued to decay unprovoked.

"All that we've accumulated has become a sort of memory and life story of the barn, which is in essence the preservation of the barn," Wolgast says. **lv**

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.

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Bluer and More Distant, Robert Caputo, through May 10

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Jenny Braig, opens May 1

Marion Arts Festival

City Square Park, Marion

www.marionartsfestival.com

Marion Arts Festival, May 16, 9am-5pm

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, UI Campus, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

Fresh Threads of Connection: Mother Nature and British Women Writers, through May 24

UI Museum of Art & School of Art

Studio Arts Building, 1375 Highway 1 W, Iowa City

www.art.uiowa.edu

SAAH Arts Festival and Open House, May 1, 4pm

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~nathist

Fossil Guy, May 2, 2pm • Kilowatt Ours, May 3, 3pm • Explorers Seminar Series: H. Greg McDonald, National Park Service, May 7, 7pm • Animal Tales Story Time: Bird Migration, May 17, 2pm • Iowa Birds of Prey, May 17, 3pm

MUSIC

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill, May 6, 8pm • Dobet Gnahoré, May 9, 8pm • Eric Taylor, May 13, 8pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Tricia Park & Conor Hanick, May 9, 7:30pm • Jason Reeves, May 29, 8pm

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu

Check website for locations

Trout Fishing in America, May 10, 2pm • Ying Quartet and Wu Han, May 15, 7pm • Dan Zanes and Friends • May, 25, 3pm

The Industry

211 Iowa Ave., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/theindustryic

All shows at 8pm unless noted

Orchestra de Alto Maiz, May 1 • Minus Six, May 2 • Kinetix w/ and Dead Larry, May 6 • This Years Heroes, May 7 • Guerilla Hustle Records Presents: The Animal Planet Tour, May 8 • East 18, Janus and Seven Day Sonnet, May 9 • The White Tornado and Ephraim Zehn, May 14 • Jumbies, May 22 • Band From Town, 5 in a Hand and Muf'n Top, May 29

Liberty Centre Blues and Barbecue

Liberty Centre, North Liberty

www.northlibertyiowa.org/bluesandbbq/

Wise Fools, BF Burt, Bob Dorr and the Blue Band, May 24 noon-10pm

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

The Recliners, May 1, 7pm • Bo Ramsey and The Mystery Lights, May 2, 8pm • Stuart Davis, May 3, 8pm • Ha Ha Tonka, The Western Front, Sarah Mannix and the Wandering Sons, May 5 • Brother Trucker performing with Dave Zollo, May 6 • The High Strung w. Teddy Boys & Lipstick Homicide, May 7 • Pokey Lafarge Duo, Dr. Eli Calico's Medicine Show and Illinois John Fever, May 8 • Scheush, The Brown Note, Beast Wars and special guest, May 9 • The Twelve Canons, Mondo Drag, Luther the Geek, May 12 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, May 13, 7pm • Kelly Joe Phelps, May 14, 8pm • Diplomats of Solid Sound with the Diplomettes and Death Ships, May 15 • The Pines w. special guests Shame Train, May 16, 8pm • Listening Party!, May 19 • Slip Silo, Koplant No and The Burning Halos, May 20 • Dustin Smith, May 22 • Wylde Nept, May 23 • Trent Wagler & The Steel Wheels, May 24 • Old Panther (7" Release Party!), Yourself and the Air, May 26 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, May 27, 7pm • Filling Space, Mint Wad Willy & Unknown Component, May 28 • The Beaker Brothers, May 29

The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.thepicador.com

All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Luther Bangert's Cirque Stupendo, May 1, 6 & 9 • Charlie Hunter, May 2, 8pm • Birthrites CD Release with Noumenon, DADKIDS and Capes of Lead, May 8 • The Birthday Massacre, I Am Ghost and Dommin, May 10, 6pm • Unearth and Lazarus A.D., May 11, 6pm • Grieves, May 13, 7pm • Wolves in the Throneroom, Krallice, A Storm of Light and Nethervoid, May 14, 8pm • Alkaline Trio, May 24, 6:30pm • FLEDtheKING, Anno Domine, Senseless Beauty, Pagans on Wagons and With Guns Blazing, May 26, 5pm • Kevin Devine, Miniature Tigers and Brian Bonz, May 27, 6pm

Public Space One

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

Petit Mal, Lipstick Homicide and the Wheelers, May 2, 9pm • Chain & the Gang and the Hive Dwellers, May 6, 8pm • Nick Jaina and Lute Tucker, May 15, 9pm • Oui Bandits and So Many Wizards, May



Iowa New Play Festival

May 4 to 8

UI Theatre Building

Full productions at 5:30 and 9pm on Monday (*La Lechera*), Wednesday (*Akarui*), Friday (*The Decline of the Front Porch*) and Saturday (*Truth and Truth*).

Each play is a project of the entire Department of Theatre Arts, with playwright, director, cast and crew pulled from the program's own branches. Four full-production plays and six staged readings comprise the 2009 New Play Festival, an annual performance of material from the University of Iowa Playwright's Workshop. Old New Plays have gone Broadway—a place new entries dream of residing.

This year, Andrew Saito's *La Lechera* (directed by Sarah Ballerma) leads with Lubia, a nursing nanny with magic milk. On Wednesday, Jen Silverman's *Akarui* weaves the yarn of the title character spinning records in "the rave cave at the end of the world." Directed by Brandon Bruce. Friday, Mary Hamilton's *The Decline of the Front Porch* traces a house-hunting couple's struggle through the search for home. Directed by Anthony Nelson. And to close the fest, John Kaufmann directs Sheela Kagal's *Truth and Truth*—it handles memory and violence, two topics that can evade honesty.

Tickets are \$6 for the general public and \$4 for UI students, senior citizens and youth. Staged readings are free.

For more information: www.uiowa.edu/~theatre/season/new-play-fest.htm

16, 9pm • The Lost Apparitions, Molly Ringwald, Executives and Red & the Eds, May 18, 8pm • Bear Weather and EYES, May 22, 9pm • Netherfriends and Exercise, May 23, 9pm

Red Cedar Chamber Music

www.redcedar.org

Check website for Iowa City location

Parlor Concert, May 9, 6pm

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.riversidetheatre.org

Dan Knight, May 2, 7:30pm

The University of Iowa Music Events

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa

Check website for locations

Jazz Repertory Ensemble, May 2, 8pm • Jeffrey Agrell, horn, and Aura Strohschein, piano, May 3, 4pm • Composers Workshop, David Gompper, May 3, 8pm • University and Concert Bands, May 6, 8pm • Gregory Hand, organ, May 8, 7:30pm • Camerata and Women's Chorale, May 8, 8pm • Kantorei and University Choir, May 9, 8pm • Semi-Annual Last Chance Concert, May 10, 8pm • Thomas L. Davis Biennial Percussion Concert, May 17, 8pm

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

Slipknot with All That Remains and Devil Driver, May 14, 7pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City

www.iowacityyachtclub.org

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Ephraim Zenh and Mooseknuckle, May 1 • Dennis McMurrin & The , May 2 • The White Tornado Outbreak CD Release and Daphne Willis & Co., May 7 • Public Property, May 8 • Bumpus + The Big Funk Guarantee, May 9 • Camp Euforia Battle of the Bands: The White Tornado Outbreak, Johnny on Point, 5 in a Hand, Slip Silo, River & The Tributaries, May 14, 6pm • Uniphonics and Mad Monks, May 15 • Sublime Tribute with Second Hand Smoke and Flavor Savers, May 16 • Dr. Z's Experiment and Steez, May 21 • Mayflies CD Release Party and Dead Larry, May 22, 7pm • Natty Nation CD Release and Bumper Crop, May 29

The Wedge

136 S. Dubuque St, Iowa City

www.wedgepizzeria.com

Unknown Component, May 8, 8pm

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

Fri. May 1 -- EARLY AND LATE SHOWS! ALL AGES/ 19+
Luthur Bangert's Cirque Stupendo

Sat. May 2 -- ALL AGES 8PM
an evening with...
Charlie Hunter

Fri. May 8 --
Birthrites CD RELEASE SHOW!!!
Nomenon DADKIDS Capes of Lead

Sun. May 10 -- ALL AGES 6PM
The Birthday Massacre
I Am Ghost Dommin

Mon. May 11 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Uearth
Lazarus A.D. The Horde

Wed. May 13 -- ALL AGES 7PM
Grieves

Thurs. May 14 --
Wolves in the Throne Room
Krallice A Storm of Light Nethervoid

Sun. May 24 -- ALL AGES 6:30PM
Alkaline Trio

Wed. May 27 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Kevin Devine
Miniature Tigers Brian Bonz

Thurs. June 4 --
Lucero Chuck Ragan

Mon. June 8 --
For Today Beneath the Sky Venia

Wed. June 17 -- ALL AGES 6PM
Attack! Attack!
Watchout! There's Ghosts Of Machines

HAVE A DRINK (AND A SMOKE) IN OUR AWESOME
BEER GARDEN

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

THEATER/DANCE/ PERFORMANCE

Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre

New Strand Theatre, West Liberty
www.puppetspuppets.com
The Amazing Adventures of Willy the Woolly, May 14, 10am and 12:30pm

Iowa Theatre Artists

4709 220th Trail, Amana
www.iowatheatreartists.org
The Lady With All the Answers, through May 10
• Underneath the Lintel, May 14-24 • Squabbles, opens May 28

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, UI Campus, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap
Know the Score LIVE!, May 8, 5pm • Emma, May 9 & 10, 7pm

Theatre Cedar Rapids

Lindale Mall, Cedar Rapids
www.theatreocr.org
Hair, May 1-16

The University of Iowa Dance

Space/Place Theatre, North Hall
www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Undergraduate Dance Concert, May 2, 8pm • Dance Forum Spring Concert, May 22, 8pm, May 23, 3pm

The University of Iowa Theatre

Theatre Building, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~theatre
Orpheus in the Underworld, May 1 & 2, 8pm, May 3, 2pm • New Play Festival: The Sea Cares Nothing, May 4, 2pm; La Lechera, May 4, 5:30pm & 9pm; The Boy in Black, May 5, 1:30pm; This is Who Comes, May 5, 5:30pm; Dressed in Money and Ink, May 6, 1:30pm; Akarui, May 6, 5:30pm & 9pm; Undergraduate Playwrights Workshop, May 7, 1:30pm; In the Starry Nights, May 8, 1:30pm, The Decline of the Front Porch, May 8, 5:30pm & 9pm; The Promised Land, May 9, 2pm; Truth and Truth, May 9, 5:30pm & 9pm

COMEDY

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Bob Zany And Costaki Economopoulos, May 7, 7:30pm

Penguin's Comedy Club

Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguincomedyclub.com
Check website for showtimes
Dr. Jim Wand, May 1 & 2 • Darryl Rhodes, May 8 & 9 • Steve Burr, May 15 & 16 • Christine Stedman, May 22 & 23 • Bill Bauer, May 29 & 30

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
Joel McHale, May 29, 8pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City
www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com
Shows start at 9:30pm
DC Young and El Arnston, May 6 • Steven J. Moore and Tim Sullivan, May 13 • Paul Frisbie and James Irvin Berry, May 27

Think you know Iowa City?

Let us in on it! Email story ideas to Paul Sorenson at features@LittleVillageMag.com
Want to share what's happening in the calendar? Email us at calendar@LittleVillageMag.com

Iowa City Public Library

Ped Mall, Iowa City
www.icpl.org
When the World Spoke Arabic series, May 6 & 20, 7pm

KIDS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org
Check website for locations
Learning Safari events at 10:30am
LS: The Spider Weaver, May 1 • LS: Please, Malese, May 6 • LS: Hep Cats' Harlem Jive, May 7

The Iowa Children's Museum

1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville
www.theicm.org
Sesame Street Live Scavenger Hunt, May 1-8 • Health Day Celebration, May 2 • DanceFest for Kids!, May 2, 1pm • Art Adventure: Mother Goose!, May 2, 2pm • Art Adventure: Picture Puzzle, May 7, 3pm • Trout Fishing in America, Hancher SPOT Program, May 9, 2pm • Cello Concert for Kids, May 10, 1pm • Art Adventure: Mother's Day Sweets, May 10, 2pm • Art Adventure: Museum Monster, May

14, 3pm • Art Adventure: Make a Statement, May 21, 3pm • "Children Just Like Me" Exhibit Opening, May 23 • Art Adventure: A Bad Case of the Stripes, May 28, 3pm • Art Adventure: View From My Iowa Window, May 29, 5pm • Opening of "View From My Window" Exhibit, May 29

WORDS

The Haunted Bookshop

203 N Linn St., Iowa City
www.thehauntedbookshop.com
Tall Grass Writers, children's authors, May 31, 2pm

Prairie Lights

15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
www.prairielightsbooks.com
All shows at 7pm unless otherwise noted
ZZ Packer, May 1, 8pm • Austin Ratner, May 4, 7:30pm • James Galvin, May 7, 8pm

CINEMA

Bijou Theater

Iowa Memorial Union
www.bijoutheater.org
Check website for showtimes
Che Part Two, May 1-7 • Skills Like This, May 1-7 • Waltz with Bashir, May 8-14 • The Class, May 8-14

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Riff Raff Theater: Alien vs. Predator, May 8, 8pm • Resist Evil, Part One: Dropping Evil, May 16, 8pm

MISC

Critical Hit Games 89 Second St, Coralville www.criticalhitgames.net

Check website for daily gaming events

Iowa Renaissance Festival

Middle Amana Park
www.iowarenfest.com
Iowa Renaissance Festival and Gathering o' the Celts, May 23-25, 11am-6pm

PATV

206 Lafayette St. Iowa City
www.patv.tv
The Smartest Iowan game show Wednesdays, contestants needed, email smartestiowan@gmail.com.
PATV Guidelines workshop- Make Your own TV Show, May 3, 10am • PATV Workshop in Media Literacy, May 16th, 2pm

Curses, Foiled Again

- Police in Arnold, Mo., reported that a woman heading for the exit of a grocery store with a shopping cart containing more than \$1,200 in stolen “groceries and other items” was thwarted by trying to leave through the wrong automatic door. Store security called police, St. Louis’s KSDK News reported, because the woman attracted so much attention when the door wouldn’t open.
- David Maksimik, 59, successfully robbed a bank in Darien, Conn., but while making his getaway, he rear-ended a car. He abandoned his car and caught a bus, then a taxi and finally a ride from his sister to get home to Stamford, where he found his 53-year-old roommate dead. He called police, who decided the death was a suicide. The Connecticut Post reported that during their investigation, officers became suspicious of Maksimik and discovered a bag on his bed containing the bank’s \$3,745. Maksimik confessed to the robbery.

Chutzpah

Following the April 3 massacre of 14 people in Binghamton, N.Y., James Kauchis, an accounting clerk at the Broome County Department of Social Services, filed a grievance to be paid for the lunch hour he missed because the DSS building where he works was locked down for four hours during the incident. Kauchis declined to comment on his complaint, telling the Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin, “That’s a matter between me, the administration and the union.”

Heaven Can Wait

Some 200 mosques in Mecca point the wrong way, according to the Arab newspaper al-Hayat. Muslims are supposed to pray facing the Kaaba, Islam’s most sacred site, located in Mecca’s Grand Mosque, and rely on niches in mosques to indicate the correct direction. The paper said people looking down from newly built high-rises in Mecca noticed the niches in many older mosques weren’t pointing directly toward the Kaaba. Tawfik al-Sudairy, Islamic affairs ministry deputy secretary in Saudi Arabia, said modern techniques had corrected the problem and assured the newspaper that all previous prayers were valid.

Slightest Provocation

- Frederick W. Bertrang, 31, told police in Oak Creek, Wis., that he slashed his mother with a knife and shot her three times with an AK-47 because she refused to give him \$2 so he could pay the cover charge at a bar.
- Derek C. Hightower, 24, set a fire that destroyed his former home in Bristol, Wis., as well as a garage and three vehicles, according to court documents, because he was upset that someone else was living in the house.

Do Society a Favor

- Smoking adds to the cost of health care, but non-smokers cost society more by living longer, according to Vanderbilt University economist Kip Viscusi. His study of the net costs of smoking-related spending and savings found that for every pack of cigarettes smoked, the country reaps a net cost savings of 32 cents. The Associated Press reported the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that smokers die some 10 years earlier than nonsmokers, resulting in savings to Medicare, Social Security, private pensions and other programs. Viscusi’s findings echo a Dutch study, published last year in the journal *Public Library of Science Medicine*. It said smokers total about \$326,000 in health care costs from age 20 on, compared with about \$417,000 for longer-living thin and healthy people.
- Fat people are each responsible for about one ton more carbon-dioxide emissions a year than thin people, according to a study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. “When it comes to food consumption, moving about in a heavy body is like driving around in a gas guzzler,” researchers Phil Edwards and Ian Roberts wrote, noting that food production is a major source of greenhouse gases.

Where’s the Gratitude?

- Two years ago, after Kathleen Slattery, 84, fell and lay on the floor of her Chicago apartment for 15 hours, a 9-year-old girl with a heart defect crawled through a window to rescue the woman, who was her landlady. The Chicago Sun-Times reported that in March, the girl, her sister and her mother, Deb Gordils, were evicted.
- Less than five minutes after Mayor Alvin Parks Jr. called police Officer Kristopher Weston, 28, before the East St. Louis, Ill., City Council to recognize him for his work in arresting a suspect in a supermarket killing, the council voted to lay him off, citing budget cuts.

Oops!

Paul Duran Jr., 23, an inmate at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, was beaten to death within 15 minutes after prison guards inadvertently put him in a cell with Jessie James Dalton, a convicted killer whom Duran had testified against.

Big Surprise

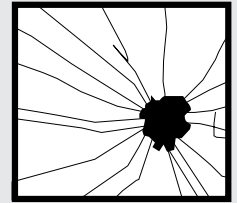
Few patrons of fast-food restaurants read nutritional information available in the outlets, according to researchers at Yale University. The study at McDonald’s, Burger King, Starbucks and Au Bon Pain outlets in urban and suburban settings watched 4,800 patrons to see who read posters, pamphlets or computer screens containing nutritional information about menu items. Six people did.

Beating the Odds

When a customer complained about the price of cigarettes to the clerk at a gas station in Hempfield, Pa., state police said the clerk took \$60 from his pocket, placed it on the counter and bet the customer that he couldn’t find cigarettes cheaper at another store. The Pittsburgh Tribune-Review reported the customer grabbed the money and fled.

Economic Stimulus

Andrew Krogh, 47, the owner of a glass company in Sacramento, Calif., was arrested after a stakeout at a martial arts store plagued repeatedly by broken windows identified him as the culprit. “I never thought it would be a window guy drumming up business,” the building’s landlord, Brian Seeley, told the Sacramento News, indicating he paid Krogh, who contacted him after the first incident, at least \$12,000 to repair more than a dozen broken windows. Another business owner said she also paid Krogh to replace glass after he showed up at her store the day after one of her front doors was shattered and then hired him twice more after her storefront windows were shot out.



Hitting Them Where It Hurts

A British neighborhood group is discouraging trouble-making teenage boys from hanging around underpasses and intimidating residents by aiming pink lights at them. Tony Gelsthorpe, who chairs the Layton Burroughs Residents’ Association in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, told the Daily Telegraph that the juveniles regard the pink light as “uncool,” but also flee in embarrassment because it highlights their acne.

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

Who gets cancer first—smokers or tanners?

My girlfriend and I were fighting over which led to a greater chance of getting cancer, smoking or tanning. I probably average a cigarette a day, and my girlfriend usually goes tanning two or three times a week. Who gets cancer first?

—Dave, Columbus, Ohio

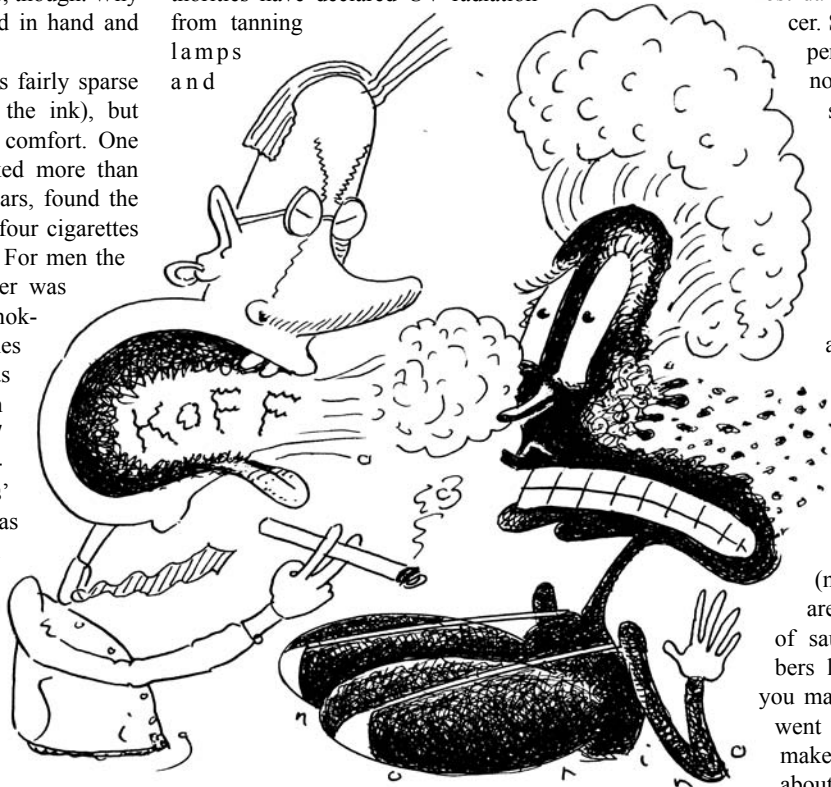
A slo-mo suicide pact—*quel romantique!* The competitive aspect bugs me, though. Why not jump out the window hand in hand and have this end in a tie?

Research on light smokers is fairly sparse (heavy smokers get most of the ink), but what there is won't be much comfort. One Norwegian study, which tracked more than 40,000 people for up to 30 years, found the risk from smoking just one to four cigarettes per day was surprisingly high. For men the risk of dying from lung cancer was 2.8 times higher than for nonsmokers, for women more than 5 times higher. The cardio news was bad, too: the risk of death from ischemic heart disease was 2.7 to 2.9 times higher than for nonsmokers. Overall, light smokers' risk of dying from any cause was about 50 percent greater than nonsmokers'. (This means within a given period of time, you understand. The long-run risk of death for anyone short of the Virgin Mary is a solid 100 percent.)

Some light smokers, maybe including you, assume there's a minimum smoking threshold below which they're safe. Don't count on it. A recent metastudy (i.e., an analysis of existing studies) of smoking exposure looked at "pack-years"—the number of packs you smoke per day times the number of years you smoke. It suggests that even at low smoking intensity (fewer than ten cigarettes daily) your odds of developing lung cancer increase linearly as your pack-years go up. At *very* low levels, prediction gets dicey, but the obvious conclusion from looking at the charts is this: the less you smoke, the lower your added risk of lung cancer; the only way to reach zero added risk is to smoke zero cigarettes. (Side note to heavy smokers who figure they'll just cut back

rather than kick the habit altogether: Good luck with that. Research finds such folk tend to go in for "compensatory smoking," meaning they smoke fewer cigarettes but take more and deeper puffs. If you're going to quit, quit.)

Now tanning. Exposure to ultraviolet radiation, whether from the sun or a tanning booth, can prematurely age your skin and increases your risk of skin cancer; federal authorities have declared UV radiation from tanning lamps and



beds a known carcinogen. Just so we're clear, not all UV radiation is the same—the UV reaching the Earth's surface takes the form of either UVA, which has a longer wavelength and thus penetrates your skin more deeply, or UVB, which penetrates less but can be more destructive. Can't decide what's worse? Not to worry—tanning beds typically emit both. Bonus cause for panic: Tanning salons and their customers routinely take a technology that's borderline stupid and push it over a cliff. An inspection of 50 tanning facilities in North Carolina (North Carolina! People are going to tanning salons *in the fucking sun belt!*) found that 95 percent of patrons exceeded the recommended UV exposure limits.

How big a risk are we talking about here? One study found that even after adjusting

for natural sun exposure and the tendency to sunburn, use of tanning booths multiplied the risk of squamous cell cancer by 2.5 and basal cell cancer by 1.5. That's not the worst of it. A 2007 metastudy in the *International Journal of Cancer* reviewed 19 different investigations of tanning risk and found that people who had ever used tanning beds had a 15 percent greater chance of developing melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer. Seven studies showed a 75

percent greater risk of melanoma if your first tanning session was before age 35. Probably the best examination of cancer risk from tanning salons was a 2003 study of 100,000 Scandinavian women. On average, women who visited a salon at least once a month had a 45 to 55 percent greater risk of developing melanoma than nontanners.


Ordinarily, given the apples-to-oranges comparisons and somewhat squishy numbers (metastudies in particular are the statistical equivalent of sausage making—the numbers look fine coming out but you may not want to know what went in), I might hesitate to make any definite statements about the relative perils of these two vices. But we're not talking about mere science here, we're talking about winning an argument. One can make a plausible case you're doubling your risk of lung cancer with that daily cigarette, while your girlfriend is giving herself a 50 percent higher chance of getting a cancer that's highly curable if detected early. True, her skin will soon look like leather, whereas you won't show any symptoms till the coughing gets bad. But I still say you've got her beat.


—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 MAY 2009


FOR EVERYONE—Bittersweet change. Permanent, irreversible change will come to all of us this month. Events will partly force us and partly allow us to break out of an old, limiting situation and into a new one with much greater promise. Some will have to abandon old expectations for new ones. But the changes will also release healing and expansive energies into our lives. We might feel sadness as we let go of familiar habits, or people and places. But we will also experience joy as we awaken to the new possibilities. Also, we will have a comfortable cushion of time before we have to put the changes fully into effect.


 **ARIES**—Simplicity and patience are best. Aries faces a complicated and fast-moving situation. Significant lifestyle adjustments will be needed. Patience and simplicity are the absolute best ways to cope. Avoid letting confusion and impatience take over. Don't paint yourself into a corner by changing too much too fast. Save some options for the future. More changes will be required down the road. The changes will release deep healing energies into your life. Those who gossip, scheme and manipulate are especially annoying right now. Tune them out as completely as you can.


 **TAURUS**—Withhold judgment. Your relations with higher ups continue to be confusing and worrisome. Authority figures are experiencing significant turbulence. It might not show on the surface, but they are learning the error of their ways. They are sincerely looking for better, genuine solutions. Withhold judgment until they have had a chance to think things through on their level and come up with workable ideas. Meanwhile, your influence in your own sphere is running high. Use your heightened influence in constructive ways. Discourage grumbling. Financial decisions continue to demand great care.

 **GEMINI**—Go-between. Friends and associates are in the midst of complex, high-stakes planning. You don't have the answers, nobody does right now. But you have an intuitive grasp of the issues and you know the people. You can communicate intelligently and effectively with everyone involved. You can also keep the discussion on track. Many of the players outrank you, but your expertise and communication skills give you considerable influence. They make you a welcome and valued participant. This is the beginning of a process, not the end, so conserve your resources.


 **CANCER**—Stand firm. You are in a confusing and vulnerable position. Finances are in flux. Trends are unclear. Negotiations are tough. People can easily overlook your interests. Remain firm and polite. Hold your ground. Play for time. Don't let others manipulate you with guilt or fear or take advantage of your need. You can regain the advantage. Conditions will firm up over time and your bargaining position will firm up too. Intuition, experience and, occasionally, luck will make up for your opponents' seeming advantage. Adjustments made now will liberate your potential.


 **LEO**—Boundaries. Partners and other key associates are at loose ends. Those in authority are stymied. This situation is deep, complicated and confusing, all around. Rushing in with good intentions will only make things more complicated and confusing. You can help yourself and others best by maintaining your personal boundaries and tending your own garden. Don't get swept into the drama. You must trust others and help them trust each other. Quietly tending to your assigned duties will have a healing effect. The benefits you bring will help your bottom line.


 **VIRGO**—Choose carefully. People you encounter in your work life will be coping with change or demanding change. You aren't exempt from the pressures of change either. Choose carefully and leave some wiggle room. Choices made now will be hard to reverse. If you apply hard-learned lessons your decisions will stand the test of time. Agree only to the wisest ideas. Your rapport with those in charge is strong and helpful. Honor and recognition will flow from travel and educational efforts. Be wary of manipulation by youngsters, friends or romantic interests.


 **LIBRA**—Pressures ease. The issues and challenges are still there. Conditions are complicated and subject to forces beyond anyone's control. You might also be experiencing a complex transformation in social, romantic or creative areas. However, the pressure and tensions have eased. You can now find sustainable solutions in a more relaxed and cooperative atmosphere. The underlying planetary energy is supportive and protective. Even changes you want to avoid will have a healing effect. The forces of change are mixed with healing energies. Women in your life might be experiencing heightened anxiety.

 **SCORPIO**—Smaller, steadier steps. Others expect you to take the initiative in a delicate and complex situation. However, you know it isn't the right time to make a move. You should step back and take a more gradual and thoughtful approach. From deep within comes a sense of increasing personal empowerment. Changes you might have been hesitant to make will release healing, uplifting forces. These will clear away old obstacles to emotional growth in family-related areas. Budgetary concerns won't ease completely for a while. Don't let manipulative people interfere with community activities.

 **SAGITTARIUS**—Healing and change. There is much to be gained this month by networking. Many people will be experiencing rapid, complicated, confusing and potentially depressing changes. You will be in the middle of the action, clarifying, encouraging, inspiring and helping everyone heal. It will be difficult to control the situation, and unwise. Go with the flow. You will now find it easier to make any needed financial adjustments. Don't take anything at face value in financial matters, though. There are those who would mislead or manipulate you on important financial issues.

 **CAPRICORN**—Redo. Now's the right time to plan changes that will bring your lifestyle into line with new realities. But it could be some months before you can follow through. It's also a good time to focus on your own needs, to hone your sense of what you need to nurture yourself. There could be a spike in health-related expenses that will enhance your well-being significantly. Fight an inclination to worry too much. However, complex and changeful your financial situation might appear right now, protective planetary forces are in place.

 **AQUARIUS**—Don't get overwhelmed. You are a key part of a healing and transformative process now taking place in almost everyone's life. Your heart and mind overflow. Your ideas are of real help to real people now making tough and important choices. You must take time to understand where others are coming from. Also, be sure that you understand your own boundaries and make others respect them. This will all take a toll unless you allot time for yourself. People bring economic opportunities that challenge and uplift you in unexpected ways.

 **PISCES**—Personal transformation. Pisceans are at ground zero as a powerful and profound healing energy strikes the world. This energy hits deep in your mind as a lengthy cycle of change reaches its peak. The energy will help you finally work through many difficult issues that have piled up in your mind unresolved. You will be able to achieve a gratifying, long sought understanding with friends, neighbors and family about these changes and the challenges you've had to overcome. Don't let anyone manipulate you as you plan for the future.

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