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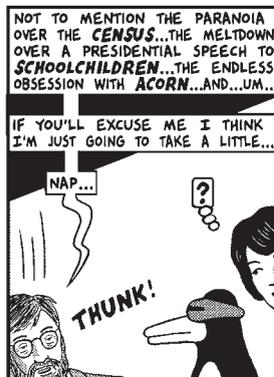
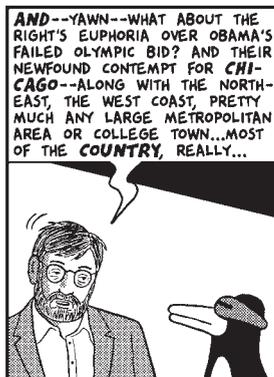
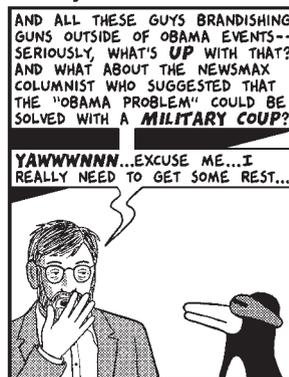
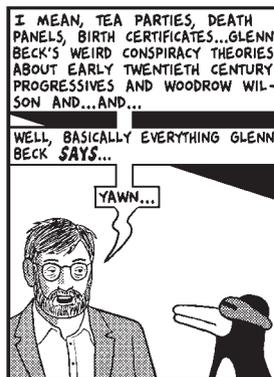
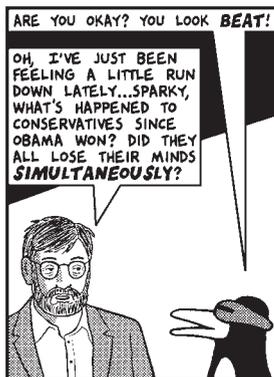
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



TOM TOMORROW ©2009... www.thismodernworld.com

Holiday Joy for Hire

This time of year, I start getting occasional cards and fliers in my mailbox telling me that I'm way too busy, especially at this season. They also tell me, somewhat more subtly, that I do a crappy job and that I'm endangering my life.

These holiday missives come from various and sundry lawn and landscaping companies, handyman services, and such like. What they want to do for me (for a fee, of course) is to put up my Christmas lights.

I'm always dumbfounded by these solicitations, and they inspire one of those occasional apoplectic Andy Rooney rants in me. What is wrong with this world when people can't even put up their own Christmas lights??? I feel like I want to go on a crusade to eliminate holiday light-decorating services from the face of the Earth!

OK, I've taken a breath. And I know these outfits aren't Al-Qaeda. But let me parse my thinking on this.

My main objection is not so much directed at the businesses themselves as it is toward the social conditions that allow such businesses to exploit the opportunity. I ask us to think about what our holiday lights are for, if we want to put them up in the first place.

First and foremost, they are about seasonal ceremony in our home. Home should be something that we make, not hire out to others. We have abdicated so much of what goes into making a household in recent decades. Cooking, for one—the proliferation of (overly) prepared foods in the grocery store and the epidemic of fast-food chains is ample evidence of that. Culture and entertainment is another—rather than telling stories with each other, making music or walking in the woods, we tend to stare at screens with pre-packaged, conveniently delivered (not to mention purchased) shows and games. I could go on and on.

I know I have invoked Wendell Berry a lot in the past several months. At the risk of my forcing him to overstay his welcome in this column, let me mention that I hearken to his concept of “household” as fundamental to a good society—a loving, cooperative group of people committed to making good, meaningful lives for each other and doing good, mean-

ingful work together. In such a “household,” we don't hire out to express our personal joy in the season, whether it's sacred or secular. And if indeed there is religious significance to your holiday lighting, why oh why would you pay someone else to express your joy in the coming of your Messiah?

Related here is the “too busy” issue. We continue to have conversations about today's “time famine” and the “slowness” we need to restore to our culture to remain sane and human. Overflow crowds at talks in our commu-



We don't hire out to express our personal joy in the season, whether it's sacred or secular.

nity in recent years by the likes of Carl Honoré and John de Graaf show a strong interest in taking back your time. If Christmas makes you “too busy” to decorate for Christmas, something is way wonky.

Okay, on to the crappy job issue. Not so subtly implicit in the sales pitch, with the emphasis on the “professional results” of hired-out light-putting-upping, is the idea that I am incapable of making my light display look good. Gee, thanks. My cakes don't look like Martha Stewart's, either. To which I merely say, so what? It's my house and it's who I am!

Somewhat more subtly implicit is the message that I must keep up with the Joneses, and preferably outdo them. That attitude is anathema to the Wendell Berry vision of “household,” as well as the spirit of community that I would prefer to share with my neighbors rather than the assertion of superiority through

competition. I'm sorry, a house is not bling, and it certainly shouldn't be used to humiliate others. My Christmas lights should be about me. If my strings are not perfectly straight or symmetrical, or if my Rudolph and Santa don't flash in perfect synchronization to the music I have playing (okay, I would never do that anyway), so be it. I'll drape some bulbs over my front bushes, hang up the lighted wreath on the nail of my front wall, plug 'er in, flip the switch, break out the hot chocolate, and I should be overjoyed, as should you.

The fliers in my mailbox also tell me that I am apparently incapable of practicing basic safety. Putting up Christmas lights is dangerous!!! You don't want to fall off a ladder or, for heaven's sake, a roof, do you?? I don't deny the risk in everyday life—including walking out my front door—but the way we have commodified safety through the promulgation of paranoia both amuses and enrages me. Guess I'd better hire someone to frost my Santa Claus sugar cookies, too—you know that picking up a butter knife will inevitably lead to a trip to the emergency room.

We live in a *reductio ad absurdum* age. To make our lives safe, easy and convenient, we must abdicate all of the offices of everyday household life to the professionals. There is some sense to the fact that as we do less and less for ourselves we in fact become more incompetent, as the light-putter-uppers suggest we are. But in our efforts to free ourselves of household labor and even rudimentary daily skill, we somehow, ironically, have become “too busy” to practice them anyway.

So, please, this season, for the sake of household, community and just plain real life—if you want to have Christmas lights on your house, put them up yourself. If you're physically unable, ask a friend, relative or neighbor to give you a hand. When I walk or drive by, I promise not to laugh. In fact, if a string droops a little below the bottom branches of your bush or a bulb or two is burned out, I'll feel all warm and toasty inside, and, when I get home, I'll raise a mug of hot chocolate in your honor. **lv**

Thomas Dean also knows how to string lights on a Christmas tree and hang stockings by the fireplace.

Zoom zoom zum

Most aerobics classes I've been to usually begin the same way. People trickle through the door into the open, mirror-lined studio. They talk with each other, put belongings out of the way, grab a sip of water and do some light stretching or movements to get ready.

However, I recently had a slightly different experience. Before class began, people exchanged their pleasantries then began working on hip-rolls. Watching themselves in the mirrors, they twisted their core thrusting one hip forward and gliding it backwards in an arc while bringing the other forward to do the same thing.

In the words of hip-hop master Ludacris: They were shaking what their momma gave them.

This was a Zumba class. One of the latest fitness trends to officially infiltrate Iowa City, the craze has spread to 75 countries across six continents. The idea is simple: dance your way fit.

"Once you give it a chance you won't be able to stop," Zumba instructor Michelle Clark said. "It's an exercise addiction."

Zumba instructors build high energy dances to each Latin-inspired song using simple elements of salsa and merengue as well as other Latin styles of dance and a few more traditional aerobics class steps. All together these

steps create a more fun spin on the standard aerobics class.

Each dance contains its own set of moves that build upon each other and repeat enough to make it easy to pick up. While there are steps and rhythm to the dances in a Zumba class, it just seems easier.

In most aerobics classes, I struggle to be perfectly in line with whatever the instructor is doing. It's stressful, and I end up concentrating mostly on whether I'm using the correct foot, turning properly, or facing the right direction. In Zumba I don't care as much. I don't always do each step perfectly, but as long as I keep moving, I just feel the music and enjoy myself.



The instructor commanded us to move with attitude, incorporate our own "happy dance" and encouraged us all to sing along.

The most recent class I took got going by doing a belly dancing move called "snake arms" where you alternate stretching your arms out to the side and move them like a wave. We also shimmied, side-stepped and did a little cha-cha. The purpose of Zumba is just to move and let yourself go.

"It lets you be yourself where in most classes you can't," Clark said. "You can move your body any way you want."

Clark teaches Zumba as well as other aerobics classes at North Dodge Athletic Club in Iowa City and Ladies' Workout Express in

North Liberty. She likes to incorporate requests into the classes she teaches throwing in the electric slide or other American favorites. Her goal is to give people something they could do at a wedding or out at a club.

Most recently, the instructor commanded us to move with attitude, incorporate our own "happy dance" and encouraged us all to sing along with the song when we knew a certain part. "Tequila," the popular song by The Champs in the late fifties, was one of those brief sing-a-longs.

The workout doesn't require any equipment. It involves a lot of arm movements, most of which are considerably more creative than the standard aerobics class. Using your arms during the workout in addition to the major muscles of the legs and core increases the heart rate making for a more intense exercise session.

With popular shows like Dancing with the Stars, people want to learn how to dance. While it can't offer any sort of classic ballroom training, it does offer a fun workout. People are catching on to this trend. Zumba classes are now offered specifically for kids and seniors. There are now Zumba DVDs for at-home workouts as well as clothing and merchandise.

There are multiple locations in the Iowa City area that offer Zumba classes, which means there are many times and locations for people to get in on this hip-shaking action and give this workout a chance. **lv**

Kelly Ostrem loves any workout where she can take her hip-shaking outside of her apartment.

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in a Message Bottle

Dwayne Uitermark sees it every-day. For 25 years, he's worked at the Iowa City Landfill, bulldozing garbage into 60-by-120-foot plots of land. Bald and goateed, with a pack of Swisher Sweets bulging from his left shirt pocket, he tells me about the shifting shape of our town's trash. These days, he sees more cardboard, more newspapers, and, without a doubt, more disposable plastic bottles.

"I see a lot of water bottles in particular," he says, sitting in the landfill's conference room. "Not as much Gatorade or Powerade or whatever. I'm not trying to pick on one company."

The numbers support his claim. From 1998 to 2005, only four items increased in Iowa landfills with statistical significance, according to a waste analysis commissioned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. One of those four was polyethylene terephthalate (PET) non-deposit plastic bottles—a.k.a. bottled water, juices, teas, and sports drinks. The Container Recycling Institute estimates that, in Iowa, over half of all deposit-less plastic bottles hold water.

"It's just sad to see all of them," Uitermark goes on. "I wish we had the manpower to pile them up, just to show how many we get in a day."

Money makes us do things we wouldn't otherwise do. Bribery, forgery, murder. It can also make us recycle a bottle of Sprite Remix.

Those bottles reach Iowa's landfills, in short, because they lack a five-cent deposit to incentivize recycling. We must change this policy. Doing so will divert thousands of tons of non-biodegradable material from our finite landfills, as Iowa's 1989 Waste Reduction & Recycling Act demanded.

In 1979, Iowa became the fifth of 11 states to implement a container deposit law, or bottle

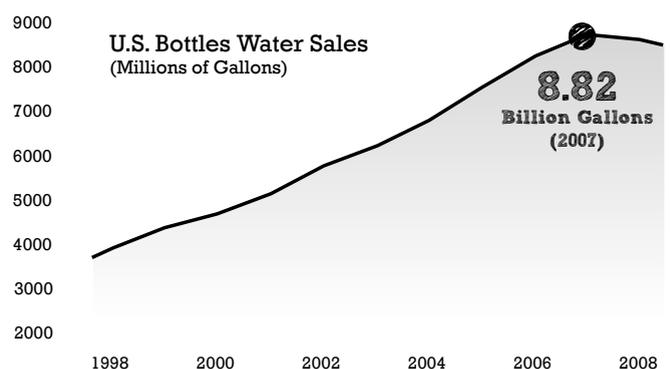


bill. The law places a nickel deposit on packaged beer, soda, mineral water, wine, liquor, and wine coolers sold in the state. Consumers pay the deposit, then get it back should they return the empty to a grocery store or redemption center. This process, though certainly cumbersome for grocers and drink distributors in our state, diverts millions of cans and bottles from landfills annually.

Earlier this year, Connecticut and New York expanded their bottle bills to include water. Oregon also implemented the expansion bill it passed in 2007. Expansion, it seems, has gained momentum. Though they've hesitated in the past, Iowa lawmakers should pursue expansion to include bottled water. In 1978, we mimicked Oregon's bottle bill in the creation of our own. We should act likewise for expansion.

Container deposit laws have long worked to cut litter and solid waste generation, though the results come at a cost to grocers, distributors,

consumers, and, in some cases, governments. Data varies on the exact difference in recycling rates between deposit and non-deposit drink containers. The Container Recycling Institute's numbers show Iowans recycling about 76 percent of their deposit PET bottles and just 14 percent of their non-deposit ones.

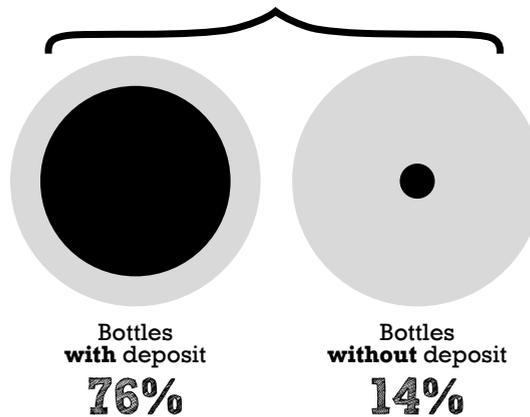


They estimate similar ratios for other container types; a deposited aluminum can has an 88 percent chance of being recycled, while its non-deposit cousin has a 35 percent chance. Iowa's Alcoholic Beverages Division tracks liquor sales in the state, which means recycling rates for these items are likely to have higher accuracy than a non-profit's estimates.

For the 2009 fiscal year, Iowans recycled 64 percent of their liquor bottles, though Lynn Walding, administrator for the bureau, estimates that rates for beer and other deposit drinks are likely higher than that. The Container Recycling Institute has our neighbors to the east, Illinois, recycling just 13 percent of those same bottles. Meanwhile, the DNR's flattering estimate has Iowans recycling 86 percent of all deposit containers, though the department lacks funding to track redemption rates with precision. Regardless of the specific estimate, the general principle holds true: Money talks. A nickel can transform the apathetic into inadvertent environmentalists.

To execute expansion, Iowa must make significant changes to how it operates the bottle bill. Simply adding water to the mix won't work for a series of logistical reasons. Currently, the law requires drink distributors to collect their empties from stores or redemption centers. So, Budweiser unloads its beer at Hy-Vee, which sells the beer to consumers, who return the containers to a retailer, where Budweiser returns to pick them up. Budweiser, of course, only wants to deal with its contain-

Recycling rates for PET plastic bottles in Iowa



ers, which means grocers (or redemption centers) must sort cans and bottles by brand in addition to size and material type.

We must simplify this process. In Oregon, grocers need only sort containers by material type (plastic, metal, or glass), which invariably reduces the amount of labor needed to manage empties. Contrast that with Maine, where brand-based sorting has turned expansion into "a madhouse," as Peter Spendelow of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

phrased it to me. Grocers will still protest expansion—they won't appreciate the new volume of water bottles—but simplified sorting should help counteract any additional labor costs.

Material-based sorting also ends the need for distributors to collect empties, a task they've long-cited as a chief concern with the bottle bill. Gathering empties means additional trucks, fuel, labor, storage—money. We can bypass all that with the Oregon model. Oregon distributors and retailers have created the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative, a statewide collective to streamline the bottle bill process. The cooperative acts as a third party, managing deposits and collecting containers from grocers. Distributors can choose not to join the cooperative, but there's a reason why 90 percent of them do: It makes lives easier. I'm sure most would rather the bottle bill just go away, but, given that it won't, distributors and grocers in Oregon have learned to hold their noses and create a workable system.

(On a side note: It's no surprise Iowa City

BOTTLES CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 >>

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We wait. Every year we wait. We wait with bated breath, face paint purchased, coolers full of ice, grills freshly cleaned, coals and meat at the ready, beers lined up in formation, newly purchased giant foam fingers proclaiming us to be “#1” waiting to be donned for the first time after last year’s fingers were torn to bits in frustration.

But we wait nonetheless because our hope for the football season—like the newly planted and freshly painted sod—is renewed each fall by visions of our bravest warriors returning to fight the ancient battles about to resume anew.

So we wait, every year we wait.

We wait to eat together, to drink together and to dress in colors that don’t occur in nature together.

We wait to clan together, to hive together, to cheer together and to sulk together. The game is our bond and through it we find comfort in times of heartbreak, heartbreak in times of joy and the sustenance, strength and hope to persevere through another long winter.

Fall’s arrival may signify the end of Mother Nature’s cycle of life but it’s also when mankind defiantly raises its middle finger (foam or otherwise) to the approaching Season of Death by creating new life of our own.

Orchestras, dance troupes, theater companies, television networks, Hollywood, they all either begin their new seasons or release their best work in the fall.

This is not a coincidence.

And so, too, like the patrons of the gentler arts (though none are any finer), we football fans, we merry band of brothers, wait again for the dances and dramas and symphonies that move *our* souls.

Our ballets feature men bigger and heavier than any appliance we’ve ever owned (and sometimes named after them) jumping nimbly over around and *through* equally large and equally fast men who pirouette and elevate through forests of limbs with the singular purpose of stopping them.

And when they do it, it is often with the equivalent g-force of an automobile accident.

And yet, heroically, up they leap to do it again. And again. And again. And *again*, goddamnit because we’ve *waited* for this and it’s now or never, pal, the game is on the line and you’re going to have to go for it on fourth down.

We’ve waited. It’s all come down to one



timately the drama that keeps us coming back. “On any given Sunday,” as the old adage goes, either team is just one fumble, missed tackle or punt return away from a shocking defeat or one one-handed catch, miraculous run or recovered on-side kick away from an unexpected victory. Theater go-

ers use their entire seat when watching a performance. We only need the edge of ours.

This is what we’ve been waiting for.

There are, of course, the traditional, seasonal performances we expect and look forward to each season when we face our division rivals but there are also new performers creating new works that present us with new challenges, as new teams are mixed into the schedule each year that supply us with fresh surprises, victories and heartbreaks oftentimes at the hands of unfamiliar virtuosos.

Each year the star performers we’ve grown to love (or hate) either meet or exceed or fall miserably short of our expectations while at the same time unknown ingénues, understudies and rookies come off the bench to take their place and thrill us with talents unknown to any of us save, perhaps, for themselves.

When everything else around us is dying we are blessed to be present at the birth of new careers and watch to fresh young talents blossom into genuine superstars and heroes.

We are not a passive audience. We are as



These battles are our shared history.

play. No time-outs, three seconds on the clock, it’s all on the line. We’re nauseous with worry, knuckles white around the remote and we wouldn’t have it any other way. The scripts to these dramas are improvised anew each and every week and whether the hero lives or dies is unknown to *anyone present* until the very moment the curtain falls. Win or lose its ul-

much a part of the team, the game, the battle as anyone on the field.

We stomp, we clap, we boo, we add *our* voices to choruses that are sixty, seventy, eighty, a hundred thousand voices strong as we sing the praises and utter the curses meant to spur our warriors on as they fight not only for their honor but also for our own.

We struggle along with them, and through them we too succeed or fail, win or lose, live or die.

Through them *we too* are sometimes champions and sometimes losers and we wait we wait we wait *every year* for the chance to join them in battle once again no matter the outcome of last year's campaign.

"Maybe next year," we console one another when we are not the victor and when next year

arrives all is forgiven, hope is renewed and we once again don our tribal colors, smear war paint on our faces, raise our glasses in toasts, place meat upon fire in burnt offering and remove our shirts in frigid subzero temperatures as acts of pure faith and devotion hoping that through our humble sacrifices and tributes that God himself will bring victory to our tribe, raise us up above all others, make us his chosen people, his chosen team.

The game is our bond and through it we find comfort in times of heartbreak, heartbreak in times of joy and the sustenance, strength and hope to persevere through another long winter.

These are our ancient rivalries, grudges and blood feuds—updated and writ large in instant replays Talmudically dissected on end zone JumboTrons.

Rivalries passed down from father to son to daughter to grandson to great granddaughter.

Feuds and rivalries that are older than any of the players on the field, most of them older than the very stadiums the battles themselves

are waged in but they persist eternally as they are our traditions, our history.

People root for teams from cities they've never lived in or even visited because *that's* who their father or grandfather rooted for. They were born into this eternal struggle. It's in their DNA.

Our tribe vs. your tribe, my clan vs. yours—our territory and our honor are at stake—and so we'll meet.

Whether it's a Saturday morning, a Sunday afternoon or a Monday night is of little matter because whenever the game is played we're ready to settle our differences with the oldest and simplest form of conflict resolution known to man: battle.

It is a struggle as old as man walking upright, probably older.

And so, again, we wait.

We wait for each weekend when our warriors meet to fight your warriors for the honor not only of all those present or watching on TV but also for the honor of all the generations of players and fans who've come before

FOOTBALL! CONTINUED ON PAGE 20 >>

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THE CONTROLLER

The customers beat us there, always. They wear black and gold, in endless iterations. Often as not they are unprepared for the weather. Thirty-one degrees: a fan wearing black short-shorts, a gold tank top, and flip flops, hugging herself, clutching a beer in one blue hand. They swear an inordinate amount for the time of day (still before 8 a.m., the fog from last night still clutched up in low spots), they eat, and they drink. There are varying levels of gustatory commitment; some stoop to a breakfast of Little Debbies and Budweisers toted around in an open 12-pack, or tallboys of Coors chasing fast-food grease.

Some have full flat-top griddles next to gas grills, mini-bars that produce Bloody Marys and Screwdrivers for the morning crowd. The lucky ones eat made-to-order omelets, pancakes, breakfast burritos, sausage and eggs piled on paper plates. The R.V.s these gastronomers inhabit are luxury-class—as big as Greyhound buses with tinted windows, seating for many, satellite hookups for flatscreen TVs that attach to the outside of the behemoths, fold-out awnings. The full range of contraband intoxicants are consumed within, to complement the Dionysian lubricants flowing outdoors.

The occupants come from all across the state, alumni and never-weres. Car dealership money. Turkey farm money. Farm implement money. Bank board money. Rich dad money. The kids go find dad's spot. The kids go find dad's boss' spot. The kids go drink with the grown-ups. The grown-ups pretend they are the kids. Legacies get switched up and mixed up. Generations attempt to blur, but from the outside, the young look furtive, and the old look predatory.

WORKING STIFFS

We all get up early. I sleep over at my girlfriend's on Friday night; we wake at 5 a.m. It is see-your-breath cold. We have woken to work, the fans have woken to be our work. We walk downtown, grab Red Bulls and granola

bars for breakfast. As we walk past houses and apartment buildings, we hear music, we hear whoops and war cries. They have already started. We cross the river on the Burlington Street bridge, shivering, cursing the cold, cursing the sport. They are already drinking. We are still hungover from the night before.

We go to the office, on the first floor of a parking ramp by the University hospital. We put on the vest, get our assignments. We work for University Parking. I am assigned to be a controller. Controllers say yes or no. Controllers call the office for advice and clari-

IN THE BAG. I looked down the lane to see a 14-year-old blonde girl, a cheerleader, scurrying all over the roadway, chasing down cash that had escaped her, to the consternation of her father. The ticket-takers aren't usually that entertaining, however. It's the customers that keep us looking.

DRIVE-IN DOLLARS

How it is for us, the parking lot gatekeepers: They are drunk. They want to park. We control their access to the lots. They either can or they can't. We either take their money or their pass, or we tell them this lot is reserved, this lot is special, they aren't special, they don't have reservations, they don't have the pass, they don't pass. It is not a meritocracy, it is not a democracy. It is the purest form of graft there is: pay more, park better.

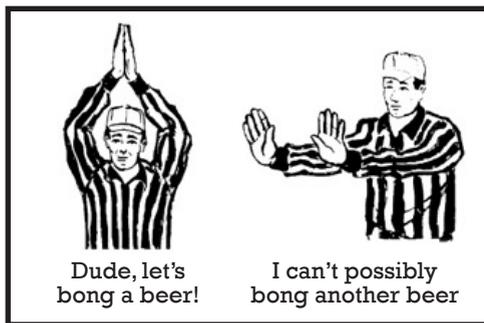
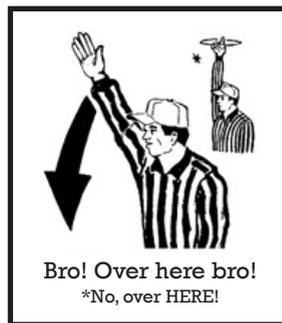
Alumni or not, if you're a booster, you park in the *good* lot, the lot with *tradition*, where you've parked on autumn Saturdays for 20 years. Senators and congressmen don't pay anything. They park in the VIP zone, don't even have to present ID—we are given a description of their car, and our deference is expected.

Money parks. But only above-board money. I made myself and my crew of ticket-sellers (two Joes, one Jane) sick by refusing two-hundred-and-some-odd dollars in bribe money to let an un-Permitted R.V. to park in our reserved lot. I said, "You simply didn't pay off the right people ahead of time," and sent him to look for public parking, which is remote, and is

always filling up early.

The University Parking Department makes over one million dollars a year. UI football brought in nearly 17.5 million dollars in FY 2008, which does not include the premium baksheesh the R.V.istocrats pay to park in their traditional lots. Kirk Ferentz is Don Corleone.

KNOW YOUR TAILGATING SIGNALS



fication. Controllers take tickets. Controllers ride herd on Joe and Jane ticket-seller. Joe and Jane ticket-seller take the money and hand the controller a ticket. One ticket in my bag for every ten dollars in their bag. That is the equation.

The ticket-sellers and pass-takers, Joes and Janes, might be my co-workers, or they might be volunteers, here to earn money for flag-twirlers, cheerleaders, and bands back in small Iowa school districts. Volunteers run as young as 13 or 14, or as old as middle-aged high school boosters. Father-daughter or mother-son teams show up—the volunteers get a free ticket to the game.

Controllers are always directly employed by the parking department. Controllers are the on-site authority at every lot entrance. One cold morning on the north Finkbine lot entrance, I heard a pissed off dad holler *GOD-DAMMIT KELSEY I TOLD YOU TO KEEP IT*

As we walk past houses and apartment buildings, we hear music, we hear whoops and war cries. They have already started.

I'm just some streetcorner gungsel he pays to collect his take.

THE PUBLIC INTOX THAT WASN'T

It's funny to make mobster jokes about the parking racket on game day, but the law really is different for tailgaters. Fans are, in many ways, above the law. On game day, open container and public intoxication laws are almost wholly unenforced west of the river, and only very, very loosely on the east side.

In two years of home-game people-watching, I have never seen anyone carded by the cops. And the cops are *everywhere*. I have heard several underage drinkers voice their concern over the presence of uniformed authority, only to be soothed by more experienced game day hands; *don't worry, nobody cares. Drink up. Have a good time.*

There are explicit and latent agreements: no kegs, no forties. Why no forties? I have seen endless tall cans, regular cans, twelve-ounce bottles, boxes of wine, cases, coolers. But the whole time, only one forty—and the guy holding it seemed to realize he was over the line.

One morning, about 11:10, as I walked home from a game day parking shift, we spotted a snow-less angel, passed out cold on the grass parking of the Benton Street hill, obviously fallen from 80-proof heaven. His cohort stood beside his prone form, talking on a cellphone, looking wholly unconcerned for the unconscious divine spread-eagled on the lawn next to his feet.

Once, the lot I was working filled up early, and I was let off ahead of schedule. I walked back across the river. At the corner of Madison and Burlington, I saw three young men attempting to alternately coerce and carry a

fourth across the river, westward, towards the festivities. The fourth was stumbling drunk, the level of intoxication you see in a young person being walked home by concerned friends on weekend nights, very late. It was 9:45 a.m.

Several police cars passed the tableau, the mobile morality play, about a small-town boy led disastrously astray by that insidious enemy of sobriety, chastity and piety: *school spirit*. None of the cops even pumped their brakes.

Clocking Out

Three friends passed by the lot I was controlling once, hailing me with drunken cheer. I told them I had to work for an hour more, to their chagrin. Before they left to party at one of their dad's boss' R.V.s, they gave me a parting gift of three cans of

P.B.R. I tucked the cans into my backpack, as good as a cooler on the bitterly chill day.

After being picked up and taken back to the office to turn in my vest and bag, I left the parking department, cracking the first beer before the door had even shut behind me. I had all three finished before I made it to the river. I wasn't celebrating the game starting—I was celebrating my morning ending.

The controller goes home. To pretend that we never grimaced at the crowds, never stomped our feet for the feeling of our toes rolling in our shoes like dice, never walked the opposite direction that the hundreds on the Burlington Street bridge walked, never shouldered through the mass of revelers, against the tide of game day fans. **lv**

Clarence Johnson is the reason your girl gets that dreamy, faraway look. Contact him at clarence.k.johnson@LittleVillageMag.com.



Kirk Ferentz is Don Corleone. I'm just some streetcorner gungsel he pays to collect his take.



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Get-A-Way Gameplan

An in-and-out-of-town itinerary for avoiding Hawk fan madness

When the Hawkeyes are disgracing themselves at Kinnick with an up-and-mostly-down season, it's difficult enough to forget there's a football game in town. But when the team is doing well? Every weekend in Iowa City becomes a loud Hawkeye-love fest and the downtown sidewalks fill with throngs of yellow-clad drunks.

Not that I don't enjoy football. On television. At home. By myself. But that I can turn on, dedicate three and a half hours to, and turn off. The rest of the fanfare is necessary to avoid. So this is your guide to making it through a home-game weekend in blissful ignorance to the alcohol-fueled festivities that usually accompany it.

Friday

5:00 p.m.

The layout of Iowa City is unfortunate in that, with few exceptions, all the restaurants worth eating at are within three blocks of the Friday-after-class drink specials that have already been running for a few hours by the time dinner rolls around. But the Motley Cow (160 N. Linn Street) is enough out of the way that you won't be interrupted by fraternity brothers streaming past.

The menu is shorter than some of the skirts that make appearances, even in sub-50-degree temperatures; the food, mostly sourced locally, is simple—think mixed olives, plates of assorted cheeses and rustic pastas—and the flatware doesn't always match. If you haven't eaten at "The Cow" since it moved from its Market Street location, you owe it to yourself to give it another try.

Since the move, the dining room is bigger, but if you still can't get a seat, either place across the street, Linn Street Café (121 N Linn Street) or Devotay (117 N. Linn Street), will work fine, too.

7:00 p.m.

Seeing a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* at the Riverside Theatre (213 N. Gilbert Street) is about as far as you can get from

football, culturally speaking. The play based on the diary of a young girl in hiding during the Holocaust runs through Nov. 8.

If you're the type to play it fast and loose—alas, if you are, you probably aren't reading this—you can try to score a \$12 ticket 15 minutes before the curtain with a student ID. Assuming there are any tickets left, of course. Regular tickets are \$26 and up. And you'll be happy to know that, even though the script calls for smoking, the production uses herbal cigarettes in compliance with Iowa City's smoking ordinance.

10:00 p.m.

After the show, head across the street to grab a drink at Dave's Fox Head (402 E. Market Street). It's the tavern of Iowa City's literati, by which I mean the dive bar where you might find Writers' Workshop participants or at least folks who fancy themselves writers.

The small, low-ceilinged bar has lost some of its charm now that it is no longer filled with cigarette smoke, but also is never filled with buffed-up 20-year-old males (or scantily clad 20-year-old females) vomiting in the bathroom.

Any raucous undergrad who does appear doesn't stay long.

Saturday

9:00 a.m.

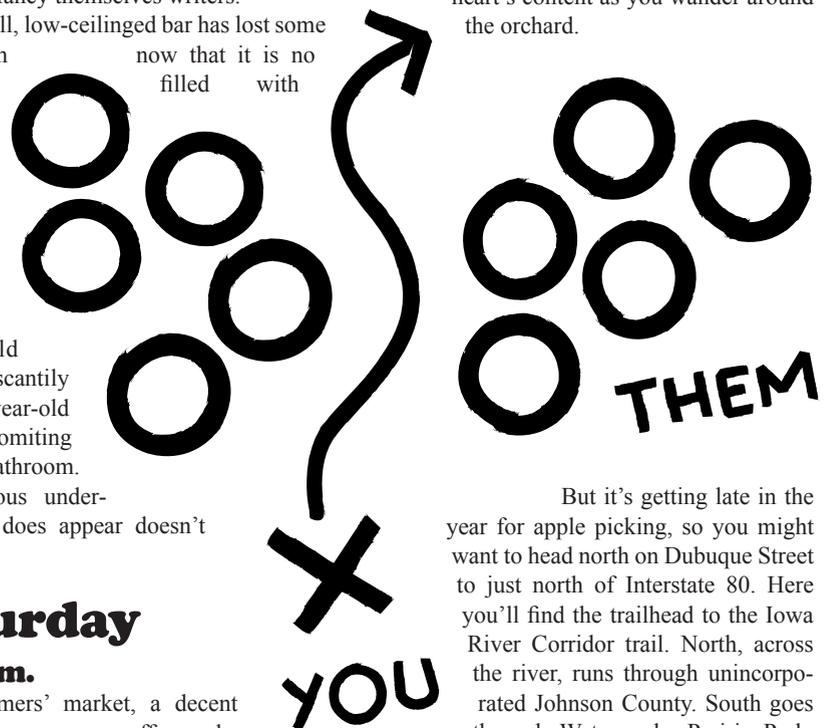
The farmers' market, a decent place to scrounge up coffee and a pastry, is on hiatus after the end of October, but who really wants to go when temperatures drop into the 40s anyway? Better to hit up Bluebird Diner (330 E. Market Street) for good eggs, passable hash browns and

Not that I don't enjoy football. On television. At home. By myself.

strong coffee. A caveat: you'll want to sit with your back to the windows, lest you spy a horde in black and gold to snap you from your Saturday morning peace.

11:00 a.m.

As kickoff approaches, football fans should be deserting the streets of Iowa City like cockroaches fleeing a suddenly well-lit kitchen. Still, it's best to skip town. And, stuffed on pancakes and eggs, a walk would probably do you some good. Head north on Highway 1 to Wilson's Apple Orchard (2924 Orchard Lane). Sure, you can *buy* apples, but the secret is that you're allowed to sample apples to your heart's content as you wander around the orchard.



But it's getting late in the year for apple picking, so you might want to head north on Dubuque Street to just north of Interstate 80. Here you'll find the trailhead to the Iowa River Corridor trail. North, across the river, runs through unincorporated Johnson County. South goes through Waterworks Prairie Park, the city's euphemistic name for the grounds around the water treatment facility, and follows the Iowa River. Either direction promises a nature walk devoid of football.

12:00 p.m.

As odd as it may seem, it is possible to get authentic Mexican food in Iowa. La Reyna (1937 Keokuk Street) and El Paso (601 Hollywood Boulevard), just a couple blocks apart, serve their tacos on a pair of corn tortillas with onion, avocado, cilantro, house-made salsas and wedges of lime. Be daring and try *tacos de lengua* (spicy beef tongue marinated then grilled), or just get chorizo, a traditional pork sausage.

3:00 p.m.

The best place to see in a movie in town is also a great place to hideout during a game. Marcus Sycamore 12 (1602 Sycamore Stree) has the advantage of (a) having the newest theatres, (b) being on the side of town that doesn't have a football stadium, and (c) being in a mall that no one ever goes to anyway.

7:00 p.m.

The *other* barbecue joint in town, Jimmy Jack's (1940 Lower Muscatine Road), often gets overlooked, probably because of its location. But with three tomato-based barbecue sauces—and Carolina mustard for those who prefer the barbecue of the South—the sandwiches are easy to customize. You'll want to call ahead with your order so that you don't have to wait when you arrive.

9:00 p.m.

The regulars still call it Gabe's, and even with new ownership and a fresh coat of paint, The Picador (330 E. Washington Street) is still a good place to go to avoid the streaming football drunks. Live music changes every night upstairs, but at the bar downstairs, where there is never a cover charge, someone will inevitably play Gun'n'Roses on the juke box.

Sunday**10:00 a.m.**

By now, football's over and you've either made it or you haven't. A celebratory breakfast is in order in the latter case, a conciliatory one in the case of the former. Try one of the old greasy-breakfast standbys: Mickey's Irish Pub (11 S. Dubuque Street) or Hamburg Inn No. 2 (214 N. Linn Street). Just make sure you're there before 11:00 a.m. so you can get a table while everyone else is sleeping off hangovers. **lv**

Nick Bergus is a writer, multimedia producer and instructor. You can find his blog about food at deathofapig.com, and the hub of his digital life at nbergus.com.

Hawkeye Fever

It was a simple slant pattern. "Two seconds left!" the quarterback yelled as he snapped the ball. He saw linemen coming hard up the middle and ducked and spun to elude the onrush before slinging the ball down the center to his open receiver. "Touchdown!"

The quarterback and the wideout left in celebration—only the two of them in a wide open field of grass.

Surely, they weren't the only Tiny Stanzis and Mini McNutts to re-enact yet another skin-of-their-teeth win for the 2009 Hawkeyes. Iowa City has Hawk fever (also H1N1) and the collective temp will continue to rise as long as the loss column reads zero.

"When fans are attached to teams, it becomes a badge of courage," said Richard Lustberg, an expert in sports psychology in an interview with the *Sacramento News Review*. "It has an effect on the image a city has."

So how rare is this ride on the crest of college football's BCS wave? Here's some Hawkeye trivia to ponder as Iowa tries to stay golden.

- On Oct. 25, the Hawkeyes climbed to #4 in the BCS rankings, the highest ever.
- After the victory at Michigan State, coach Kirk Ferentz has won in every stadium in the Big Ten except one: Ohio State's "Horseshoe" in Columbus. Iowa plays at the Buckeyes on Nov. 14.
- The Hawkeyes have appeared at #1 for a total of 11 weeks in the AP poll's history, covering three seasons, most recently for five weeks in 1985, before losing to Ohio State 22-13.
- Iowa has never won an "official" poll-era championship (1936-today), but they did finish at #1 in the Football Writers Association of America poll after winning the Rose Bowl to cap the 1958 season, when they finished #2 in the AP poll, which held its final vote pre-bowls.
- The Hawkeyes have never before been 8-0, but they have finished with a perfect record twice, in 1921 and 1922, both 7-0 seasons.
- Fitting for a coach in a UNESCO city of literature, Kirk Ferentz taught English lit 30 years ago at Worcester Academy. School motto? "Ἐφικνοῦ τῶν Καλῶν," Greek for "Achieve the Honorable."

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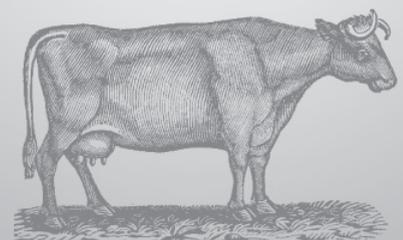
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Yes, You Can

You've seen the videos, these so-called "internet memes." Anything can become one. The shoddy English translations from a virtually unknown video game became known the world over the early part of this decade, as "All Your Base Are Belong To Us" entered the popular lexicon. Eight years later, Keyboard Cat (RIP, Fatso) became a hit, featured on a joint Daily Show-Colbert Report segment. The entirety of the keyboard cat idea: Fatso is pictured, hovering over a keyboard, while a movie, TV, or other clip is played until the speaker says something outrageous, stupid, or otherwise notable. At that

point, Fatso belts out a now-infamous tune, in mock con-



demnation of the speaker. Examples are as disparate as British Prime Minister Gordon Brown claiming his efforts to shore up the financial system "Saved the world"—rather than saved the banks; Cue Keyboard Cat. Or a man proposing to his girlfriend on a TV show, and in response she asks "Can we talk about this later?" Ouch. Cue Keyboard Cat.



Nobody quite knows what makes an internet meme. There isn't a single universal attribute they share, besides from their social status as memes. But there is no doubt that viral videos and semi-reality websites increasingly define the history of early 21st-century internet life.

The social consequences of this trend are as elusive as the quest to create the Next Big Internet Phenomenon. In our post-modern landscape, do the proliferation of internet

memes mean anything? Perhaps they are merely ways to connect with our fellow humans, to share in the inherent absurdity of our globalized, fragmented world. But theory aside, there is little doubt that given the opportunity, all would love to claim a smash hit wonder as their own.

Memes are perhaps one of the last great democratic traditions in American society. Literally anything can become a meme. With hard work, creative thinking, perseverance, and some vague sense of American Internet

blog. The Biden Birthers then made *The New Republic's* blog, *The Plank*, *The Daily Beast* and other political websites.

At that point, we had gotten farther than any of us had dreamed. (Okay, not quite—I was long crippled by visions of appearing on "The Colbert Show," in character, hopefully with a guest appearance by the "Vice President" himself.) But then the unexpected occurred, as the Biden Birthers were featured on the September 23 episode of "The O'Reilly Factor," the Most Watched Show on cable television. This was a shock—not only had I not expected to make

TV, I certainly didn't expect our breakthrough to come on Fox News.

Set in your knowledge that the internet world is your oyster, you

traditions, you too can hope of a day when the YouTube "viewed" count for one of your creations skyrockets overnight.

Indeed, I am part of a triumvirate that has reached the ultimate stage. As part of the Biden Birther Directorate (along with my dear friends Soheil Rezayazdi and John Schlotfeldt, who also contribute to *Little Village*), I achieved internet immortality as our "Biden Birther Manifesto" crossed the Rubicon from YouTube video to mainstream media. After a long campaign (fueled by many absurdist, over-the-top, in-character Facebook messages and emails to notable political blogs), we entered the conversation on Ben Smith's *Politico*

must then tackle an original issue, or put a unique spin an existing one. Our Biden Birther experience plays this out. Conservatives had long propagated their own internet meme, that President Barack Obama was somehow "different." First were rumors that he was a secret Muslim (and really, the fact that somehow being a Muslim is scary says more about the people spreading the myth than Obama), then a Black Nationalist, and finally reaching its zenith with the Birther movement. Led by Orly Taitz and Alan Keyes, the Birthers be-

**I CERTAINLY
DIDN'T EXPECT OUR
BREAKTHROUGH TO
COME ON FOX NEWS.**

Iowa's Cewebrities



Leslie Hall

At the top of the list is the famous Leslie Hall, rapper, sweater collector, artist, and international super-celebrity from Ames. You may have seen her at the Iowa Women's Music Festival, MTV, VH1, Tech TV, or like a million other things. If you're not familiar with her work you'll want to go ahead and Google "Gem Sweater."



Iowa's Funniest Guy

There are quite a few funny guys here in Iowa but no one makes the claim as much as YouTube's iowasfunniestguy. iowasfunniestguy is a character and celebrity impersonator confident in his ability to make you laugh. His audience isn't so sure, or rather, they're unsure

whether it's all a put-on.

Allmylifeforsale

Not all internet memes involve cats, laughing stocks, or personal injuries caught on tape. In the case of Iowa City's own Allmylifeforsale, it can be an artistic take on web technologies. In 2001, John Freyer sold nearly all of his possessions on eBay. The project gained international attention and turned into a book and, rumor has it, a movie option.



Ben Johnson

Some internet sensations are not self-made. Case in point is Ben Johnson, the University of Iowa student and Chairman of the Iowa Federation of College Republicans. His sincere video testimonials made the rounds a couple of years ago after viewers suspected the well-groomed Johnson might be graduating from College Republican to Log Cabin Republican.

Matt Butler

focused on the vice president, with his blue-collar, quintessentially "white" background of Scranton, Pennsylvania. We performed hours of research to make sure our idea had not already been attempted (thankfully, it hadn't), and launched a Facebook group. A few days later, we produced a mock-scare video (to be fair, Rezayazdi deserves most of the production credit), and from there persisted in our attempts to gain mainstream acceptance.

The success of Biden Birthers is testimonial to the persistence we maintained in pitching our "scandal." It was over a full month before we had our major breakthrough (appearing on *Politico*), and only two days after that we made cable news. Littered among our sent mail folders were failed pitches to *Talking Points Memo*, Andrew Sullivan, Colbert, and dozens of other pundits. Furthermore, we launched an AstroTurf campaign, hailing the creation of Biden Birthers on every related (and plenty of non-related, too) blog post we could find.

Our success, like most all meme creators', was fleeting. We received no compensation and no gratification besides the knowledge we had constructed a successful piece of satire. Ultimately, however, meme creators remain satisfied in the knowledge that they've contributed to that great laboratory of American culture: the hallowed halls and endless corridors of the internet. Nobody can ever claim to have fostered the greatest or most relevant meme Of All Time. They exist only in a nebulous web, forever ready to be joined by newcomers. **lv**

Andrew Swift is a recent graduate of The University of Iowa, with a bachelor of arts in history and political science. A voracious follower of both domestic politics and international relations, his (much more serious) blog can be found at: transitionalstates.foreignpolicyblogs.com. He can be reached at andrew.swift@littlevillagemag.com

lieve Barack Obama was born in Kenya, and is therefore not a U.S. citizen, and ineligible to serve as president.

Putting a more absurdist spin on the Birthers was not automatically easy. But the

joke was inherent in the Birthers own beliefs. What could be more absurd than claiming that the president (who had dealt with the questions of "Who Is He?") throughout his political career) was not a citizen? Logically, we

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Punk Rock Love

Exene Cervenka is a folk artist, in every sense of the word. Despite her punk roots in the legendary Los Angeles band X, her connection to traditional country, folk music and folk art runs even deeper.

“I’m really into primitive and folk art, and I have no formal training,” she says, explaining the unique visual style she developed. For instance, she designed the cover of X’s 1981 album *Wild Gift*, and has contributed to the group’s distinctive hand lettered liner notes over the years.

Cervenka didn’t become an exhibiting artist until 2004, when she began showing her work in established art galleries, but she has been making art for as long as she can remember.

“The first time I drew a picture that my dad said was really good—it was a banana—was when I was four,” she tells me. “That’s my first moment of being an artist. I think that’s when it all starts, when you’re young.”

Born in 1953, she moved from Missouri to California in 1976, right before the punk explosion reshaped the Los Angeles musical landscape. L.A. bands like The Germs, Fear and Black Flag emerged around this time, a scene that was documented in Penelope Spheeris’s *The Decline of Western Civilization*, which also featured X. After arriving in L.A., Cervenka began a relationship with John Doe, the group’s bassist, who brought her into the band as a singer and co-lyricist. (Doe is also a working actor whose credits include *Road*

House, *Boogie Nights*, and a slew of other guest appearances on TV and film.) Although they married in 1980 and then divorced in

Many of Cervenka’s songs have an “outsider art” vibe to them.

1985, the two have remained musical partners—working together in both X and their

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side project, the countrified Knitters, which also includes Blasters guitarist Dave Alvin.

Her iconoclastic fashion style, dark lyrics and lack of musical training made her a natural fit for the Do It Yourself punk scene. As a group, X made four classic albums between 1980 and 1983: *Los Angeles*, *Wild Gift*, *Under the Big Black Sun* and *More Fun in the New World*. The dissonant harmonies she created with John Doe gave X its unique sound—because only someone who wasn't a "real musician" could come up with something that sounds so wrong, it's right.

The experimental rock documentary *X: The Unheard Music* captures the band at their artistic peak, and it also showcases Cervenka's fascination with traditional folk and country music. In the film, you get a fly-on-the-wall view of Cervenka and Doe running through some country classics in their living room, where they sound less like Johnny and June Cash and more like, well,

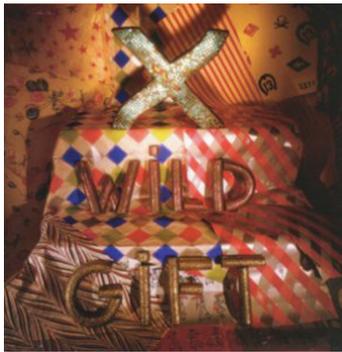
a more disturbing version of this country royalty couple. Cervenka tells me that she was drawn to this music because of its simplicity and beauty—as well as the timeless themes of love and loss. Also, the raw sound of classic country made sense for someone steeped in DIY culture.

"I totally taught myself to play guitar," she explains. "A while ago Dave Alvin showed me to play the chords, and I just make them up as I go when writing."

Many of Cervenka's songs have an "outsider art" vibe to them. Even though most of her original compositions adhere to a standard verse-chorus-verse structure, there's something off-kilter about the tunes she has written

for her three solo albums. In short, they sound nothing like what a Berklee College of Music or Guitar Institute of Technology graduate might come up with.

Her new album, *Somewhere Gone*, released last month on the Chicago-based Bloodshot, nicely fits with this indie label's country aesthetic. Unlike her first two solo albums—released nearly two decades ago—this album contains no overtly political songs, save for the title track. She tells me "Somewhere Gone" is "about hurricane Katrina and my friend who escaped the storm, but who later had to flee from other hurricane." In this recording, you



"Life is all about making connections with people and making art."

—Exene Cervenka

can hear a sense of melancholy mixed with anger—meeting at the intersection of the personal and political. Mostly, though, her recent songs are about relationships.

"Everything I've been writing lately are love songs," she tells me. "I grew up in the car listening to Ray Charles, Conway Twitty, Johnny Cash and others, and their songs were all about love." One song that still haunts her to this day is Tony Bennett's version of the bittersweet Johnny Mercer composition, "I Wanna Be Around (To Pick Up the Pieces)." Cervenka says, "There are love songs that are positive, and some that are not. That Tony Bennett is the perfect broken heart song."

As for the other view of love, Etta James'

"At Last" takes the cake. She tells me, "It's a great, positive love song of realized love. It's just beautiful." Cervenka says that she is in the middle of writing a new album, which will also be dominated by love songs—and she has also been keeping busy in other ways.

"I have an art show in Miami, where I'm also doing a performance," Cervenka says while running through a list of upcoming events. "I'm working on the music, and the art—the Knitters are playing this weekend—and I'm collaborating with other musicians." She adds, "I like to keep myself amused," something that a recent diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis hasn't stood in the way of.

"I'm a lucky girl," she tells me. "I got diagnosed late in life because my symptoms are not as severe as other unfortunate folks. At some point I'll lose some ability to do one thing or another, but for now I'm going strong, working with a lot of people on art projects, and my songs."

Cervenka explains that she recently moved back to

California, from Missouri, to be more in touch with her friends, and since then she has been really happy, healthy and enjoying life. "When I got sick I found out how wonderful people are, and I heard from people that I hadn't talked to in a long time. Life is all about making connections with people and making art."

For me, this last statement sums up Exene Cervenka as an artist: staying engaged and overcoming what life throws in your way, all while putting something new out in the world. **IV**

Kembrew McLeod salutes all those who are about to rock.

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Writing Reality

Sheil Najm has lived in Baghdad nearly his whole life, and remembers vividly its beauty: the wide avenues where you could walk and walk, the bars and cinemas that dotted them. Now, he says, his city is ruined. There is only one theater in the entire city, and because of the religious views of the politicians, very few bars. He wants to see Baghdad restored to its former beauty and his country's cultural life rebuilt, a legacy he cares deeply about in part because of his five children.

The editor of a literary journal, he has his finger on the pulse of both the Iraqi and the international literary scene. He and other Iraqi writers have more freedom

**Books deepen
our powers of
empathy...
and broaden
the world.**

—Christopher Merrill

now than they did under Saddam Hussein, but not much. The three subjects off-limits under Saddam were politics, sex and religion; so writers—those who stayed in Iraq during his rule—often expressed themselves obliquely, if at all. Now, they can express a certain range of political opinions, although it is still dangerous. But because of the chokehold that traditionalist views have on Iraqi life, he says, sex and religion are still taboo.

So it was with a certain weight that Najm took the microphone on Friday, October 23 to ask four of his colleagues if they believe writing can influence reality. The four were participating in one of the International Writing Program's weekly panels held at the Iowa City Public Library, this one addressing the question "Why I Write."

A creation of Paul Engle, the founder of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and his wife,



Nieh Engle, a native of China, the International Writing Program (IWP) brings rising stars in writing from all over the world to Iowa City each fall for a three-month residency. At its best, Christopher Merrill, IWP's director says, the writers gain a better understanding of what it means to be a writer, uncovering new elements of "the mystery and mechanics of the creative process."

Dressed in his characteristic fisherman's many-pocketed vest, Merrill tells me over

a cup of coffee that the program's goals can be summed up in two words of E.M. Forster: "Only connect." Though writing, he acknowledges, is a largely solitary endeavor, when these writers come together—this year 36 writers from 30 countries—their interactions give them a "larger sense of literary possibility," and the opportunity to "think deeply together about their common endeavor." And as they discuss their commonalities, they also discover the rich social, political and cultural points of departure in their lives and the "different ways to inhabit literary life."

Andreas Weber, an Austrian fiction writer, novelist and filmmaker, stressed this. Talking with his colleagues, he told me, has opened his eyes to his relatively privileged life.

Austria provides grants and other forms of state support for writers, while many of his colleagues not only work full-time professional jobs to support themselves but some also face censorship and very real danger.

Min Htet Maung from Burma is one of them. He and Weber had both spoken at the panel where Najm asked his question.

He was funny, his presentation self-deprecating as he spoke of his early literary life: "In 1983, at a time when I was concentrating only on poetry, ignoring other matters and failing the matriculation exam twice, a poem of mine was first published in a popular magazine. I was very happy. I think I would not have been that happy even if I passed my matriculation exam with flying colors."

But as Maung matured as a poet and as the political situation in Burma became more grave, his poetry became more concerned with justice, with suffering, with the daily struggles of the Burmese people. His job in journalism, he joked, was "very dangerous but not well-paid—much like writing poetry!" He continued writing, however, because he trusts in truth and in poetry. He writes about environmental degradation and he writes for children because, he says, "it is very important for children to know justice from injustice."

Some of the other writers also have such noble goals in mind. Osman Conteh spoke of

his novel, *Unanswered Cries*, written in just three weeks. In the opening of his pages, his heroine, a girl who lives in the city with her father, is spending time in her native village with her mother, who wants her to submit to genital mutilation, which is a rite of passage for girls in Sierra Leone. He said that he used the characters to “explore the beliefs behind the passion for this sensitive tradition,” and hoped, through his work, to begin to change traditional attitudes about it.

But of course they write for more personal reasons as well. In answer to Najm’s question, Weber joked that only Dan Brown, with his 40 million readers, could hope to influence reality.

“I write professionally,” he said, “because I’m completely spoiled for proper jobs.”

But it was more than that, too. In his late twenties, as Weber was trying to figure out what to do with his life, two of his best friends died under tragic circumstances, and he felt a new sense of urgency, a need to use the time he had. So he plunged into his passion and began writing. The novel he plans to finish in Iowa City, *Veitel’s Dream*, is an intoxicating murder mystery, concerned more with untangling the relationships between fathers and sons and with uncovering the secret lives of our parents than with solving the case.

Like most of the writers, he has found that he can be very productive here, in this small community where he is free from distractions and obligations, and also surrounded by writers and artists who inspire him. He goes for long walks and writes every day, he told me. Christopher Merrill affirmed this, saying that Iowa City is a place where many of the writers have important aesthetic breakthroughs. And, he added, Iowa creeps into the literature of writers who have visited here. Internationally, people have a racier idea of Iowa City than the

average American. Because of a famous contemporary Bengali novel, he told me, a friend of his in Calcutta believes that attractive Iowa couples spend their winters sipping wine in cozy farmhouses.

And the program often gives rise to fruitful artistic and cultural collaborations. Last spring, for example, two poets, one from Macedonia and one from Iran collaborated to write a play. During his time in America, Najm says, he has had the chance to speak with many writers and intellectuals who share his vision, who believe that it is the time for culture to do its part. As a result of some of these meetings, he is now

Weber joked that only Dan Brown, with his 40 million readers, could hope to influence reality.

planning a conference that will bring together Iraqi and American writers to discuss these issues.

Participants also have the opportunity to collaborate with American writers in a translation workshop. For these writers, too (many of them participants in the Writers’ Workshop), Merrill says the interaction with international writers can open their eyes to a larger understanding of what it means to be a writer. Denis Johnson, who worked for the IWP both as an undergraduate and while in the Workshop, has spoken to him about its importance in his understanding of his profession.

Merrill says the writers, as voices for their cultures, give us glimpses into other lands and the opportunity, for some, to broaden our understanding of the world. In the International Literature class, guest-taught by IWP participants, students have to listen hard to understand not only strange accents but strange experiences, far from their own experience. This relation they must draw to the other helps them

to articulate who they are. Even Christopher Merrill, after many years of working with writers from across the globe, is constantly surprised, engaged in a perpetual “discovery of how little I know,” alerted to the limits of his own knowledge of the world.

David Foster Wallace once wrote that “a big part of the purpose of serious fiction is to give the reader...imaginative access to other selves.” And when I asked Merrill about his reaction to Najm’s question—what influence can literature have on reality?—he said that books subtly “deepen our powers of empathy...and broaden the world.”

Najm echoed Merrill’s thought when I asked him to respond to his own question. Unlike leaders in a revolution, he said, literature creates slow change, through the mind.

Many Iraqis have not had access to educational opportunities, he told me, and the uneducated are easily influenced by extremist ideas. The war against terrorism, is therefore, a war of ideas. He wants to see “armies of intellectuals” descend upon his country, “troops of writers” fighting destructive extremist ideas, deconstructing them and offering alternatives.

Or as he wrote in his essay, “The Word and the Bullet,” “The relationship between the word and the bullet is complicated and tense, or rather, one of rivalry. Both of them compete for sovereignty over man’s life...Let the word be first as long as there is a listener on the other side...it is certainly criminal to let the bullet decide instead of the word, again and again.” **IV**

Sharon Benzoni is the executive director of the Council for International Visitors to Iowa City and the Iowa City Foreign Relations Council. She also hosts KRUI interview show “At the Moment,” atthemoment-krui.blogspot.com.



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>> BOTTLES FROM PAGE 7

has a serious case of Oregon envy. Our record stores, coffee shops, bike culture, ped-friendly streets, and hipster-chic youngins all scream Portland. Both states also have comparable populations. Not an intellectual argument, but just a thought: Duplicating the state's law, as we did in the seventies, might help ease our envy.)

Lastly, redemption centers need a funding boost if they hope to survive. When the original bottle bill passed in 1978, it forced drink distributors to pay redemption centers or grocers one penny for every container they handle. In 31 years, that rate hasn't changed. Consider inflation, wage increases, cost of living, real-estate costs; a penny per can is almost an insult. If Iowa legislators succeed in passing expansion, they should devote the following legislative session to increasing this handling fee. We'll need two separate stones to kill these birds. As Mick Barry, vice president of Mid America Recycling, told me, "Christmas-treeing" an expansion bill with a handling fee amendment would amount to a political "death wish." An omnibus bill would infuriate and mobilize the grocer and drink distributor lobbies that much more.

That all sounds like a lot of work, I know. Disposable drink containers, after all, comprise no more than five percent of Iowa's waste stream. In an ideal world, we wouldn't need a bottle bill. We would rely on one of two alternatives. The first: an overarching product stewardship law, something akin to Germany's "Green Dot" system. Such a law would target all packaging, not just drink containers. Forcing manufacturers to pay for the wasting and recycling of their products—the "polluter pays principle," as environmentalists call it—

gives them incentive to make their products as recyclable as possible. The second: Iowans could just, you know, recycle. On their own. Without the promise of a nickel. And hope for a comparable return rate for drink containers.

Both those options are non-starters, politically and socially. I don't see a large-scale product stewardship law—something akin to California's—passing in our legislature, espe-

The Container Recycling Institute estimates that, in Iowa, over half of all deposit-less plastic bottles hold water.

cially given the total lack of progress for bottle bill expansion. Socially, people are people. Money makes us do things we wouldn't otherwise do. Bribery, forgery, murder. It can also make us recycle a bottle of Sprite Remix. That we need the dangling nickel remains a sad but true reality. So long as that doesn't change, and so long as comprehensive product stewardship remains unfeasible, expanding Iowa's bottle bill stands as our best bet for a progressive piece of environmental policy.

Most polls show Iowans support this effort. Legislators know this, but I don't think they quite *feel* it. Surveys and percentages can't match the power of phone calls from real people. Remember that when the next legislative session begins on January 11, 2010. **IV**

Soheil Rezayazdi is a masters student in journalism and mass communication at The University of Iowa. This article is one of many written for his thesis on bottle bill expansion. You may reach him, if you are so bold, at soheil.rezayazdi@littlevillagemag.com.

>> FOOTBALL! FROM PAGE 9

them while proudly wearing our colors. These battles are ancient, intractable and far bigger and more important than any one player or coach or fan.

Battles endlessly plotted for, planned for, schemed for and orchestrated by the calculating generals who prowl the sidelines and fight to take territory away from their enemies—not just one battle at a time but sometimes one yard, one foot, one *inch* at a time.

These battles are our shared history, and—as history is written by the victors—every week we must face off again to fight for the privilege to write it.

Though we may live in a world filled with secular Jews, lapsed Catholics and "twice a year at the holidays" Lutherans, there is no such lack of devotion for us.

The members of our congregation *always* attends service. We are a devout lot.

We evoke the names and feats of legends and heroes past in hushed, reverent tones and talk of Immaculate Receptions, Hail Mary passes, Davids slaying Goliaths.

We gather, we form minions, we share communion of chips and beer and we pray.

We evoke the names and feats of legends and heroes past in hushed, reverent tones and talk of Immaculate Receptions, Hail Mary passes, Davids slaying Goliaths.

When we go to the game our services also have accompanists: horns and drums and music of the primal sort first performed on hollow logs and ram's horns that you can *feel* pulsing through your very bones along with the stomps and claps and cheers thousands of your closet friends—strangers all—who are nonetheless tied together by their shared faith that *this year* will be the year.

And with this music in the background we cry out to the heavens and speak in tongues as the spirit overtakes us and we wait for God's Will to Be Done as the kicker tries for a 54-yard field goal in the driving, blinding snow to win the game in overtime.

This is when mountains skip like rams, hills like young sheep, and the defensive line is pushed backwards like the river Jordan and our team crosses the goal line and leads us, together, into the Promised Land.

These are *our* miracles.

And we get to witness them every week.

But our faith has many houses of worship besides the stadium: the corner bar, on the radio at work, at home with your friends in your living room—wherever it is you gather in Your Team's name Your Team is there among you.

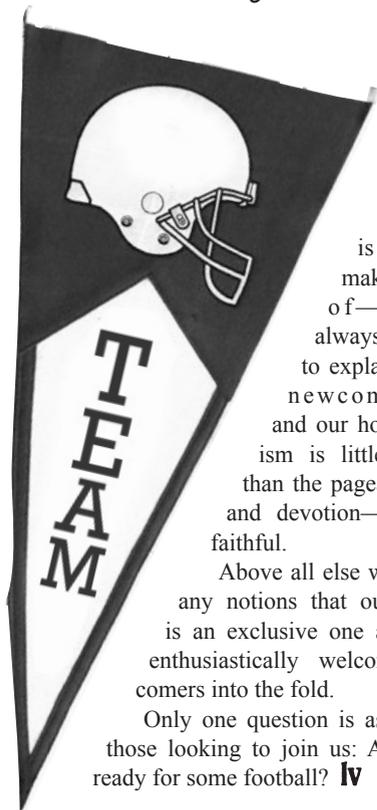
In the name of the Offense and the Defense and the Special Teams, Amen.

These are our beliefs and our devotion to them is strong.

Our congregation has adherents all over the globe and from all walks of life who all have their own unique stories about their journey to our faith.

It may, to an outsider, seem a rather complicated form of worship attended to by a clammy lot of borderline hooligans and, ultimately, it is.

These are our miracles.
And we get to witness
them every week.



But it is easy to make sense of—we're always happy to explain it to newcomers—and our hooliganism is little more than the pageantry—and devotion—of the faithful.

Above all else we shun any notions that our faith is an exclusive one and we enthusiastically welcome all comers into the fold.

Only one question is asked of those looking to join us: Are you ready for some football? **Iv**

Yale Cohn was born and raised in Chicago and is a lifelong Bears fan who enjoys watching football at The Vine because of its many TVs, cold beer, hot wings and attractive waitresses—though not always necessarily in that order. This is when mountains skip like rams, hills like young sheep, and the defensive line is pushed backwards like the river Jordan and our team crosses the goal line and leads us, together, into the Promised Land.

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My eight-year-old daughter demonstrated her good critical genes when she gave me her verdict on the movie *Where the Wild Things Are*: “They added too much.” In fact, I came across several budding critics in the theater while I endured this much-hyped movie by Spike Jonze. In the jarring scenes prior to the arrival of the monsters, one kid blurted out, “When are we ever going to see the monsters?” After the monsters did finally arrive and proved to be in serious need of anti-depressants, a girl in a ballerina costume

The movie is at its best when the camera is pressed up against the fur and skin and toes of its characters.

shrewdly wondered aloud, “Why are they all so sad all the time?” About halfway through, a tiny Ebert had the courage to yell out the essential question, “Can we go home yet?”

All of 10 sentences long, *Where the Wild Things Are*, which Maurice Sendak wrote and illustrated in 1963, is a story that opens wide vistas in the imagination. An immediately lovable Max flies down the stairs in his wolf suit, with a naughty grin of high spirits, as he attempts to terrorize his dog. His mother calls him “wild thing,” and Max threatens to eat her. So without supper he’s sent to his room, where an ocean promptly tumbles by; and Max sails off “through night and day, and in and out of weeks, and almost over a year, to where the wild things are.” He tames the beasts, frolics with them in a “wild rumpus,” grows lonely, and sails back home to find that his mother has set out his dinner. And it’s still hot.

Why is Max making mischief? Is his mother overreacting by sending him to his room without supper? Who are the wild things anyway? These questions perplexed me neither as child nor adult. Mischief, anger, wildness, beauty, loneliness: These basic realities were all just there, as much a part of Sendak’s world as they are part of ours. Now Spike Jonze and his screenplay collaborator, the vastly overrated Dave Eggers, have raised these reductive questions and given them dull answers.

Max acts out because he’s in need of attention, his sister is enduring puberty, and their single mother has troubles at work and in her love life. Therefore, Max indulges in a fantasy where there are big monsters in need of attention, enduring puberty, and having trouble at work and in their love lives. In fact, Jonze’s



WHERE THE WILD THINGS WENT

Where the Wild Things Are is a totalitarian fantasy, for Max promises to eliminate sadness from the world and even starts a war in order to distract the depressed beasts from their problems. The main wild thing, oddly given the name Carol, is voiced by James Gandolfini; and fans of *The Sopranos* will be surprised to discover that Carol makes Tony seem like a relatively well-adjusted guy.

Jonze’s monsters do, I admit, have the right weight and feel. In fact, the movie has a good bodily sense and is at its best when the camera

About halfway through, a tiny Ebert had the courage to yell out the essential question, “Can we go home yet?”

is pressed up against the fur and skin and toes of its characters. But even the look of the movie leaves much to be desired. Sendak’s expansive, calm illustrations seem to be colored by an inner light—they are at once vivid and crepuscular. Jonze’s monsters, on the other hand, are poorly lit. Too much of the movie takes place in darkness, and when the sun shines, it is either sallow or blinding.

Why does this movie exist? Are we soon going to have to witness *Good Night Moon IV: The Saga Continues*? Is Eggers working

on an epic trilogy of one of Basho’s haiku? Even if we grant the stretching of 10 musical sentences into 101 minutes of melodrama, to take on a story of such imaginative purity as *Where the Wild Things Are* should at least require some imagination. I think of the great movies by Albert Lamorisse, *The Red Balloon* and *White Mane*, which, like Sendak’s book, grapple with grief and suffering but do so in a way that is at once calm and deep.

There is nothing inappropriate (at least in the traditional sense) about the movie *Where the Wild Things Are*—no foul language or nudity, hardly any blood. Yet the movie is deeply inappropriate for children. We often ignore the

fact that the imagination needs nourishment. This movie offers only pretentious gruel. No, Jonze’s *Where the Wild Things Are* is not for children, unless they are overwrought, disaffected teens. **IV**

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.

Strange Days

November is always a strange month for live music in Iowa City, what with Thanksgiving weekend being a dead loss with respect to available paying patrons. But there are some decent things coming up, from my particularly biased, idiosyncratic point of view, starting with Dennis McMurrin at the Yacht Club November 7th. I have seen Dennis play for going on 30 years now, and he is a true original and an Iowa music treasure.



I know he's at the Yacht Club every month, but I don't believe we've hyped it up in LV before. Dennis can play the hell out of a guitar, and deserves to be in the Shredding Hall of Fame, but his virtuosity is the least of what he

Dennis can play the hell out of a guitar, and deserves to be in the Shredding Hall of Fame.

does. His shows are unique, sweaty, funky, and funny. At the Yacht Club he sets up right in the middle of the damn room, because the band wants to be right in the middle of the scrum.

A unique event at the Mill comes a few days earlier on November 3rd: The Naked Lunch 50th Birthday Party with Lwa, Datagun, Supersonic Piss, Shitty Wizard, Killer Apps. If you've never seen Lwa, they generate a deafening, oceanic drone based around a mis-used Beltone Hearing Tester. Datagun is Iowa City's answer to New Order, with a heaping side of Suicide (and includes Craig Eley, who sometimes writes for LV). Supersonic Piss are the standard bearers of offensive, nasty and disturbing punk rock. Who better to celebrate Burrough's landmark paean to drug abuse, sexual deviance and decadance?

That same week brings Simon Joyner, who is the elder statesman of the Omaha Music scene. Sesquicoastal (i.e. Iowa City & San Francisco) duo The Lonelyhearts play their sad songs with Sad Iron at the Mill November 27th, and Pieta Brown is playing three consecutive Thursdays (5th, 12th, 19th), a high-concept residency featuring the cream of local folk & roots musicians.

The Picador in November might be featuring some completely awesome shows, but I don't recognize any of the bands. The show to look forward to isn't until December 7th when the mighty and amazing Melt Banana baffle and pummel you, along with the above-mentions Lwa and Supersonic Piss. The Industry's online schedule is pretty sketchy right now, but expect things to improve in the coming months now that legendary Gabes/Picador booker Doug Roberson is helping out.

And if you're feeling adventurous, check www.myspace.com/whitelightningic for shows at The White Lightning Warehouse. In the grand tradition of Theta Beta Potato House, The Warehouse is a non-commercial venue for underground and experimental music, housed in what looks like a former truck repair shop around the corner from Public Access TV. The only music venue in Iowa City History with a trampoline! **IV**

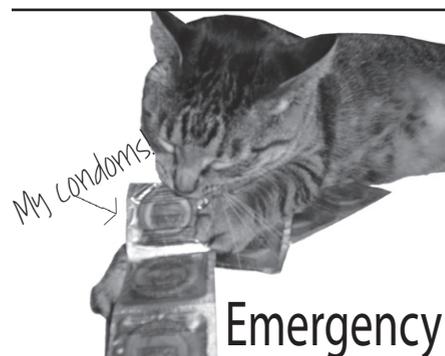
Kent Williams is an optimist who loves life, sport, and hates lies. He is Little Village's arts editor.

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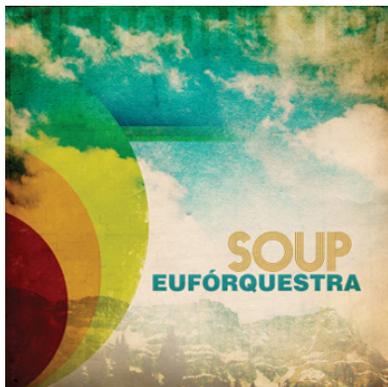
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Euforquestra

Soup

Self-released

www.euforquestra.com

Two things about Euforquestra: They are the most technically accomplished band to come out of Iowa City, and you never know what they're going to do next. With *Soup* they go so many different places musically, it's like the musical tour that Donald Duck takes in the movie *The Three Caballeros*. The Reggae of "Cause A Reaction," is followed by Afro-Cuban funk in "Melody Truck," which is followed in turn by the Highlife stylings of "Soup." They come back to a kind of Reggae with "The Events of December 11" but with a touch of Steely Dan thrown in for good measure.

I'm certain "December 11" is unique among Reggae songs in being about an Iowa ice storm, which points up what my main reservation about this album: When these guys play, they transcend race and culture. I think they could tour Ghana and Nigeria and rock crowds like they were born there. But when they sing, man are they white! I'm not saying they're bad—they're fine, and at least they don't try to sound Jamaican. But the vocals are my least favorite aspect of this album. The singing works the best on "Ochosi" when they return to the call and response Yoruba chants of their last album, "Explorations in Afrobeat." They sing that song in a manner both relaxed and reverent, and when they jam out in the last half of the track, they cook white hot.

Things only get better on "Backbone," where they really find the sweet spot. The groove comes from reggae, but the horns are blowing Afro-Cuban bush horn riffs, and the saxophone solo manages to dip and dive like bebop and still stay in the pocket. "Change Me" is another reggae track, and again I'm not feeling the vocals. But the center section is

brilliant, combining tasty solos, through-composed horn parts, and dub echoes. The final track, "Cause A Dub," is a dub version of the opening track and shows that the band's love of Roots Reggae goes beyond mere tourism. And that's what makes Euforquestra special, and this album—mostly—brilliant. They can play so well, and play so well together, that they can incorporate musical influences from all over and make them into something new, original and authentically their own.

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



The Western Front

The Balkanization of Epistemology

Self-released

www.myspace.com/thewesternfront

The Western Front has always had a lot going on: a little country swing, midi tics, synth vamps and slacker guitar riffs. The Iowa City indie-pop trio may have found the balance between all their disparate sounds on the new EP *The Balkanization of Epistemology*.

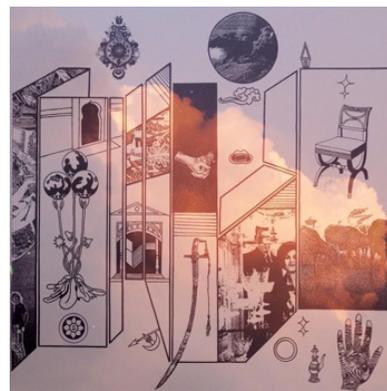
The four-song EP is divided, down the middle, into two mini-suites. The first two cuts (the title track and "What Kind of Man Has Tears in His Beard") are strung together by an excerpt from an interview with social theorist Terrence McKenna—one of whom's theories is the namesake for this EP. The two tracks are also tight and jittery.

The opening suite rides waves of stuttering synths and programmed drums like embryonic TV on the Radio or a lo(w(er)-fi version of mid-nineties Beck. Both also nod to the academic and social roots of the collection's title. "Tears in His Beard" muses on the inner struggle between idiotic bliss and a higher plain with a mantra "I am a Buddha and fool."

The second movement (comprised of "Rabbit Dog" and "Greenville") opens up the windows. Unlike the bookish introspec-

tion of the first half, both "Rabbit Dog" and "Greenville" are filled with wanderlust. Both cuts also stretch past the four-minute mark. Each taking diversions from determined rock build towards for electronic blurps or keyboard fills.

The Western Front are also expanding spatially, laying on blankets in various locales (Buffalo, Tennessee, North and South Carolina) in "Rabbit Dog" to the cattle call chorus of "Greenville" stating that "it's a wide, wide world." The aforementioned chorus on "Greenville" is not only a call to arms for travelers, it's also one of the most jubilant, anthemic slices of music to emanate from Iowa City this year.



Wet Hair

Glass Fountain

Not Not Fun

www.myspace.com/wethairgold-sounds

Wet Hair's *Glass Fountain* comes on the heels of their April release, *Dream*. It's a bit darker, the autumn or winter counterpart to the more dub-infused, summer-noise of *Dream*. But with their blend of noise and kraut rock with a dose of Jamaican groove, even the deepest, droning cuts from the album feel lighter for having a half-speed dollop of Reggae Rhythm.

It opens with the wind-blown stutter of "Mesmerized." The song is built around a steady, tribal cymbal beat, pulpit-tinged synth waves, and Shawn Reed's distorted, baritone drone. There's something claustrophobic about the follow-up "Crucifix in the Waves." It's a percolating, swirling song that muses on the inevitability of either the end of happiness or of life all together. I'm not sure, as Reed's caterwauling can be harder to comprehend than Eddie Vedder's mumbling croon.

Already a live staple for the group, "Cold City" feels like the emotional and spiritual center for *Glass Fountain*. It's also one of the denser cuts on the album. There's some-

thing meditative about the repetition of simple synth lines and the circular percussion of Ryan Garbes' kit work, but the little fills from Casio keyboards or tweaked-out distortion pedals feel so precise and intentioned. Reed's vocal performance—bellowing and straining past his normal reservation—is also his most intense and evocative. Garbes ratchets up the immediacy when he breaks off his leash for some bombastic fills over the last two minutes of "Cold City."

Album closer "Stepping Razor (to Heaven's Door)" offers one of Wet Hair's most satisfying musical moments. As the song bobs and weaves towards its climax, it suddenly explodes in a fury of Flash Gordon whizzes and bangs—as though George Lucas' sound effects machine lost its mind, before dropping back to the tinny drum machine and electronic hiss.

John Schlotfeld finds these pocket bios surprisingly difficult to write.



Liberty Leg

Ginger Lee

Wrecked-em Records

www.myspace.com/libertyleg

Count Liberty Leg as another Iowa City band falling into the "heard of, but not heard"

category. Their new album, *Ginger Lee*, finally gives me an excuse. These 11 tracks are a solid, sometimes damn fine trek through a place designed for foot stompin'—I just wish I was hearing them live.

Bands like Liberty Leg are made for the stage, the Mills of the Midwest that frequently house this sound: rootsy and rocking and familiar all at once, with some lyrical misery and backup vocals thrown in for good measure. Guitarist Craig Ziegenhorn anchors the songs with the uptempo melodies, and drummer Josh Carrollhach keeps everything flowing (plus a bit of cowbell). Vocalist Ethan Richeson defines the band's slice of style—there's an inherently goofy quality to Richeson's voice, like Tom Waits if he was constantly yawning, that makes even the most serious song sound (perhaps unintentionally) fun.

Take "This Dude has Got No Mercy": Richeson repeatedly declares that his subject "gonna kill yourself," yet it's danceable all the same. Some are a deliberately light ("1776"), but only "Shaking" avoids being amusing before affecting. Perhaps William Elliot Whitmore's prominence declared the Iowa style to be one weighed with dark and dusty tales of sorrow, though I'm not sure it works for Richeson.

Fortunately, Liberty Leg's musicianship (and help from a fair number of IC's musical elite, including David Zollo and Olivia Rose Muzzy) keeps *Ginger Lee* engaging and, most important of all, practically begs its listener to seek out a live show and watch how it all works in real time. The beauty of local music is that they're always, hopefully, oh so close.

Paul Sorenson is Little Village's features editor, host of Little Village Live from 5 to 6pm Wednesdays on KRUI, and has anywhere from 2-4 other jobs depending on the day. If you'd like to let this exhausted boy cry on your shoulder, email him at paul@littlevillagemag.com.

PHYSICAL CHALLENGE

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Wednesday November 4
Casey Donahew

Thursday November 5 ALL AGES 6PM
Paper Route Backdrop Pacific Proving Ground

Thursday November 5
Pelican Black Cobra Struck By Lightning

Friday November 6 ALL AGES 5PM
White Lie Syndicate
Kidnap the Sun Labyrinth Running With Scissors

Friday November 6
The Collective Experience Tour
with East 18 Drift Effect Cutting Room Floor

Saturday November 7
Valient Thorr The Architects

Monday November 9
Red Knife Lottery Native Lost Apparitions

Tuesday November 10 ALL AGES 6PM
Between the Buried and Me
Veil of Maya Animals As Leaders

Friday November 13
Chicago Rocks Tour
with Heavy the Fall Wicked Soul Rebels Without Applause
Kaos Katalyst

Saturday November 14
Dark Mirror Freak Label Identity Crisis Cur

Sunday November 15 ALL AGES 6PM
Quietdrive The Higher Cory Lamb Final Alibi

Wednesday November 18 ALL AGES 6PM
Person L John Nolan Brian Bonz Chrash

Wednesday November 25
Cage

Thursday December 3
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ART/EXHIBITS

AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City
www.akardesign.com

Michael Hunt and Naomi Dalglis & Warren Mackenzie, through Nov. 12 • 30x5 Show, opens Nov. 13

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art

410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids
www.crma.org

Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, Guided tours of Grant Wood's home and studio, Saturdays & Sundays, hourly 12-4pm
 Creative Connections-Artists in Action with Naser Shahriar, Nov. 7 • Celebrate the Unexpected-Sight & Sound 2009, Nov. 14, 6:30pm • Norman Rockwell: Fact & Fiction, ongoing • Malvina Hoffman, ongoing • Mauricio Lasansky, ongoing • Art in Roman Life, ongoing • Grant Wood: In Focus, ongoing

The Chait Galleries Downtown

218 E Washington St., Iowa City
www.thegalleriesdowntown.com

Syed Ahman: Flowing Rivers of Glass, through Nov. 20

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids
www.legionarts.org
 Translations, ongoing

Faulconer Gallery/Bucksbaum Center for the Arts

Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell
www.grinnell.edu/fulconergallery
 Molecules that Matter, ongoing

Glassando

Old Capitol Mall

Cori Pitcher: New Colorful Monster Painting through Nov. 14

Herbert Hoover Presidential Museum

West Branch

www.nps.gov/heho
 Iowa A to Z, ongoing

Hudson River Gallery

538 South Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.hudsonrivergallery.com

Joseph Patrick, through Nov. 7 • Deborah Zisko and Michael Kienzle, opens Nov. 13

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City
www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Handmade for the Holidays, opens Nov. 13

Johnson County Historical Society

310 5th St., Coralville
www.jchsiowa.org

Me, Myself, and Hayden, ongoing • Submerged, ongoing

Modela

323 E. Market St., Iowa City

Jim Butkus: From Minnesota to France, through Nov. 8

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

The Museum Goes to the Fair, ongoing • History of ACT, ongoing

University Museum of Art

www.uiowa.edu/uima
 Check website for locations
UIMA@IMU, ongoing

MUSIC

Agave Bar & Grill

2781 Oakdale Blvd, Coralville
www.tequilabarandgrill.com

Scott Cochran & Flannel, Nov. 6, 8:30pm • Drag Show, Nov. 7, 9:30pm

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids
www.legionarts.org

BeauSoliel and Michael Doucet with Tim Eriksen, Nov. 6, 8pm • Enter the Haggis, Nov. 8, 7pm • Buille, Nov. 14, 8pm • Keri Noble, Nov. 16, 7pm • Vagabond Opera, Nov. 18, 8pm • Ari Hest, Nov. 21, 8pm • Meg Hutchinson, Antje Duvekot, Anne Heaton, Natalia Zukerman, Nov. 27, 8pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org

Dáithí Sproule And Laura MacKenzie, Nov. 13, 8pm • Generations Of Jazz, Nov. 17, 7pm • An Intimate Christmas With Lorie Line, Nov. 23, 7:30pm

Gus' Food and Spirits

2421 Coral Court, Coralville

Mcphisto, Nov. 7 9pm • Holiday Road, Nov. 14, 9pm

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu
 Pentacrest, Iowa City

Herb Alpert and Lani Hall, Nov. 13, 7:30pm • Parker Quartet, Nov. 17, 7:30pm

The Hawkeye Hideaway

310 E Prentiss St, Iowa City

Unknown Component, Nov. 13, 10pm

The Industry

211 Iowa Ave., Iowa City
www.theindustryic.com

All shows at 8pm unless noted

Loom, Nov. 2 • Miracles of God, Nov. 14 • Minus Six, Nov. 20

Java House

211 1/2 E. Washington St, Iowa City
www.thejavahouse.com

Java Blend: Big Blue Sky, Nov. 6, 2pm

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

Naked Lunch at 50 with Lwa, Datagun, Supersonic Piss, Shitty Wizard & Killer Apps, Nov. 3 • Pieta Brown & Friends, Nov. 5, 8pm • Simon Joyner with members of Bright Eyes, Lambchop, and Capgun Coup., Nov. 6 • Uniphonics & Filling Space, Nov. 7 • Grums, Molly Ringwald, The Bloodsugars, Nov. 10 • Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Nov. 11, 7pm • Pieta Brown and Friends, Nov. 12, 8pm • Chooglin', Illinois John Fever & Porchbuilder, Nov. 13 • Daytrotter Presents: Ezra Furman & The Harpoons, Nov. 14 • University of Iowa Jazz Performance, Nov. 17, 8pm • Pieta Brown and Friends, Nov. 19, 8pm • The Pines, Nov. 20 • Haley Bonar, Sin Ropas and The Vagabonds, Nov. 21 • Sad Iron & The Lonelyhearts with Skye Carrasco & Alexis Stevens, Nov. 27 • The Beaker Brothers, Nov. 28

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

Piano Sunday, Nov. 1, 1:30pm

Orchestra Iowa

www.orchestraiowa.org
 Check website for locations

Neocons, Nov. 8-15

The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.thepicador.com

All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Innerpartysystem, Nov. 1, 6pm • Casey Donahew, Nov. 4 • Hed PE & Failure of Progress, Nov. 4, 6pm • Paper Route, BackDrop, Pacific Proving Ground, Nov. 5, 6pm • Pelican, Black Cobra & Struck By Lightning, Nov. 5, 10pm • The Collective Experience Tour, East 18, Drift Effect & Cutting Room Floor, Nov. 6, 10pm • White Lie Syndicate, Kidnap The Sun, Labyrinth, Running With Scissors, Nov. 6, 5pm • Valient Thor & The Architects, Nov. 7 • Red Knife Lottery, Native, Lost Apparitions, Nov. 9 • Between the Buried And Me, Veil of Maya • Animals As Leaders, Nov. 10, 6pm • Unknown Component, Nov. 11 • Chicago Rocks Tour, Heavy the Fall, Wicked Soul, Rebels Without Applause &



Scene from the original *Reefer Madness* film.

Reefer Madness

E.C. Mabie Theatre

Nov. 13-21

www.uiowa.edu/~theatre

It's odd that the off-beat musical adaptation has seen such a comeback recently (see *Spamalot*, *Grey Gardens*, etc.), but fine by us—and finer still that The University of Iowa brings one of the genre's, um, high points to the stage this month: *Reefer Madness*.

Written by Dan Studney (music) and Kevin Murphy (lyrics), veterans of the sometimes beloved "Weird Science" TV show (remember that one? So might we), the musical takes its cues from the 1936 cult film that links "marahuana" use with all sorts of insanity: tragic car accidents, rape, murder—everything that happens when you (yes you, dear reader!) try weed for the first time. Which is why Iowa City averages a dozen homicides a day...

The musical version doesn't have to try too hard to make the original film's hyperbole funny—the effort goes into the songs, which may not be *Les Miserables* caliber, but as comedy they get the job done.

Directed by Brandon Bruce, it premieres on November 13th at the UI Theatre Building's E.C. Mabie Theatre and runs until the 21st. Tickets are \$20 for non-students, \$5 for students, \$15 for Seniors, and \$10 for those ever-vulnerable youth.

Let us hope that *Reefer Madness* can save this town before it goes up in smoke. (Okay, that was lame, but better than its "Soilent Green" pun alternative).

Kaos Katalyst, Nov. 13 • Dark Mirror, Freak Label, Identity Crisis & Cur, Nov. 14 • Quietdrive, The Higher, Cory Lamb & Final Alibi, Nov. 15, 6pm • Person L, John Nolan, Brian Bonz & Chrash, Nov. 18, 6pm • CAGE, Nov. 25

Public Space One

115 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

Naked Lunch at 50, Nov. 2 • Mount Eerie, No Kids, Tara Jane O'Neill, Nov. 9 • PS1 Benefit with Pacific Proving Ground, Acoustic Guillotine, and Hott, Nov. 13 • Real Estate, Common Loon, Christopher the Conquered, Nov. 14 • Dr. Manhattan, Elsinore, The Happy Chromosomes, Nov. 19, 7pm

Scope Productions

scope.uiowa.edu

Check website for locations

Third Eye Blind, Nov. 2, 7:30pm

University of Iowa Music Dept

www.uiowa.edu/~music

See website for locations

Percussion Fall Concert, Nov. 1, 3pm • Electronic Music Studio, Nov. 1, 7:30pm • Jacqueline Wilson, Nov. 4, 7:30pm • Blaine Cunningham, Nov. 5, 7:30pm • Kantorei, Nov. 6, 7:30pm • Band Extravaganza, Nov. 8, 7:30pm • Scott Conklin, Tami Lee Hughes & Ellen Bottorf, Nov. 9, 7:30pm • Iowa Brass Quintet, Nov. 12, 7:30pm • Kevin Judge, Nov. 13, 8pm • Natalie Ramlow, Nov. 14, 8pm • Jennifer Cunningham, Nov. 14, 7pm • Volkan Orhon, Nov. 14, 8pm • Jack Quartet, Nov. 15, 7:30pm • Chamber Orchestra, Nov. 15, 7:30pm • Johnson County Landmark and Jazz Repertory Ensemble, Nov. 16, 8pm • Trumpet Studio Recital, Nov. 17, 7:30pm • Symphony Band Ensemble, Nov. 18, 7:30pm • Paul Barnes, Nov. 20, 7:30pm

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.uptownbills.org

UI School of Music Therapy fundraiser, Nov. 7, 7pm • Blitz, Nov. 14, 7pm

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.uscellularcenter.com

Boston Brass, Nov. 15, 7:30pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City

www.iowacityyachtclub.org

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Jumbies, Nov. 5 • Lubriphonic & Big Funk Guarantee, Nov. 6 • Dennis McMurrin and the Demolition Band, Nov. 7 • Afro-Zep, Nov. 12 • Rubblebucket + Dead Larry, Nov. 13 • Family Groove Company + The White Tornado and Crew, Nov. 14 • Cornmeal & Bumpus, Nov. 20 • Cornmeal & Sexist, Nov. 21 • Jimi James and the Blue Flames, Nov. 27 • Collectible Boys, Mint Wad Willy & Ryan Carnahan, Nov. 28

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NOV 21 } HALEY BONAR

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www.icmill.com

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THEATER/DANCE/ PERFORMANCE

Dreamwell Theatre

Unitarian Universalist Society (Iowa & Gilbert)
www.dreamwell.com
Playboy of the Western World, Nov. 13, 14, 20 & 21, 7:30pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Champions Of The Dance, Nov. 6, 8pm • Broken Lizard Live, Nov. 7, 8pm • Paula Poundstone, Nov. 14, 8pm • Adam Richman From Man Vs. Food, Nov. 19, 8pm

Iowa Theatre Artists

4709 220th Tr., Amana
www.iowatheatreartists.org
From the Homefront, through Nov. 15

No Shame Theatre

Theatre B, UI Theatre Building
www.noshame.org
Fridays in November, 11pm

Penguin's Comedy Club

Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguincomedyclub.com
Check website for showtimes
Mike MacRae and Matt Conty, Nov. 6 & 7 • Jack Willhite & Andy Woodhull, Nov. 13 & 14 • Walt Wiley & Shawn Gregory, Nov. 18 • Jon LaJoie & Johnny Beener, Nov. 19 • Drew Hastings & Johnny Beener, Nov. 20-21 • Tim Walkoe & Ken Schultz, Nov. 27 & 28

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.riversidetheatre.org
Militant Language: A Play with Sand, Nov. 4, 7pm • The Diary of Anne Frank, through Nov. 8

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
Richard Marx, Nov. 28, 8pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City
www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com
Shows start at 9:30pm
Ben Ulin & Johnny Beehler, Nov. 4 • Norm Stultz, Nov. 11 • Bruce Goodman, Nov. 18

Theatre Cedar Rapids

4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.theatre.org
Annie, Nov. 20- Dec. 6

The University of Iowa Dance

Space/Place Theatre, North Hall
www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Dance Gala, Oct. 29-Nov. 7

The University of Iowa Theatre

E.C. Mabie Theatre
www.uiowa.edu/~theatre
America! (Our Better History), Nov. 1, 2pm • Reefer Madness, Nov. 13-21

WORDS

Barnes & Noble

Coral Ridge Mall
1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville
The Writers Workshop, Oct. 12 & 26, 7pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Talk Art - Writers' Workshop, Nov. 4 & 18, 9pm

University Museum of Art

www.uiowa.edu/uima
Check website for locations
"Word Painter" Reading: Janet Hendrickson, Robin Hemley, Nov. 5, 7:30pm • Public Talk: Ginger Ertz, Nov. 12, 7:30pm

CINEMA

Alexis Park Inn

1165 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City
www.alexisparkinn.com
Aviation Movie Night, Nov. 3, 10, 17, 24, 6:30pm

Bijou Theatre

IMU, UI Campus, Iowa City
www.bijoutheatre.org
World's Greatest Dad & No Impact Man, Oct. 30-Nov. 5 • In the Loop & Rashoman, Nov. 6-12 • Big Fan & Lorna's Silence, Nov. 13-19 • Four Day Free Movie Series: Nosferatu, Nov. 30, 7pm; Night of the Living Dead, Dec. 1, 7pm • M, Dec. 2, 7pm; Metropolis, Dec. 3, 7pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
This Is Spinal Tap, Nov. 8, 7pm • Say Anything, Nov. 15, 7pm • The Sound of Music, Nov. 22, 3pm

Human Rights Film Series

UI Campus
international.uiowa.edu/centers/human-rights/
Check website for locations
Milk, Nov. 3, 7pm • Voices From Inside: Israelis Speak, Nov. 4, 7pm • Garbage Dreams, Nov. 5, 7pm • Pray the Devil Back to Hell, Nov. 6, 7pm

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~nathist
Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery, Nov. 1 & 8, 2pm

KIDS

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids
www.legionarts.org
Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre children's opera Brundibar, Nov. 21, 1 & 3pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
The Rainbow Fish, Nov. 8, 2pm

Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre

30 N. Clinton St. Iowa City
www.puppetspuppets.com
Education of a Donkey, Nov. 8, 4pm

Iowa City Public Library

123 South Linn St. Iowa City
www.icpl.org
Storytime at 10:30 Mon-Sat, 2pm Sun

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~nathist
Storytime Explorers: Sloths, Nov. 15, 2pm

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.uscellularcenter.com
Playhouse Disney Live, Nov. 20, 7pm

MISC

Critical Hit Games

89 Second St, Coralville
www.criticalhitgames.net
Board Game Night, Nov. 4, 11, 18, 25

Milonga

700 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
Milonga Tango, Nov. 6, 8:30pm

PATV

206 Lafayette St., Iowa City
www.patv.tv
The Smartest Iowan game show Wednesdays, contestants needed, email smartestiowan@gmail.com

Curses, Foiled Again

- When police went to a home in Regina, Saskatchewan, looking for David William McKay, 28, a man matching McKay's description answered the door but said his name was "Matthew," which, when asked, he misspelled. The Regina Leader-Post reported police also noticed he had the name "David McKay" tattooed on his back.
- A police officer spotted a man at a convenience store in Lebanon, Pa., holding his cap and eyeing the sweatband with a puzzled look. The Lebanon Daily News said that as the man got closer, the officer noticed a small plastic bag stuck to the man's forehead, pulled it off and asked the man, "Is this what you're looking for?" Police who booked Cesar Lopez, 29, for possession said sweatbands are common hiding places for drugs.

Not Quite Right

- Lynda K. Russell, the district attorney of Shelby County, Texas, plans to defend herself against accusations that she stole money from motorists by using the money she's accused of stealing to pay for her legal defense. The ACLU of Texas is suing Russell on behalf of the 150 motorists whose property was illegally seized and turned over to a county forfeiture fund. Reason Magazine said Russell used the fund for a Christmas party and tickets to a motorcycle rally, but the ACLU asked the state attorney general to prevent her using the fund for her defense.
- After a surveillance camera in St. Catharines, Ontario, caught James Cedar, 19, masturbating in his neighbors' backyard while looking through the windows, the perp confessed. Later, Cedar's lawyer sent the victim a letter threatening legal action for invading her client's privacy because, Margaret Hoy wrote, "you have installed surveillance cameras which photograph and videotape into my client's yard and windows." Victim Patricia Marshall told the Toronto Sun her reaction was "total disbelief." She explained she installed the infrared camera because she suspected someone was spying on her and her two teen daughters.

In addition to the threat by Cedar's lawyer, prosecutor Wally Essert withdrew the original criminal harassment charge against Cedar, informing Marshall that branding Cedar a sexual offender would lessen his chances of developing "normal relationships."

Second-Amendment Follies

Timothy Allen Davis, 22, told sheriff's investigators in Lee County, Fla., that he was digging through a drawer looking for a shirt, but when he pulled it out, his .380 semi-automatic hand-

gun flipped in the air, landed and discharged a round. The Fort Myers News-Press reported the bullet hit Davis in the rear end.

When Guns Are Outlawed

Police in Broken Arrow, Okla., charged Decai Liu, 52, with beating his roommate on the head with a harmonica. The roommate explained he was in the bathroom getting ready for work when Liu burst in and started beating him with the musical instrument. "I don't know what his problem was," the roommate said.

The Dating Game

A 27-year-old woman told police she was on a first date with Terrance McCoy, 24, at a restaurant in Ferndale, Mich., but when the check came, he said he forgot his wallet in her car and asked for the keys. According to the Associated Press dispatch, McCoy then drove off in her car.

Uniform Disaster

Women draftees in Sweden complained that the brassieres issued by the military are unacceptable because they keep catching on fire. And because the garments aren't flame resistant, once lit, they can melt onto conscripts' skin. "Our opinion is that the Swedish Armed Forces should have ordered good, flame-proof underwear," Paulina Rehbinder of the Swedish Conscript Council said. The Göteborgs-Posten newspaper reported the women also complained that the standard-issue sports bras' fasteners have a tendency to come undone during vigorous exercise, forcing them to remove all their gear to refasten the brassieres.



Mixed Messages

At least 22 states that ban texting while driving offer some type of service that allows motorists to send and receive information about traffic jams, road conditions or emergencies via Twitter. "If you're sitting there and trying to update the world on the congestion you're in, you could be part of a collision," said Fairley Mahlum of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

Off-Season's Greetings

Joshua Johnson, 26, injured himself while rid-

ing a snowmobile in Waterloo, N.Y., when it flipped and threw him off, then struck him in the head and chest. Deputies noted Johnson was test-riding the vehicle but wasn't wearing a helmet, plus there was no snow on the ground.

FWIW

The Wisconsin Tourism Federation, a 30-year-old tourism lobbying coalition, changed its name to the Tourism Federation of Wisconsin after officials realized its initials—WTF—formed a crude acronym popular in text messages. The group made the switch after web sites and blogs poked fun at it. "We didn't want it to detract from our mission," TFW official Julia Hertel told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Slightest Provocation

A Washington, D.C., jury needed less than 10 minutes to convict Lankward Harrington, 25, of shooting a landscaper who was using a lawn trimmer and got some grass on Harrington's clothes and hair. Harrington stopped, reached into his backpack for a .357 magnum and shot Jose Villatoro four times in the face and body before walking away. "I made sure he saw me and looked me in the eye," Harrington testified. "I take pride in my appearance. I did not appreciate that. "He did nothing to you, did he?" Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve Snyder asked. "He got grass on me," Harrington said. "That was something."

Race to the Finish

Jerry Johncock, 81, was at mile 21 of a marathon race through Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn., when he stopped at an aid station and said he badly needed to urinate but couldn't force anything out. He explained a catheter would fix the problem, but the aid station didn't have one. According to the Pioneer Press, a spectator who overheard the conversation said he had a spare catheter in his car. Johncock was able to insert it himself and finish the race, 1:23:05 off the record pace he set last year but still good enough to win his age group. "What a relief that was," he said. "I must have had a pint of urine inside me."

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

Why is this song stuck in my head?!?

What's the deal with getting a song stuck in your head? Why does it happen, especially if it's a song you don't like or don't even know well? Yet all you can think about is that stupid tune. Please enlighten me; I'm getting really sick of "Tainted Love" running circles through my brain.

—Meg

You think you've got problems? My assistant Una claims she had the same tune running through her head off and on for 27 years. Only after laborious research online was she able to establish what it was: a concerto by Antonio Vivaldi, which at least has some class. Can you imagine 27 years of "Achy Breaky Heart"?

As is all too often the case with the interesting parts of science, we don't know much about this phenomenon but we have a good name for it: *earworm*, a translation of the German *Ohrwurm*. (Use the German if you want anyone to pay attention to you in the faculty lounge.) People have been interested in earworms for a while now—Mark Twain used one as a plot device in his 1876 story "A Literary Nightmare." They're the most common type of what's called "involuntary imagery," sounds, pictures, smells, and even tastes that repeatedly come to mind unbidden.

One theory is that earworms are a form of mild musical hallucination (normally a rare experience), the distinction being that with an earworm you (a) usually aren't on drugs or suffering from schizophrenia and thus (b) are fully aware there's no actual music being played outside of your skull. Another theory is that earworms are a side effect of your brain trying to consolidate memories, akin to what happens in REM sleep. Yet another possibility is pondered by neurologist Oliver Sacks in his book *Musicophilia* earworms might simply be a consequence of our being surrounded by music in our lives whether we want to be or not.

A more promising line of investigation in my opinion is to focus on the earworminess of particular songs. Una contacted the office of James Kellaris, a professor of marketing at the University of Cincinnati who's styled

himself "Dr. Earworm" after years studying the subject, to learn more about a theory of his known as "cognitive itch." According to Kellaris, "certain pieces of music may have properties that excite an abnormal reaction in the brain"—in other words, your brain detects something extraordinary or unusual about the music that compels attention. Your brain tries to process the itch by repeating it, which only makes things worse—not unlike an epidermal itch. Kellaris finds the music most likely to

Kellaris's research also suggests that musicians and those inclined to worry are particularly susceptible to worm attacks.

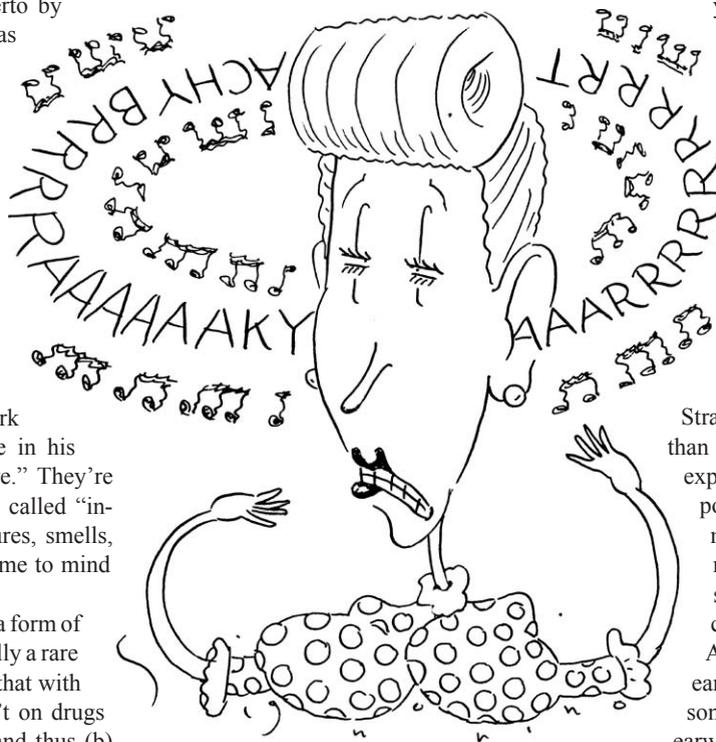
In the early 1980s Chicago parking garage bigwig Myron Warshauer used earworms as the basis of a patented "musical theme floor reminder system," in which a different well-known song plays in each floor's elevator lobby. When you come back hours later and can't remember what floor you parked on, all you have to do is pay attention to the tune that's (theoretically) still running through your head—the song titles are listed opposite the buttons in the elevators.

Despite all this, no one really knows what causes earworms or how to get rid of them. Common removal techniques include replacing the tune with a different one, trying to distract oneself with something else, listening to the piece in question, talking to others about the earworm, or just waiting the worm out.

In an unscientific poll on the Straight Dope Message Board, more than half of 91 respondents reported experiencing earworms daily, with popular music by far the most common culprit. About half could get rid of an earworm only by putting something else in its place; 30 percent said nothing worked reliably. Another survey of 286 people found earwormants typically had heard the song three times or more just before the earworm set in and were in a "neutral to positive emotional state" but alone and bored. So avoid ennui, my friends. That's when the earworms strike.

A final infobit: A 2005 survey found 7.5 percent of respondents were afflicted by their least favorite song as an earworm, and more than a third hated the song's lyrics more than anything else about it. The most loathed tune? No surprise here: Billy Ray Cyrus's "Achy Breaky Heart."

—CECIL ADAMS



cause an earworm has one or more of three key qualities: repetitiveness, simplicity, and what he calls incongruity, often an unexpected rhythmic variation. One example he gives is the song "America" from *West Side Story*, which features a repetitive melody and shifting time signatures.

A 2003 study by Kellaris showed that nearly 98 percent of people experienced earworms, usually involving sung rather than instrumental tunes. (Una's Vivaldi was a relative rarity, obviously indicating her superior intellect.) While women and men experienced earworms equally often, women had to put up with them for longer and were more likely to be peeved.

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 NOVEMBER 2009

FOR EVERYONE—Promise. November brings three contradictory things. One is a barrage of virtually insurmountable hurdles, obstacles that we must often work hard to overcome. It also brings tremendous inspiration and hope for the future. Finally, it brings the beginning of significant progress after months of delay and uncertainty. We must use the month's inspirational vibes for guidance and the growing momentum to start working through the obstacles toward new goals. The world is in a very fluid state. People are open to new ideas and ready for change. Things we might have thought unrealistic just a few weeks ago now show promise. Opportunities we might not have known existed now beckon us forward.

♈ ARIES—Push comes to shove. November brings a mix of challenges and visions of a brighter future. The challenges are real, but so are the possibilities for a more attractive future. And it is clear that, despite the challenges, the future can be much better than the past. Knowing that will make it easier to convince family and close friends to make needed adjustments and allowances. To enable progress, everyone's expectations must be harmonized with new realities. All must take their share of responsibility to realize future potentials in good time.

♉ TAURUS—Persistence and cooperation. Your work situation is growing more challenging as the powers that be cope with economic events beyond anyone's control. Adjustments are unavoidable. You understand the necessary trade offs. You can do more, but you have your limits. Some things will stay the same, but something will definitely have to give. In the end, you will need to change the way you work and/or adjust personal activities so you can continue to function successfully on the job. Visions of future possibilities inspire and motivate you to persist.

♊ GEMINI—Maneuverability. You will find yourself less restricted and less upset by ongoing events than others. You will also be better able to use the situation to your advantage. You will find your mind brimming with insights and useful suggestions. People will be in need of your ideas and inclined to take your advice. You could find yourself treading a somewhat more solitary path in days to come, however, as you redefine the meaning of affection and friendship. It is time to start harmonizing your social involvements with your higher aspirations.

♋ CANCER—New foundations. The disruptive events of November set off a lengthy and thoroughgoing lifestyle transformation for Cancerians. The material and the philosophical foundations of your life begin to shift simultaneously. You will find yourself envisioning a new way to live and a new place to live in. It will take time and effort to realize what you envision, though. These are the kinds of changes you must make one slow, well-planned step at a time. Most important, you must successfully achieve certain financial goals before you start making firm commitments.

♌ LEO—Hard work and politics. Inspiration, enthusiasm and nervous energy are running high. However, realizing the changes you envision will take lots of hard work. The forces of change are affecting key areas of your life, so you have to keep moving forward. Frustration and nervous exhaustion could set in. The trick is to transform the nervous energy into the kind of patience and dedication that is needed. Although it is subtle and indirect, you have real influence over the decision-making process. Improvement in long-term financial areas is around the corner.

♍ VIRGO—Shape the future. November brings a mix of tantalizing future prospects and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. You know absolutely that the prospects are realistic. But you also know that if they are to pan out, you'll need to motivate people. Along with this realization will come a seemingly magical ability. You'll be able to reshape the hopes and desires of others in accordance with your own visions of the future. Using such power is risky, but you'll need to if you and others are to overcome the obstacles you all face.

♎ LIBRA—Dreams and realities. Visions of ideal romantic situations and other alluring possibilities are potent distractions. But responsibilities weigh heavily. Big financial decisions and economic challenges loom and, truth to tell, energy is a bit low. Enjoy the visions, and the distractions. Let them motivate you and help you choose your goals. But you must settle down and start making the choices that will streamline your existence. It is high time to let go of involvements that only weigh you down. Bring your lifestyle your resources and your goals into harmony.

♏ SCORPIO—Strive. The situation is very complex and very simple. Complicated circumstances are, well, forcing you to make lots of adjustments. It is simple because you really just have to do it all. However, if you work it just right, you can move everything in the direction of dreams that are quietly, and secretly, motivating your thoughts. You can create a living situation that is more affordable, more loving and more in accord with your own preferences. Self-healing is a big priority. Stalled financial issues will also begin to move forward.

♐ SAGITTARIUS—Planning and leadership. You can see beyond current difficulties. Your visions for the future are turning attractive—and realistic—enough to inspire yourself and others. You can, in fact, influence how others see the future. Your most immediate and important task, however, will be to update your personal goals to suit new realities and your new vision for the future. You also need to consult friends and others in your community. They need help formulating plans. That will help all concerned define goals and devise a good strategy.

♑ CAPRICORN—Crunch time. Events are forcing changes in just about every key area of your life. These changes are irresistible and permanent. You do not lack for access, influence or power. You know what there is to know. By now, you have moved beyond easy answers and quick fixes. You are ready for reliable, realistic guidance. You can also help others cope. You understand how today's tough choices will lead to a much brighter future. People need to see that connection and showing it to them will inspire and motivate them.

♒ AQUARIUS—Impose order. Aquarius is ground zero for a big release of energy. Positive, inspiring, exciting energies will collide with blocking, challenging energies. For every challenge, there is an inspiring and energizing response. Many stalled issues and projects will start moving forward too, creating opportunities. It will be your job to bring the visions and opportunities together with the challenges to produce progress. The overall effect could be a little overwhelming. You will probably have to lay down some ground rules to handle the traffic. Make time for rest and recreation.

♓ PISCES—Momentum increases. "Don't let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy," goes the old song. That is good advice for Pisces this month. You will be talking to people you never thought you'd talk to about thoughts you never thought you'd think. It is past time to break out of old patterns and if this burst of energy doesn't do it, nothing will. This can be a very nervous-making process, though. Schedule some downtime. Give it some time. Things will fall together more smoothly than you might think.



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