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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

THIS WEEK: ANOTHER MYSTERY FROM THE CASEFILES OF CONSERVATIVE JONES, BOY DETECTIVE! BACK IN THE TREEHOUSE, I SEE.

VERY OBSERVANT OF YOU, MOONBAT! PERHAPS WE'LL MAKE A BOY DETECTIVE OUT OF YOU YET! THOUGH I DOUBT IT.

(FEATURING THE EVER-HAPLESS MOONBAT M'WACKY!)

NOW PAY ATTENTION! I'M WORKING ON THE MYSTERY OF HEALTH CARE REFORM--AND THE GAME'S AFOOT!

OH, THIS SHOULD BE GOOD.

YOU SEE, WE HAVE THE BEST HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN THE WORLD! HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE UPON PERFECTION? QUITE CLEARLY, MY DEAR MOONBAT, YOU CANNOT! SO WHY DO DEMOCRATS PERSIST IN TRYING?

ER--WELL--LEAVING ASIDE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE WATERED-DOWN, INSURER-FRIENDLY BILL WE'RE LIKELY TO GET EVEN QUALIFIES AS 'REFORM'--

--COULD IT BE BECAUSE MILLIONS OF AMERICANS HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE? BECAUSE INSURANCE COMPANIES ROUTINELY DENY CARE AND DROP COVERAGE? BECAUSE OUR PATCHWORK SYSTEM OF FOR-PROFIT, EMPLOYER-BASED HEALTH INSURANCE FUNDAMENTALLY MAKES NO SENSE WHATSOEVER?

OH, MOONBAT! DO DELIGHTFUL CARTOON ANIMALS FROLIC THROUGH THE FORESTS OF THE FANTASY WORLD IN WHICH YOU SPEND YOUR TIME?

NO, THE ANSWER IS MUCH SIMPLER! LIBERALS WANT TO 'REFORM' THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM... BECAUSE THEY HATE THE FREE MARKET!

THAT SEEMS TO BE THE SOLUTION TO A LOT OF YOUR CASES.

CEASE YOUR PRATTLE, MOONBAT! I'M ON TO MY NEXT CASE-- THE MYSTERY OF HOW THIS COUNTRY WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM REAL AMERICANS--SUCH AS MYSELF!

OH--I KNOW THIS ONE! THERE WAS AN ELECTION--

DON'T YOU HAVE A FLAG TO BURN OR SOMETHING?

NEXT: YOU'RE EITHER PART OF THE SOLUTION--OR YOU'RE A TOOL OF ACORN!

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The Cold Pause

I used to dread the cold, white, blank period that followed shortly after the new year arrived. As a kid, January 3 or 4 or 5—somewhere in that neighborhood of the calendar—meant Christmas vacation (yes, that’s what we called it) was over, school was back on, and spring break was so, so far away. It was as if the bottom of life itself had dropped out, the apotheosis of human celebration suddenly plunging into the abyss of dark nothingness. If December was transcendence, January was nihilism.

These days, I rather enjoy the first couple of weeks of January. Sure, the hoopla and excitement over the holidays are over, and the next really big thing seems to be the burgeoning of summer. That, of course, is even more distant than spring break. But there’s something lovely and refreshing about the stripping down of life after the glut of colored lights, tinsel, presents, carols, egg nog, all followed by noisemakers and champagne. There are very few times during the year that the calendar itself, by virtue of its lack of excitement, offers such an opportunity to get back to essentials. When the tree is out of the house and the fireplace mantle is cleared of nutcrackers and reindeer

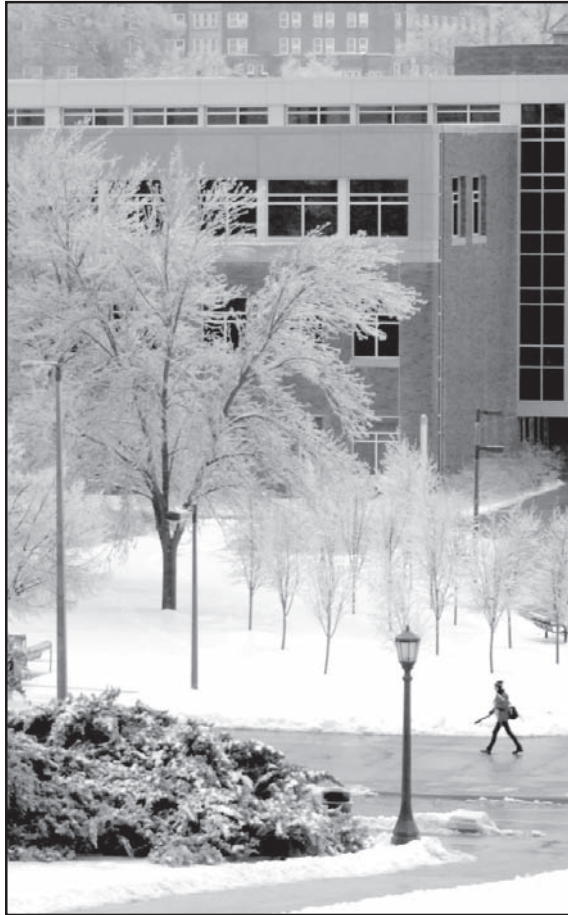


Photo by Ofer Sivan

doorways and yards are denuded of garlands, colored lights, and those grotesque blow-up Santas and snowmen, the stark whites of the snowy plains and the delicate grays of the leafless tree branches silently invite us to slow down, to quiet down, into a cold pause.

All of this coalesces into a calm stillness that cannot be experienced at any other time of year.

Living as we do in a university town, the cold pause is even deeper. Most of the thousands of students are still somewhere else on break. The faculty generally are not on campus, and much of the staff are still taking some vacation time. In years like this, with the Hawkeyes playing a bowl game somewhere

stocking holders, the living room opens itself back up to a quieter simplicity. When people’s

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Dine In or Carry Out

warm in January, a lot of fans have vacated Iowa for Miami or Tampa or wherever the postseason gods have summoned the team.

Yes, for those of us who remain and haunt the campus and downtown for work or plea-

Very few times during the year does the calendar itself, by virtue of its lack of excitement, offer such an opportunity to get back to essentials.

sure, the available parking spaces and the shorter—or nonexistent—lunch lines at the restaurants are welcome. But I enjoy the empty city center for more than just those pleasant conveniences. Walking across the nearly deserted ped mall, with January wind biting my cheeks, empty benches longing for a lunchtime rendezvous, and the deserted playground sighing for its lost children to return—all of this coalesces into a calm stillness that cannot be experienced at any other time of year.

As I return to my work duties after the New Year holiday on the campus Pentacrest, Jessup Hall is quiet and still as well. I know that January can be a busy time for certain people in certain jobs, but, for me, it's a slow period. During these days, I put stacks of books I have pulled off the shelves over the weeks of a busy fall back onto their proper shelves. I go through the piles of papers that have somehow grown higher and

higher on my desk and cleanse my workspace of unnecessary dross. By the time the new semester starts, I will have reinstated my clean, well-lighted place. In the midst of these restorations, I can play a string quartet or big band CD—and maybe even one last Christmas album or two for a respectful coda to the season—and I can play them maybe a touch louder than usual, since many of my hallmates are not there to be bothered or to chip up my listening with their own sounds of daily business. In these days, looking out my window over the snowy west Pentacrest—at maybe one lone tightly wrapped person trudging up the sidewalk—looking through the bare trees to the rooflines of

the hospital and the purple and pink afternoon sunset beyond, I savor this time that is like no other, a time and place that are uniquely here and now, a time when I will not experience this place in quite such a fashion for another whole year.

In traditional cultures, the depths of winter are the time for reflection and restoration. The earth has stripped itself of life to the greatest extent it can, yet in that pause, that quiet, essences and truths are never closer to the surface. The white has replaced the green, and in the world's whorl of no color and all color, we are invited to ponder more patiently who and what

we are, as well as who and what we want to be when the birds, the leaves, the grasses, the flowers and the colors return. There are few places more conducive to the cold pause than Iowa City, Iowa. **lv**

Thomas Dean is not going to Miami for the Orange Bowl.

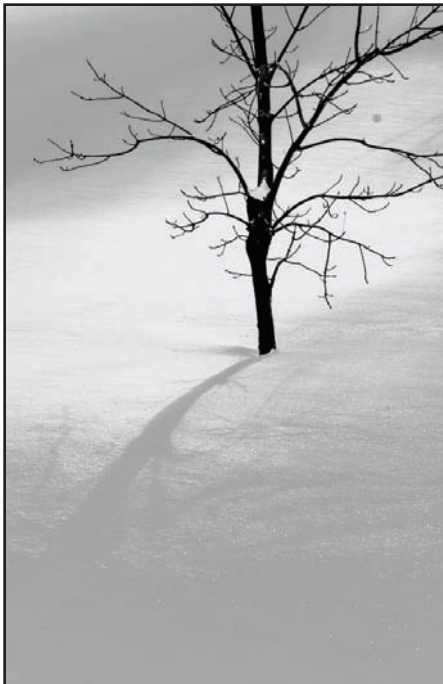


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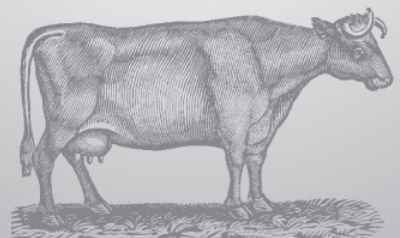
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SNOW BIRDS

Long before the first winter chill hits Iowa City, the literal fair weather fans among us have shipped out for warmer climes in Phoenix, Orlando and San Antonio. What a shame that those winter wimps miss what is truly one of Iowa City's greatest sights: dozens of bald eagles soaring above the the frigid Iowa River.

Sadly, the eagles remain a public secret even to many of those that do winter in Iowa City. Stop by Crandic Park on Rocky Shore Drive and you might find the park's dozen parking spaces vacant, while a dozen eagles sit perched in the trees above.

How is it that more people tune in to watch Family Guy reruns every night than see one of nature's great shows? Especially when, 20 years ago, the presence of one eagle would have made the local news?

Remember, it wasn't long ago that we'd nearly extinguished our national bird. In 1990, Iowa had only eight nesting pairs of bald eagles, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But nationwide efforts to stabilize and restore the eagle population brought Iowa's count to more than 100 pairs in only

one decade. The rebound was so dramatic that Iowa stopped counting in 2000—it simply wasn't a concern anymore.

The rest of the nation saw similar gains and in 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the federal list of threatened and endangered species.

On this icy December day, sitting on the bridge near the Iowa River Power Restaurant, I'm having trouble counting bald eagles. I can see 28, but I know there are more just around the bend.

This is the best spot to eagle watch. A torrent of water runs over the spillway under the bridge, which makes this one of the last places on the river to freeze. Open water means good fishing, and these birds are here to hunt.

On this day I watch for hours but not one catches a fish. Still, it's marvelous to witness these giant birds as they dip and rise in the air, riding an unseen roller coaster.

What I wouldn't give to join them up there, but cheering from the sidelines is the next best thing. Bird watching may often be dismissed as a goofy obsession, but eagle watching is for everyone. **lv**

Andrew Sherburne married into a family of birders. He still doesn't like pigeons.





WHERE TO WATCH

Iowa River Power Co Restaurant

501 1st Ave., Coralville

Watch out, the signs say private parking so either grab a bite to eat while you're there or live dangerously. Lots of open water and usually dozens of eagles. Access to and from the peninsula parks and dog park.

Crandic Park

Rocky Shore Drive

This triangular park is right on the river bend, making for good views up or down river. Look up, the eagles like to perch in the trees or soar high above.

City Park

200 E. Park Road

Walk the pathway along the banks and you're bound to see an eagle or two, but you won't find the numbers sometimes seen at the other two spots.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>

Escape Winter.



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Red squirrel



Hairy woodpecker

WALK THE PENINSULA

Take a walk around Iowa City's peninsula parkland and you'll find more than bald eagles.

There are the dogs, of course, running somewhat freely behind the fences of the Thornberry dog park. But in the wild, geese and ducks are common sights wherever the Iowa River remains unfrozen.

Venture off the paved walkway into the disc golf course and the surrounding wetlands and you'll find crows, squirrels and cardinals in the trees. There are deer in there, too.

None of these animals is so exciting on its own, but the ever presence of nature makes the peninsula a welcome retreat from the concrete drag of the Coralville strip, even though it's only a mile away.

If you're patient or lucky, or both, you may hear the sounds of two of the areas more interesting residents: downy and hairy woodpeckers and the barred owl.

You'll probably hear either before you see them, but winter is a great opportunity to spot birds with fewer leaves on the trees.

Listen for the tell-tale knocking of the woodpecker digging for insects and let your eyes follow the sound.

The barred owl's distinct "who cooks for you?" call is instantly recognizable, but finding the caller can be difficult. Just keep scanning the trees if you hear its call. Of course, your chances of hearing (and seeing) an active owl are better at dusk, when the owl is starting its nightly routine.

There are other nearby spots to get your fix (have you been to the bird blind at the Coralville Dam?), but a hike in the serene wetlands of the peninsula make getting back to nature possible without leaving town.

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Skiing is believing

The snow called my name. It was freezing outside, but that didn't stop me. With a little assistance (ok, a lot), I climbed into some rental boots and hooked each of them into a long, thin ski.

I've never gone cross-country skiing before. My only downhill experience left me with a fear of ever leaving the bunny hills. However, I happened to stumble upon an opportunity to try cross-country skiing in Hubbard Park on The University of Iowa campus. Sponsored by Touch the Earth, the UI's department dedicated to all activities outdoors, passers-by could attempt a few laps around the open field.

I was in no way prepared to go skiing. In thin athletic pants, a sweatshirt and fleece, I wasn't even properly dressed to take on an Iowa winter. Curiosity got the best of me though, so I gave it a try.

Cross-country skiing is one of the best aerobic physical activities. It requires all major muscle groups, making it a great full-body



Photo by Don Wright

ATV who was packing down the snow into a freshly groomed trail for me. "Keep your poles in front of you," was the main advice and to just walk. It really was more of a glide,

as I slid each foot up to meet the pole of the opposite arm.

My first lap around the track was pretty slow as I tried to get a feel for the movement. It was pretty intuitive, a lot like walking but smoother. I was getting more comfortable with each step. Halfway through the second lap, I started thinking I was catching on and looking pretty good out there (and I was the only person out there).

Eventually, those big muscle groups heated my body up pretty well and while students were walking to classes bundled up in hats, scarves and big warm coats, I had stripped down to my sweatshirt, gloves and hat.

I found cross-country skiing to be very graceful. I took a lap around Hubbard Park, then another and another. Each time I skied passed the equipment guys, they would call out compliments, "You're doing great!"

It got to my head.

I abandoned the carefully calculated steps of my first lap (slide left ski on ground to meet right pole, repeat on other side, while staring hard at the snow about three feet in front of the tips of my skis). Once I got into the third lap I started trying to move quicker to show them I could go pro any day now. I looked up from my path and just let my body do its thing.

Wipeout.

Actually, epic wipeout. I ended up sprawled in the cold powder on my side. My left ski had dug deep into the snow on the edge of the packed-down track and was stuck. The right ski got crossed with the left and was now sticking straight up into the air. I laid there in the snow with my legs tangled up in a very awkward position.

I ended up sprawled in the cold powder on my side.

With some careful maneuvering I managed to straighten myself out and stand up again. I proceeded a little more cautiously but soon continued the exciting

cycle of feeling comfortable, feeling arrogant, and feeling my face in the snow. I completed about six laps around the field and two more wipeouts before calling it a day.

I burned over twice as many calories as I would have just walking around campus in the same time, and the best part, it was actually really fun (even when I wasn't necessarily upright).

Cross-country skiing is a great winter activity for any age or skill level. If you're a beginner like me, it's best to take a lesson to get started. This will help you figure out the right equipment for you and show you how to use it.

Start slow, dress in layers, and check out iowaski.blogspot.com to see what trails are packed down and ready to go. The Ashton Cross-Country Course and MacBride Recreation Area are the two popular cross-country skiing destinations in the Iowa City area. **lv**

Kelly Ostrem doesn't like winter, especially the cold Iowa winters. XC Skiing proved to be a good way to warm up, especially when followed by hot coco.

Get Out and Ski

Touch the Earth is hosting a Moonlight Ski & S'Mores event at MacBride Recreation Area on January 29, from 8-10 p.m. The event is free and open to the public, just make sure to rent some equipment before trekking out to the park.

workout. It burns a killer amount of calories regardless of the pace. A 30-minute session can burn anywhere from 250 to 325 calories (for a 160lb person).

Some of the fittest athletes in the world are cross-country skiers.

That's the motivation I needed. With a little instruction from the Touch the Earth guy who helped me into the skis, I grabbed a pole in each hand and began following a man on an

Grab Winter by the Snowballs



When it gets as cold as it did after our first real snowstorm of the season a few weeks ago, it gets so you don't notice it anymore after a while because it's not a thing to "notice" so much as it's the only thing you're thinking about to begin with.

It was, in retrospect, a storm that didn't even remotely live up to the massive amount of hype that preceded it, and this made me wonder if cold fronts hire publicists these days as this one single-handedly commandeered all our local media for the better part of three days.

Sure, it may have been a legitimate blizzard, but when words like "life threatening," "historic" and "snow-pocalypse" are being tossed around on TV and in print, I fully expect to see stories of cows frozen solid, Cossacks raiding the Hy-Vee and sporadic acts of desperate cannibalism being reported in snowbound bowling alleys shortly thereafter—but they never materialized.

Winter is a long season in Iowa though, so maybe next time, right?

And—if that were to end up happening—we'd gripe about it then just like we grieved about this storm and we'll gripe about the one after that. But the fact remains that since we're

still here griping about them they really must not bother us that much after all.

The state of Arizona doesn't have a fence around it just yet. We're free to move there any time we like but we don't, because we like it here, and for good reason.

As bad as it ever gets here we still have it easy considering that—not all that long ago—people living in Iowa were subjected to the same kind of winters we are but without a mailbox full of Netflix DVDs to help them pass the time when they were snowed in or the numbers for 14 different pizza delivery places stored on their cell phones.

If they weren't careful and they let their chamber pots freeze over, they'd just have to hold it until spring. A cold floor greeting us when we get out of our hot shower in the morning isn't quite the same hardship.

Our wintertime "suffering" is little more than minor inconveniences compared to theirs.

Like the time I spent nearly 30 minutes

The state of Arizona doesn't have a fence around it just yet. We're free to move there any time we like but we don't.

shoveling out a car I mistook for my own. This is not a problem you'd have if you lived in Miami. You might go outside some January morning and find that your car had been stolen if you lived there but the weather would probably be a lot nicer and this would make it easier to process the news. And it wouldn't take 30 minutes.

Early in the morning while I shoveled and salted the walk on those first few bitter bitter cold days I could hear car engines neighing like horses as they struggled to turn over with batteries that weren't up to the challenge.

I don't know much about horses, but I can't imagine a horse would have been any more enthusiastic to get moving in that kind of cold. And last I heard you can't jump-start a horse.

So, we either did or didn't get our cars started but nobody died if we didn't. Nobody froze to death because they ran out of firewood and nobody died after getting lost in a whitetout just yards from their front door while outside searching for it. These things actually

happened in years past. Did some people lose their cars in the mall parking lot while out Christmas shopping? I'm sure it happened to a number of people but nobody will be telling their grandchildren about it.

Even if we absolutely had to spend a lot of time outdoors, our winter wear is infinitely more efficient than that of our predecessors here, and none of it requires us to personally shear or skin any animal to make.

Unless, of course, Uggs are actually made from a creature of the same name that is simply unknown to me, and each sorority house in town has a tanning and hiding operation set up in their basement.

I don't know this to be true, but I won't rule it out because I'm hard-pressed to believe that people would actually pay money for boots that look like they came from a Muppet production of some Wagner opera.

But just because such amazingly warm winter clothes are available to us all doesn't mean that we're all smart enough to wear them.

Wearing spaghetti straps and heels in 15-degree weather while teetering down Burlington Street through the snow towards the bars might not seem like a bad plan—or even one too difficult to

pull off—at nine o'clock on a Saturday night with a stomach full of jello shots and excitement about the adventures the night may hold, but it's awfully painful to watch the same girls make the return trip back uphill the following morning over ice while holding their shoes and their stomachs which are now filled only with regrets and the other half of the burrito that's caked in their hair while desperately resisting the urge to scratch at an annoying new itch in a place it's not polite to scratch in public.

Then again, you're only young once, right? Maybe this is their Matterhorn.

Even though the snow was a bother for a few days (and will be a bother again few months from now when make-up days will

extend the school year for everyone who had classes cancelled because of the storm, just as the weather starts taunting us for spending one more minute inside than is required for bathing) I still prefer snow to the ice storms we experienced a few winters back.

Like the morning there was a quarter-inch of ice (yes, I measured) encasing every single thing in Johnson County. While scraping the ice off my car after one such storm, I decided to just make a few surgical cuts and to pull away really

west side of the river to see if he still had power, and he told me he didn't, but he had plenty of wood for the pot-bellied stove in his basement. So I poured a bowl of brandy for my cat, wished it well, and invited myself over for dinner.

When I got there I discovered that two other mutual friends who also lived on the east side had done the same thing, and we all enjoyed a lovely and impromptu feast made by his wife from random leftovers warmed up on the stove top. We drank a few bottles of wine and had a snowball-throwing contest where we tried to see who could hit the stop sign on the corner from his front step.

It was actually a disappointment to leave when power had been restored. I wished it didn't take an ice storm to create evenings like that, but as long as it does, I'll put up with them.

It was a far nicer and more memorable evening than any of us would have had on a random Thursday night in the middle of May.

Why? For the company and the meal? Sure, but more so because the storm itself was something we had "survived" together.

Our spontaneous wonderful evening was our insurgency against the storm.

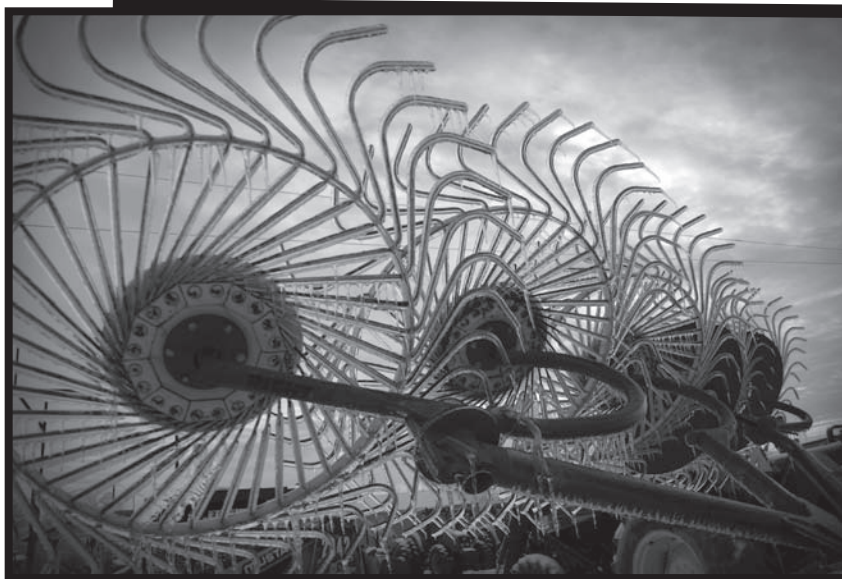
It's still snowing out? Fine, we'll open another bottle of wine.

By the time I got home my house was toasty warm and my cat was still sober. I drank his untouched brandy out of the bowl I had poured it in while I looked out the window and watched the sodium vapor lights turn my block the same color orange as a desert sunset and tucked that memory away for just a time like this.

Winter will only be as hard on you as you let it.

Stand up, hold your ground, open a bottle of wine with your friends. It'll be gone soon enough. **IV**

We drank a few bottles of wine and had a snowball-throwing contest. I wished it didn't take an ice storm to create evenings like that.



I spent nearly 30 minutes shoveling out a car I mistook for my own.

fast to see if I'd be able to leave a car-shaped shell on the street like a 2,000-pound cicada might have, had it shed its exoskeleton in front of my house. It didn't

work. And the duct tape still holding my front bumper together that survives to this day is a reminder of that fact.

Yale Cohn has a Ph.D. in snow shovelling and considers the use of snow-blowers to be a fundamentally dishonest practice on par with professional athletes using steroids.

Clipse



Growing up in Virginia Beach during the 1980s, it seemed like a cultural wasteland—a sleazy tourist trap whose primary cultural export was Juice Newton. If you had said back then that my hometown would become one of the centers of the hip hop universe, I would've told ya to get off the pipe. But it happened. Clipse, Missy Elliot, Timbaland, and the ubiquitous production team The Neptunes (who are all roughly my age and who went to neighboring high schools) have been responsible for dozens of the most infectious, quirky and popular records of the past dozen years.

In retrospect, Virginia Beach's commercial and creative rise makes sense. While hardly cosmopolitan, the ubiquitous presence of military bases imported personnel from urban centers like Philly and New York, bringing with

STRAIGHT OUTTA *Virginia Beach*

them their musical tastes and tape collections. As a Southern beach town, it was a mixture of urban, suburban and rural spaces, something that created a unique blend of influences. As a teen I worked at the only record store on the Virginia Beach strip, and the experience was a head-spinning mash-up of cultures. We were in the business of selling rock t-shirts by hair metal acts like Whitesnake, cassettes by Public Enemy and other hip hop acts, 12-inch dance singles and punk records—all to wide and weird variety of folks.

This environment surely influenced Missy,

Timbaland and The Neptunes' Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo (the latter two were band geeks from Princess Anne High, my school's primary drama club competitors ... Gangsta!). They never pretended they were hardcore, nor did they make up stories about slinging (crack) rock or anything of the sort. Not so with Clipse, fronted by brothers Gene and Terrence Thornton—better known as Malice and Pusha T—who have been rapping about

guns and the drug trade since the beginning. Unlike many of their coke-rap peers, they're not faking it. Clipse's former manager was arrested for being part of an eight-figure drug ring, and after their first album deal fell through, they famously went back to their previous vocation.

Turning life into art, they mined their experiences on their phenomenal official debut, 2002's *Lord Willin'*. I say *official* debut because their first album, *Exclusive Audio Footage*, was withdrawn by their label a month before it was to be released. Here's a

review I wrote in the August 1999 issue of the now-defunct *Raygun* magazine, which made it to print before I got a call from an agitated Elektra Records publicist.

From the derailed drum 'n' bass snare drum rolls of "Power" to the sitar loops in "Diana Ross," they've mastered that offbeat, took-the-Atari-2600-apart-and-put-it-back-together-wrong Southern synthetic production

Pop hits could have been theirs, but Clipse dug deeper—gravitating towards dark, dirty soundscapes that were more claustrophobic than club-ready.

aesthetic. And if the sitar sample on "Diana Ross" wasn't weird enough, that song's clever, pop-culture-damaged chorus pushes everything else over the edge: "Y'all niggas don't move with caution/runnin' round here flexin' flossin'/like your name was Richard Dawson/if our families feud/ya gonna Die-ana Rossin'." Clipse's hardcore/absurd lyrical and aural juxtapositions recall an early Outkast, and if they continue to improve like this like those ATLiens did, this promising duo has a shot at becoming a great hip hop group.

Hey, it turns out that I was right! But in addition to developing into one of the decade's best artists, Clipse have also had some serious record company drama in the 10 years since they first came to my attention. After being dropped by Elektra, the duo briefly moved to Arista for the release of *Lord Willin'*—only to be the victim of a corporate merger that left them signed to a disinterested Jive Records,

which dropped Clipse after their jaw-dropping *Hell Hath No Fury* record. Finally, after three years and a couple mixtapes, Columbia Records has unleashed *Til the Casket Drops*.

Hell Hath No Fury had hip hop heads and the most finicky of critics drooling, in part because it was entirely produced by The Neptunes, who gave the brothers Clipse first dibs on their beats. It was a remarkable arrangement, given that this production team crafted huge singles



for Snoop Dogg, Jay-Z, Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears, and Nelly, just to name a few. Any of those pop hits could have been theirs, but Clipse dug deeper—gravitating towards dark, dirty soundscapes that were more claustrophobic than club-ready.

For the first time, on this new album, Clipse have worked with outside producers (though The Neptunes also contributed to half of *Til the Casket Drops*). As a result, it features some of their most radio-ready songs that are counterbalanced by an undercurrent of aural dread running through tracks like "Freedom," "Showing Out," and "Door Man." As much as I like their back catalog of sick sonics—es-

pecially on *Hell Hath No Fury*—the uptempo Bollywood beats of "All Eyes On Me" and the head-nodding, guitar-heavy braggadocio of the Kanye West collaboration "Kinda Like a Big Deal" are a nice change of pace.

Ultimately, though, it's a bit of a letdown coming after two classics (and one great unreleased debut). Don't get me wrong—compared to most hip hop records of the past year, *Til the Casket Drops* is a godsend, and half of the album is truly great. But Clipse are at their best, creatively, when thriving on adversity, which no longer seems to be the case. On the lightweight, feel-good "Champion," Malice raps, "I thought that life was a bad bitch and a bad car/Life is with your kids watching *Madagascar*." (You gotta love it when a coke-rapper named Malice busts a rhyme like this.) While I wish

Hell Hath No Fury had hip hop heads and the most finicky of critics drooling, in part because it was entirely produced by The Neptunes, who gave the brothers Clipse first dibs on their beats.

Pusha T and Malice the best and hope their kids to have a well-adjusted childhood, I'm secretly hoping there's more trouble brewing for the brothers grim. Bad times = great records. **IV**

Kembrew McLeod is preparing to enter winter hibernation, and also planning for a national broadcast of his co-produced documentary Copyright Criminals, which will air on PBS's Independent Lens series on January 19, 2010.

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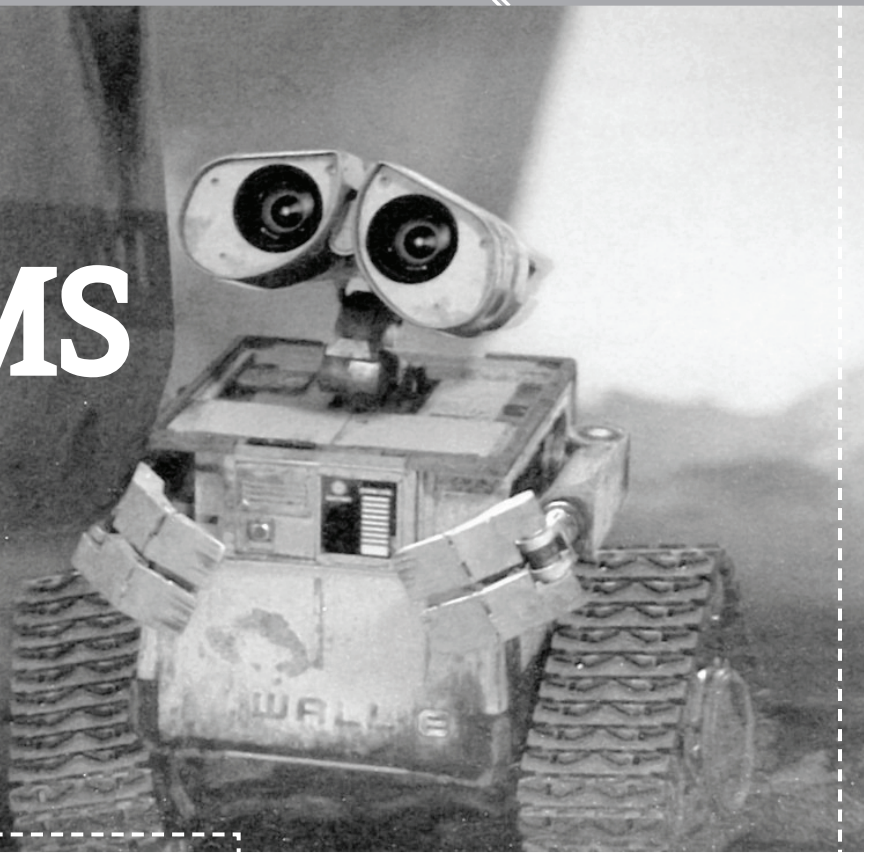
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WHAT DREAMS HAVE COME

The 21st Century
(So Far) in Cinema

Wall-E



A philosopher once remarked that if by some miraculous machine one could see all the dreams of a people, one would fully understand the time they lived in. The 20th century—the *last* century, still strange to say—bequeathed us just such a machine: the movie projector. Now that we’ve just finished the first decade of the 21st century, I thought it would be worthwhile to take stock of what our dreams have been telling us. Maybe it’s just all the sparkling snow and tinsel and shop windows, which can blacken anyone’s mood, but my conclusions are somewhat depressing.

One of the standout dreamers of our *Zeitgeist* is Judd Apatow, whose presence haunts a large number of recent comedies, most notably *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*, *Knocked Up*, and *Funny People*. Though his movies harken back to Ernst Lubitsch’s great comedies of manners and early Bill Murray classics like *Stripes*, it’s hard to imagine Apatow’s leading men in any other time but our own. Perhaps leading *males* is a better term, for the problem with them is that they’re not really men: They haven’t been initiated as

adults into our tribe. The 40-year-old virgin Andy Stitzer (Steve Carell) collects action figures and has a framed picture of the rock band Asia on his wall. In *Knocked Up*, when the wife tracks down her husband, who she suspects is having an affair, she finds that

The most memorable popular movies of the past decade have short-circuited the corrupt adult world altogether.

low males (“bromance” is one of the terms our decade can boast) in an attempt to keep alive some semblance of their masculinity. The only plausible initiations we have left, Apatow’s movies seem to say, are sex, having a kid and dying.



Knocked Up

Another curious feature of the past decade, related to the prolonged adolescence Apatow so lovingly captures, is the rise of a new approach to superhero movies—they’re no longer made for kids. Compare Tim Burton’s *Batman* of 1989 to Christopher Nolan’s 2008 *The Dark Knight*. Burton’s caped crusader had the look and feel of a comic; the movie winked at the adults as it satisfied the

his “cheating” involves playing fantasy baseball with some friends. These overgrown adolescents, just like their teen counterparts, cling to their fel-

kids. *The Dark Knight*, though marketed evilly to children, clearly was not meant to delight wide-eyed 12-year-olds. The various Toby McGuire *Spiderman* pictures seem to have been written by a panel of existentialists. And Jon Favreau’s *Iron Man* had all the whimsy of a Black Sabbath tune. These movies, which explore love and evil and politics insofar as the caricatures of their villains and heroes permit, are a have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too kind of pleasure. They feed a still festering desire for the mythologies of youth in such a way as to placate the basic structure of an adult sensibility.

A slightly deeper set of movies deals with how atomized and inauthentic we’ve become

in our highly constructed virtual worlds. The Wachowski brothers' *Matrix* trilogy symbolizes our condition by depicting us as simply biological beings who are kept alive in order to feed machines. This is done by manipulating before our eyes a continuous world of absorbing images—the *Matrix*. What a bizarre fantasy! In reality, of course, we keep ourselves alive at any cost (though perhaps to feed the machine of the health care industry) as a continuous world of absorbing images is played before our eyes. The best movie of this variety, and maybe of the decade, is Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*, which diagnosed our affliction as childlessness. In other words, being cut off from the past and the future, living in an essentially meaningless present moment of random pleasures and violence.

The most memorable popular movies of the past decade have short-circuited the corrupt



Dark Knight

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current predicament. According to *Wall-E*, a megacorporation called "Buy n Large" helps us to trash our planet and then takes our bloated bodies to a space station, where essentially a comic version of the *Matrix* ensues. Disturbingly, Pixar's robots, fish, rats and hopping desk lamps are among the most memorably human characters of the past 10 years.

Obama was elected under the word *hope*. His politics, which inevitably have to grapple with the hopeless world, have been the source of much debate and disappointment. But his great speech at Oslo, which wrestled with the paradoxes of peace and war, was a rare thing for a politician: the speech of a genuine human being confronting reality. Let's hope that the dreams of the next decade begin to reflect that more authentic engagement with the world. I guess the spirit of the holidays got to me after all. **lv**



Children of Men

adult world altogether. The Pixar movies, taken as a whole, have surpassed even the Disney classics in creating delightful children's movies for everyone. Though *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* were products of the 1990s, this decade has given us treasures like *Finding Nemo*, *The Incredibles*, *Ratatouille*, *Wall-E*, and *Up*. Though, it must be said, even these delights tend to be laced with a grim assessment of our

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.

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FRI, JANUARY 29
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Another Year Older

Welcome to the future, kids: It's twenty-ten. 2010. While all you music-crit geeks out there might already want to get started on your best-of-the-next decade list (I hear Beach House's new one is good! Radiohead's next album! Everything not yet done by Animal Collective! A mainstream hip hop record approved by white intellectuals!), I'd like to take a minute to reminisce on what we've seen in the last decade of live music here in Iowa City.

I only moved here in 2005, but even with my half-decade of observation I've said goodbye to clubs like Gabe's, The Green Room, The Q Bar (and The Industry), and said hello to The Picador and Blue Moose Tap Room. Public Space ONE showed up above the Deadwood, disappeared for a few years, and resurfaced under Subway. The Yacht Club is going on its seventh birthday (more on that below), and, according to their t-shirts, the Mill has been around since 1962. There are also a ton of places that have live music that I've never written about in this column, for one reason or the other, like the jazz at The Sanctuary or, even the classical "Piano Sundays" in the Old Capital Building.

Among people of a certain musical disposition, the last five years have been extremely active ones for house shows and alternative venues, with one of the newest being the White Lightning warehouse. People who have been around longer than I have said this sort of thing has always been a crucial part of the music scene, which in and of itself speaks to just how strong a musical community exists here. It's my sense that this is an exciting time to love music and live in Iowa City—I, for one, never have a lack of things to write about. Here's what I think is noteworthy for the first month of the new decade.

First of all, January is a great month for birthdays: The Yacht Club, the King of Rock and Roll, and yours truly all turn one year older this month, but only two of those will be celebrated with huge Iowa City musical events that will actually be fun to attend. (My birthday, which is on the 2nd, is usually spent quietly forcing one or two still-hungover friends to forget about New Year's Eve and

start drinking again.) Elvis Aaron Presley (and his stillborn twin, Jesse) would turn 75 on the 8th were he still alive (...or is he?!), and they'll be celebrating with a tribute show at the Mill. Check their website, www.icmill.com, for the complete list of bands. Also, venerable establishment the Yacht Club turns seven on the 23rd, and they'll celebrate by putting the number seven on everything they can: seven bands for \$7, 70-cent beers until seven o'clock, sev-



Elvis Aaron Presley would turn 75 on the 8th were he still alive (...or is he?!).

en swans a-swimming, etc. Expect Dead Larry and the Mad Monks, among five others. Again, their website—www.iowacityyachtclub.org—has the full run down.

Perhaps my most anticipated show this month is the return of San Francisco-via-Iowa indie-folk band Bowerbirds at the Mill on the 15th. After breaking out with 2007's *Hymns for a Dark Horse*, they returned this year with *Upper Air*. Like its predecessor, the album is marked by direct lyricism and acoustic instrumentation. While their more "stripped down" songs can (and do) sound damn good, Bowerbirds songs more characteristically include incredibly lush arrangements which send them soaring. Expect multi-part harmonies, an accordion, and at least one xylophone.

If it's poetry you like, then formerly local-fella' Miguel Soria, who performs under the name , will be in town with a new CD on the 26th. His songs fall into a long tradition of poetic Americana verse and gruff delivery style that includes everyone from Whitman to Waits. His talented friends Olivia Rose Muzzy and Skye Carrasco open the show. Also at the Mill on the 15th is the artist formerly known as Grampall Jookabox. Sensing, as we all did,

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that the name was too much of a mouthful, he know goes solely by Jookabox. It's an electronic, drum-machine-driven solo project that is fun to watch and dance to.

The Picador this month features an end of the month metal double-header on the 29th and 30th. The Horde, with members from Iowa City and the Quad Cities, will play the first of those two nights, along with Minneapolis band In Defence. On the 30th, it'll be Raise the Red Lantern.

Finally, I'm a relatively big fan of many of the weekly events in town—various dance parties, open mikes, jam sessions, whatever—so it's always nice to see a new one enter the mix. The Picador is starting a regular Wednesday Night Record Club, which will feature free pool, cheap drinks, and the chance to spin your very own vinyl through their system. **IV**

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

Curses, Foiled Again

Brier Cutlip, 22, and Paul Bragg, 25, were arrested for firearms possession, a felony parole violation, after sheriff's deputies in Randolph County, W.Va., found two rifles in Cutlip's truck. The deputies thought to look for incriminating evidence because the two men showed up at their parole meetings together dressed in blaze orange. WBOY-TV News said the men admitted hunting earlier that day.

Unsurprising Conclusion

A University of Montreal researcher studying the impact of pornography on men intended to interview subjects who had never been exposed to pornography but couldn't find any. "Guys who do not watch pornography do not exist," assistant professor Simon Louis Lajeunesse told the Montreal Gazette. He said he switched projects and will now study how consuming X-rated material affects men's sexual identity and shapes their relationships with women.

**Community Investments**

- Hoping to capitalize on their success, Somali pirates have set up an exchange to sell shares of their raids to investors. Operating mostly out of Haradheere, sea gangs have made tens of millions of dollars from ransoms, according to Reuters, and their success is attracting Somali financiers in other nations to back their sea raids. "The shares are open to all, and everybody can take part, whether personally at sea or on land by providing cash, weapons or useful matters," a pirate named Mohammed explained, adding, "We've made piracy a community activity." Haradheere's deputy security officer agreed. "Piracy-related business has become the main profitable economic activity in our area, and as locals we depend on their output," Mohamed Adam said. "The district gets a percentage of every ransom from ships that have been released, and that goes on public infrastructure, including our hospital and our public schools."
- A group of inner-city activists in Los Angeles announced the start of bus tours of rundown public housing, sites of deadly shootouts and racial unrest, and the birthplace of many of the city's most famous gangs, including Crips and Bloods. "This is ground zero for a lot of the bad in this city," former gang member Alfred

Lomas, who is spearheading L.A. Gang Tours, told the Los Angeles Times. "It could be ground zero for a lot of the good, too."

Lomas calls the venture "true community empowerment." The nonprofit group is charging adults \$65 for the two-hour tours of South L.A., Watts and Florence-Firestone, and notes it uses the money to create jobs and start similar tour franchises in other inner cities. Organizers will sell souvenir T-shirts painted on the spot by a graffiti tagger, and one organizer said he hopes to stage a dance-off among the locals where tourists pick the winner. Organizers did decide against having kids shoot tourists with water pistols, followed by the sale of T-shirts that read: "I Got Shot in South-Central."

Finders Keepers

Jesus Leonardo, 57, told the New York Times he makes more than \$45,000 a year by cashing in winning tickets on horse races that betters throw away. "It is literally found money," he said, explaining he spends more than 10 hours a day at a New York City off-track betting parlor. "This has become my job, my life. This is how I feed my family." Leonardo collects the betting slips by picking through the OTB parlor's trash each night. He also pays two friends \$25 a bag to bring him the trash at four other OTB parlors around the city. Leonardo collects 2,000 to 7,000 discarded tickets a day and hauls them to his New Jersey home. He and two other friends bundle them in stacks of 300 for Leonardo to tote to the city the next morning and spend hours scanning each ticket to find any winners. "It is such exhausting work," Leonardo said, "that I give myself a lunch hour."

When Guns Are Outlawed

- When a man spotted a prowler at a nearby vacant home in Kelso, Wash., he grabbed his hunting bow and chased the suspect for more than three blocks before shooting him with an arrow when he refused to stop. Police Capt. Vern Thompson told the Daily News that a 32-year-old suspect later sought treatment for an arrow wound at a hospital.
- Authorities in Marion County, Fla., reported that a man told them Elsie Egan, 53, repeatedly hit him in the face with an uncooked steak. Sheriff's deputies told the Associated Press that Egan attacked the man because he refused a piece of sliced bread. He said he wanted a roll. Egan denied hitting the man with the steak but did admit slapping him "so that he could learn."

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

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Coolzey

The Honey

Public School Records
myspace.com/coolzey

Zachary Lint Aka Coolzey has taken time off from home renovation and staring in zombie movies, to drop another CD of profound silliness. Or silly profundity—I'm not quite sure. Full disclosure: I've done some post production and mastering work for Zack in the past. But hey if you want someone who knows something about Iowa City music to write reviews, they're probably going to know half the people they review somehow.

Anyhoo, given my lack of objectivity, you'll just have to take my opinions with a grain of salt, or maybe a spoonful of honey. Oh snap, segue to *The Honey* and watch a stereoscopic Viewmaster slide show of how Coolzey rules his little patch of hip hop. Goofy easy listening intro *click* floaty strange chorus "take off all your clothes..." *click* "you coulda been valiant/mounted on a stallion/advancing on the palace/at the top of that mountain/battling battallions/of paladin assassins/mighty like a falcon dressed in medals and medallions" *click* and really the song is about appreciating the present moment. In rhyme, with jokes.

Coolzey sings a lot more on *The Honey* than he has on his past hip hop joint. "Look" is entirely sung, to a beat constructed from cut up cop show themes, sounding a bit like Beck, if Beck still had a talent for surrealism, and, y'know, gave a shit. "Let's Flip" is a straight up party jam that proclaims "it's time to Mop and Glow." While I'm rooting for Coolzey to hit it big, I hope he never gets so big he has to license samples, because "Let's Flip" would cost big bucks to clear, based on two highly recognizable bites, combined to make something close to a perfect beat.

The Honey is, for me, Coolzey's most fully

realized hip hop record. Partly it's the deep craft that's gone into his verses, partly it's the cast of Iowa City local heroes (Ed Gray, Will Whitmore, Luther the Geek and many more) he brings in to deepen the music. But for a guy who can't rock half a verse without cracking wise, who makes beats by jacking the goofiest, least soulful sample he can find and making them bump, Coolzey is no joke.



Jeremy Kinn

Things Gained

myspace.com/jeremykinn

The yellow Post-it note Jeremy put on this CD says "recorded in my kitchen." When I listen to *Things Gained*, I believe it, and that's not a bad thing. Kinn's voice and guitar have a homey intimacy. He's at his best with songs like "Without Glory" which sounds a bit like Donovan's "Colours" and a bit like Nick Drake, but Kinn's take on the English folk template has a slip-slide rhythm arising from its odd 7/4 verse. What's too charming for words is he recorded it with the window open and at the end you can hear a snatch of bird song and insect buzz.

There isn't a song here that's bad, but a couple make very little impression on me. The ones like "When You Call" has a nicely deviant lyric, "I didn't have a clue, well neither did you, so we withdrew, what's new?"—the extended single rhyme motif is repeated in each verse. But the song has a generic I IV V (C F G) chord progression whose blandness sinks the words. "Concrete Turns To Clay" doesn't stray far from the "mighty three" major chords but does a better job of staying interesting.

What really grows on me after listening to the CD a couple of times is the lo-fi production values. I'd go so far as to say he does things "wrong" in a way that ends up being right. When he adds bass guitar, it's a vague rumbling that threatens to overpower his voice and guitar. I can hear the needle riding into the red

on his four-track cassette when he sings, and it makes his voice sound nicely furry. When he overdubs guitars, they get all mashed together into what sounds like a commotion in the next room. Even if his songs can verge on being a bit too samey, he's really nailed an interesting, warm inviting sound.

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



The Pines

Tremolo

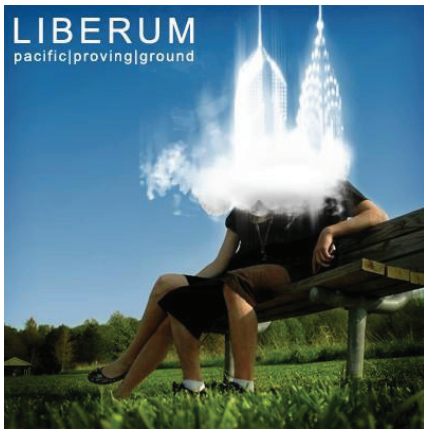
Red House Records
www.myspace.com/thepinesspace

The Pines, a pair of young Iowa boys (David Huckfelt and Benson Ramsey) have to walk a fine line playing old-timey music. There's an impulse (and a certain commercial and critical demand) to make the music sound current, but a conflicting duty to remain faithful to the music's tradition. The Pines walk the line easily on their latest album, *Tremolo*.

"Pray Tell" leads off The Pines' third album with a dense finger-plucked guitar run before the band joins in. Bo Ramsey (Benson's father) adds shimmering echoes of lead guitar and dry, sprightly drum work behind the dry, rough-hewn vocals. "Behind The Time" shows the dual pillars of *Tremolo*—the duos songwriting and their producers' set dressings—balanced at wonderful pitch, with the shuffling percussion driving the delicate flits of slide guitar over top, Ramsey and Huckfelt's rhythm work set as the backdrop for the lyrics full of loss and pain.

However, after all of papa Ramsey's touches, what really shines through strongest is the duo's chemistry. "Lonesome Tremolo Blues" has the two alternating between rhythmic propulsion and interwoven fret work as well as the two doubling-up on some deliciously raspy and downright eerie harmonies.

The duo's only misstep is the pleasant but uninteresting instrumental track that sits one song shy of the end of *Tremolo*. "Avenue of the Saints" is a fine tune, but it lacks a driving melody that justifies leaving off the characteristic vocals and heart-felt verses. "Avenue" appears to exist as a chance to show off the group's studio prowess, but actually ends up proving how strong the compositions were when The Pines hashed them out between themselves over acoustic guitars. If the songs weren't sturdy, the ornaments would bog them down and leave them heavy and dull.



Pacific Proving Ground

Liberum

Self-released

myspace.com/pacificprovingground

In tribute to the nuclear testing site from which the young quartet took its name, Pacific Proving Ground is loud. However, the band's precision probably has more in common with a heat seeking missile. Every polyrhythmic run unleashed from the kit of Cohen Karnell laces like machine gun rounds between the

blistering guitar lines of Erik Michaelson and the undulating bass work of Tyler Shoemaker. In short, the group's new EP, *Liberum*, is pretty bombastic.

Anyone who's been following Pacific Proving Ground since they were constructing mathematically precise emo-core attacks at City and West high schools may recognize this material. *Liberum* has been released once before, but that was under different circumstances: The band was an instrumental trio before they graduated high school. Now that they're warming dormitory bunks at night, they've recruited a singer. This five-song EP is a chance to fix a few mistakes made in the original recording, implement some new tricks that have come out in shows and incorporate the new vocals of Seth McDuffee.

It's a testament to his dexterity that McDuffee fits so well with the group. He's found the natural tempos (yes, there are at least three or four per song) and dropped some pretty fiery, chord stretching crescendos to the music. Lead track, "A Horrorshow Cooperative," is an exemplary piece of mathed-out rock: hard stops, more sixteenth notes than a Yes song, hard dynamic shifts, and wicked tempo changes; and McDuffee's rafter-rattling calls add to it.

"A Horrorshow Cooperative" is the first part of a three-song suite—followed by "Some Kind of Stopwatch" and "Reverse Beartraps"—which is the thematic core of *Liberum*, and also shows off the young group's ability to compose on a continuum. Each of the three stands well on its own, but they also connect well to each other—and it's not just the trailing interludes. *Liberum* is the perfect example of the benefits of revision. Next time an instructor asks for a second draft or for edits they might have a good idea there.

John Schlotfeld won't be making any resolutions this year.

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ART/EXHIBITS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa

www.blackiowa.org

Check website for locations

No Roads Lead to Buxton, ongoing • Edna Griffin...

Iowa's Rosa Parks, Jan. 16, 1pm

AKAR

257 E. Iowa Ave. Iowa City

www.akardesign.com

30x5 Show, ongoing

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

Drawn to Drawing, Jan. 2 - Apr. 18 • Less is More: The Vogel Collection, Jan. 23 - May 2 • Creative Connections: Artists in Action with Michelle Fischer, Jan. 9, 10:30am • 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

Stephen Klopp: Out of the Countryside, through Feb. 1

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Translations, ongoing

Herbert Hoover Presidential Museum

West Branch

www.nps.gov/heho

Patterns of the Past: A Century of American Quilting, 1840-1940, Jan. 23 - Mar. 21 • Iowa A to Z, ongoing

Hudson River Gallery

538 South Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.hudsonrivergallery.com

Deborah Zisko and Michael Kienzle Out of Doors, through Jan. 9 • Terry Riley opens January

Iowa Artisans Gallery

207 E. Washington, Iowa City

www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com

Contemporary Bookwork, a Juried Members' Show, Jan. 8 - Feb. 15

Johnson County Historical Society

310 5th St., Coralville

www.jchsiowa.org

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

Old Capitol Museum

Pentacrest, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap

WorldCanvass with host Joan Kjaer, Jan. 22, 5 - 7pm • 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

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Bearfoot, bluegrass from Alaska, Jan. 20, 8 pm • Chris Proctor, Jan 24, 7 pm • Garnet Rogers, Jan 29, 8 pm • Genticorum, Jan. 30, 8pm

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Mozart's "La Finta Giardiniera", Jan. 29-31

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Study Hall, the game, Sundays, 9pm-Midnight

Open Mic with J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up

Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays

The Beaker Brothers, Jan. 2, 9pm • Liberty Leg, The Can Kickers, The Twelve Canons, Jan. 5, 9pm • James Kennedy & Friends, Jan.6 • The Sound Thoughts, Jan. 7, 9pm • 12th Annual Elvis Tribute and Benefit, Jan. 8, TBD • Bob Dorr & The Blue Band, Jan. 9, 8pm • Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Jan 13, 7pm • Jookabox w. Molly Ringwald, Happy Chromosomes, Hey Hello, Jan. 15, 9pm • Andy Carlson and Casey Cook, Jan. 16, 8pm • Bowerbirds w. Sharon Van Etten, Jan. 18, 9pm • Elsinore, Jan. 20, 9pm • Miles Nielsen, Jan. 21, 9pm • Monadnoc, Olivia Rose Muzzy, Skye Carrasco, Jan. 26, 9pm • Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, Jan 27, 7pm • Desdamaona, Jan. 28, 9pm • New Duncan Imperials, Jan. 29, 9pm • Adobanga w. All Rattle & Dust, Sarah Cram & the Derelicts, Jan. 30, 9pm • Vagabonds, Dewi Sant, Vincent Peiffer, Feb. 2, 9pm

Orchestra Iowa

www.orchestraiowa.org

Check website for locations

Fire and Ice, Jan. 23, 8pm, Sinclair Auditorium • Fire and Ice, Jan 24, 2pm, West High School

The Picador

330 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.thepicador.com

All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Demolisher with When Forever Ends the Challenge Up! and Fall Dividing the Masses, Jan. 15, 6pm • Datagun CD Release Party, Jan. 22, 9pm • In Defense with Special Guests, The Horde, Jan. 29, 9pm • Raise the Red Lantern, Jan. 30, 9pm • Mountains with Tape, Feb.1, 9pm

Public Space One

129 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.myspace.com/publicspaceone

Stubborn Tiny Lights vs Clustering Darkness Forever OK?, the New Bodies, Jan. 2, 9pm • Molly Ringwald, Limbs & Digits, Disgruntled Noise Box, Billy Harris, Jan. 7, 7pm • The Work Clock Does, Claudia Nagy, more TBA, Jan. 8, 8pm • Sam Lockeward, Viking Fuck, Yuppies, These Needles, Jan. 9, 9pm • Dadacom, Yaw-nee, Staples, Jan. 15, 8pm • Marlo Eggplant, more TBA, Feb. 1, 10pm

University of Iowa Music Dept

www.uiowa.edu/~music

See website for locations

Zoran Jakovcic, violin; Anton Jakovcic, viola; Wendy Warner, cello; Rene Lecuona, piano, Jan. 20, 7pm • Katherine Eberle, Jan. 24, 7pm • "Strike Duo," Center for New Music guest artist, Jan.26, 7:30pm • La Finta Giardiniera, opera, Jan. 29-30, 8pm, Jan. 31, 2pm

Uptown Bill's Small Mall

401 S. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.uptownbills.org

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

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.uscellularcenter.com

Three Days Grace with Breaking Benjamin and Flyleaf, Jan. 27, 7pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City

www.iowacityyachtclub.org

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Dennis McMurrin and the Demolition Band + Matt Skinner and James, Jan. 2, 10pm • Roster McCabe + Bulletproof Motive, Jan. 8, 9pm • Collectible Boys, Jan. 9, 9pm • Porch Builder + Dogs and Cats Living Together, Jan. 15, 9pm • Colin Braley and Company + Lick it Ticket, Jan. 16, 9pm • 7th Anniversary Party Jan. 23, 4pm • Heatbox + Dr. Z's Experiment, Jan. 29, 9pm

THEATER/DANCE/PERFORMANCE

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

Church Basement Ladies, Jan. 16, 2pm & 7pm • Hope Lodge Magic Show, Jan. 18, 7pm

A-LIST



Bowerbirds

January 18th, 9pm
The Mill

Bowerbirds finally return to the Mill on January 18th, and if the bookers are at all smart they'll charge mortgages for spots on the floor. At their Mission Creek show in April (their bus broke down in August, preventing an encore), the nature-centric folk trio competed against the GZA for the crown of the night and won handily.

On paper, their vocal-harmonies-meets-Walden aesthetic might turn off the hardened set—and this year's *Upper Air* lacks the magic concoction of their lush debut—but seeing Bowerbirds live can jostle the skeptic into peaceful ecstasy, and that's no easy feat. To boot, lead singer/songwriter Phil Moore attended The University of Iowa.

Aspiring indie stargazers, here's your high point in the sky. Tickets are \$8 in advance and at the door—a steal.

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu

See website for temporary locations

Thank You, Gregory: A Triute to the Legends of Tap, Jan. 23

Iowa Theatre Artists

4709 220th Tr., Amana

www.iowatheatreartists.org

Check website for showtimes

2010 Winterfest Dance, Jan. 23, 8pm - 11:30pm

No Shame Theatre

Theatre B, UI Theatre Building

www.noshame.org

Fridays in January, 11pm

Penguin's Comedy Club

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

www.penguinscomedyclub.com

Check website for showtimes

Jason Russel with Richie "The Hammer" Holiday, Jan. 1 & 2 • Chris "Boom Boom" Johnson's World, Jan. 8 & 9 • Tom Arnold, Jan. 14 • Henry Phillips, Jan. 15 & 16 • Mike Armstrong, Jan. 22 & 23 • B.T. with Todd Andrews, Jan. 29 & 30

Riverside Theatre

213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City

www.riversidetheatre.org

Check website for showtimes

End Days, Jan. 29 through Feb. 21

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside

www.riversidecasinoandresort.com

Jason Latimer: Illusionist, Jan. 20, 8pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City

www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com

Shows start at 9:30pm

Darryl Rhodes, Benny Quash, Jan. 20, 9pm • Ward

Anderson, Bill Squire, Jan. 27, 9pm

Theatre Cedar Rapids

4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.theatre.org

The Laramie Project, Jan. 15 - 24

The University of Iowa Theatre

Main Theatre Building, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~theatre

Check website for showtimes

Nostalgium, Jan. 29-30, 8pm

WORDS

University of Iowa

calendar.uiowa.edu

See website for locations

Daniyal Mueenuddin, Jan. 21, 7pm • Dean Baker,

"The Great Recession: How We Got Here and How

We Got Out", Jan. 27, 7-9pm • Jerald Walker, Feb.

01, 7pm • Joshua Ferris, Feb. 2, 7pm

CINEMA

Alexis Park Inn

1165 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City

www.alexisparkinn.com

Aviaton Movie Night, Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25 6:30pm

Bijou Theatre

IMU, UI Campus, Iowa City

www.bijoutheatre.org

Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans, Red

Cliff, Jan. 22-28 • Women in Trouble, Good Hair,

Jan. 29-Feb. 4

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Copyright Criminals (Screening Party), Jan. 19

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~nathist

Meet Me in St. Louis, Jan. 31, 2pm

KIDS

The Iowa Children's Museum

1451 Coral Ridge Ave., Coralville

www.theicm.org

Art Adventure: Lava Lamp, Jan. 7 • Art Adventure:

Season of Scraps, Jan. 14 • Martin Luther King

Day Celebration, Jan. 18 • Art Adventure:

Cardboard Collage, Jan. 21 • Art Adventure: Festive

Decorations

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

Owls: Whooo are you?, Jan. 9, 1pm • Storytime

Explorers: Arctic Animals, Jan. 17, 2pm

MISC

Critical Hit Games

89 Second St, Coralville

www.criticalhitgames.net

Board Game Night, Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26

CSPS/Legion Arts

1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids

www.legionarts.org

Salsa classes with CR Salsa, Jan. 9, 3:30-5:30 pm

• From New Orleans, The Crossroads Project, Jan

15-17 • Salsa classes with CR Salsa, Jan 16, 3:30-

5:30 pm

Johnson County Historical Society

310 5th St., Coralville

www.jchsiowa.org

3rd Annual Coralville WinterFest, Jan. 31, 1-4pm at

the Coralville River Landing

PATV

206 Lafayette St., Iowa City

www.patv.tv

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What's up with compostable plastics?

The restaurant around the corner from where I work has started using corn-based “compostable” plastic takeout containers. They have a “7” recycling logo on the bottom, but also say they can't be recycled with other clear plastics. What happens to these if I just throw them out?

—Pattee Smithee

The short answer is: probably nothing. Compostable merely means the stuff is capable of being composted. There's no guarantee it will be, and given how much would need to go right, most likely it won't. That's not necessarily a problem. For years we've been told biodegradability is good, but you know what? A few scientists now suggest that, in some circumstances, maybe it's not. Confused? We're just getting started. First let's get a couple things straight.

The triangular chasing-arrows symbol with a number inside doesn't mean the product bearing it can be recycled. As I've explained before, it merely indicates what type of plastic the thing's made from. Type 7 is miscellaneous, which can't be recycled because the materials in the mix may have different melting points and such. Plastic types 3 through 6 can theoretically be recycled but seldom are because the financial return is minimal.

Second, keep in mind that composting and recycling are two different things. Nobody's talking about reusing compostable plastic to manufacture something else; they just want it to disintegrate into something simple and harmless. The problem is, our idea of what's harmless has changed.

That brings us to your question. Several different types of “environmentally friendly” plastics are being promoted these days. Here are three approaches thought to be commercially viable:

- Biodegradable plastics break down naturally in the environment without special treat-

ment. However, they're mostly made from nonrenewable petrochemicals and sometimes leave toxic residues.

- Oxo-biodegradable plastics contain chemicals that act like a time bomb, breaking the plastic apart after it's exposed to heat or sunlight. The process works, although not quickly.
- Compostable plastics are designed to break down under “composting conditions” and support plant growth without poisoning the environment in the process. The advantage of compostable plastic is that it's made from a re-

compost pile from cow manure, wood shavings, and waste feed that reached 149 degrees Fahrenheit.

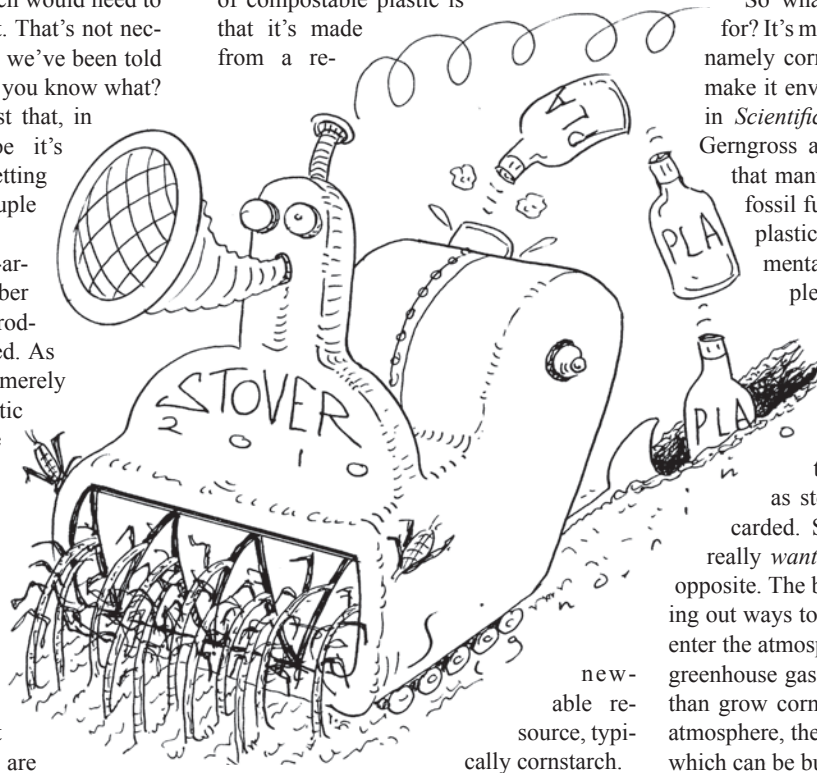
But what if you have less ambition, or less manure? Then it's best to keep PLA separate, since it might interfere with regular composting. You could try to sending PLA trash to a dedicated PLA composting operation, if you can find one. Realistically, though, most compostable plastic is going to wind up in a landfill with all the other trash, where it'll last just about as long.

So what's compostable plastic good for? It's made from a renewable resource, namely corn, but that doesn't necessarily make it environmentally friendly. Writing in *Scientific American* in 2000, Tillman Gerngross and Steven Slater pointed out that manufacturing PLA required more fossil fuels than it takes to make most plastics, canceling out the environmental benefit. They weren't completely down on the stuff, though, and pointed out two benefits you might not suspect. First, much of the energy needed to turn corn into plastic could be obtained by burning the stalks and leaves, known as stover, which are normally discarded. Second, they argue, we don't really want PLA to biodegrade—just the opposite. The big push these days is on figuring out ways to sequester carbon so it doesn't enter the atmosphere as CO₂, one of the major greenhouse gases. What better way to do that than grow corn, which sucks CO₂ out of the atmosphere, then use the corn to make plastic, which can be buried underground after use?

Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying this is accepted scientific advice. But it's not out of the question that years from now the environmentally responsible thing may be to use all the plant-derived plastic packaging you can and then throw the stuff away.

—CECIL ADAMS

Comments, questions? Take it up with Cecil on the Straight Dope Message Board, straightdope.com, or write him at the Chicago Reader, 11 E. Illinois, Chicago 60611. And now you can subscribe to the Straight Dope podcast—search for “straight dope” in the iTunes Store.



new-
able re-
source, typi-
cally cornstarch.

Probably the most common compostable plastic is polylactic acid, or PLA, which is made by a company called Cargill Dow, a joint venture of Dow Chemical and Cargill, the big agricultural processor. Used in everything from drink cups and water bottles to deli trays, PLA is advertised as compostable. However, breaking it down requires a special industrial facility that exposes the plastic to 140-degree-Fahrenheit heat for at least ten days—something you're not going to get by tossing it on your backyard pile of grass clippings. I'm not saying it's impossible to do yourself—some guys from Michigan State managed it by building a high-temperature

ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR JANUARY 2010

FOR EVERYONE—Vision vs. Budget. January is a major turning point. We will all begin implementing the tough decisions we have had to make. Options that are no longer realistic, if they ever were, will vanish. We will all have to work with tight budgets, also. Progress will be a matter of doing something new and different with what we already have. However, January will also make it clear that careful budgeting isn't enough. To succeed, we must work to fulfill a vision of new possibilities. The planets will not support those who only use budgeting to get by until things go back to the way they were, until all this blows over. Your dreams for the future have an important role to play.

♈ ARIES—Accept it gracefully. January brings unavoidable endings and beginnings. Major work and partnership issues are coming to a head. The actions of friends and youngsters are forcing your hand, too, making complex life decisions more complicated. It will be awhile before things settle into a steady, predictable rhythm, but you can make progress more or less comfortably. Feelings of frustration could run fairly high, though, and the wrong words could cause pain. Don't read too much into things. A healing influence will soon start affecting your innermost thoughts and feelings.

♉ TAURUS—Ride it out. The times are demanding hard choices and sacrifices. Difficult decisions are being made. Some things are changing forever. But, while others have to take a direct hit, Taurus can take events in stride. You almost have no choice but to persist and pitch in where you can. You are well-placed to positively influence the way higher ups respond to events. Help smooth the transition by adding key bits of advice and information. You might feel powerless, but your contribution is benefiting many. Recent financial pressures will ease.

♊ GEMINI—Rumor control. The action isn't in Gemini's backyard. It isn't under your control. The big decisions have already been made, for now. The challenge is to deal with a new and rapidly unfolding situation. Protect yourself and others from the corrosive effects of false rumors and bogus theories about what's happening. They are more damaging than they seem. You will soon be in greater harmony with the forces of change. This will increase your influence and enhance your control over events around you. Financially, you are entering a cycle of consolidation.

♋ CANCER—Courage. Your life and your relations with others are being transformed, irrevocably. You can handle it. Others might need some help, though. Few can see beyond appearances or hear the truth behind the words as well as you can. Few can communicate difficult truths as gently as you. Things are even less stable than they seem, however, and you need to help people understand that. You might need to endure hurtful attacks. Say what needs saying. Don't overreact to those who disagree, however sharply. Remaining calm and civil is key.

♌ LEO—Complicated times. New policies are being implemented at work. You will also be channeling the turbulent thoughts and feelings of people around you as they cope with complicated events in their own lives. Feelings are running high. Some people are reacting strangely. Strive to be inclusive, supportive and upbeat in all that you say. New, exciting opportunities for personal growth and expansion will soon emerge. You will need to plan carefully to take advantage of them, however. Excess enthusiasm could lead to missteps. The wrong word could cause an uproar.

♍ VIRGO—Makeover. You have long had high ideals and a desire to play a larger role in events. But few are born knowing how to play such a role. Idealism and ambition aren't enough. One needs the emotional and social skills that allow people to function effectively in a leadership role. January 2010 will test the progress of your efforts to develop these skills. Your ability, and your willingness, to work effectively with others will be the key issue. Humility and flexibility are more important now than high ideals and ambition.

♎ LIBRA—Make it close up and personal. January brings a big change in your home and work life. It's important to take a personal, hands-on approach to finding solutions and sorting out details. Work carefully with individuals, establish and nurture relationships. This approach will succeed almost magically. Hands-off, top-down approaches, drawing flow charts and writing memos, for example, will backfire. A supportive influence is now affecting your long-term finances. Difficulties in this area should ease. The winds of change will soon start affecting your most important business and personal relationships.

♏ SCORPIO—Act locally. Community relations are becoming increasingly important and January marks a turning point in your community involvements. Decisions and commitments will be called for. Be at your most diplomatic because feelings will be running high and tempers could easily flare. Rumors and gossip could also play a destructive role. Avoid them. Be attentive to details. Make your contributions specific, concrete and directly relevant. The abstract, general approach will fall flat and multiply problems. Financial and budgetary constraints will soon begin easing. The planets will support more rest and recreation.

♐ SAGITTARIUS—Vision vs. Reality vs. Budget. Your hopes are pulling you in one direction, financial concerns in another. January will bring this conflict to the fore. It will not be a question of abandoning your dreams. It will be more a question of how to coax reality in the direction you want it to go in. Use what you have in new ways. Don't expand in directions you can't afford, whatever the temptation. Impatience isn't your friend right now, especially if it involves taking on more debt. It's time to consolidate.

♑ CAPRICORN—Trail blazing. January will bring major personal revelations for Capricorn. Your own notions of who you are and what you stand for will change. People in your life will also begin to regard you differently. And you will find yourself at a threshold, needing to find a way forward. True progress will be impossible without an inspiring plan. Good bookkeeping and sound budgeting are crucial, but your vision for the future is equally important, now. Use available resources in the service of new and creative ideas. Reach out into the community.

♒ AQUARIUS—Game changer. January will help Aquarius break free of old attitudes and patterns. This will liberate you psychologically and spiritually. It will also give you greater freedom in employment areas. Your circle of influence will begin to grow. You will become more involved and active in the world. People love to tell Aquarians that their ideas are unrealistic. But all those practical people will soon be helpless without your idealism and vision. Sidestep potentially troublesome arguments over irrelevant and obscure issues. Stick to your budget. You can still be innovative.

♓ PISCES—New role models. Pisces is officially beginning a new cycle of personal growth and prosperity. The forces of change that transformed your personal identity will soon go to work transforming your place in the economic scheme of things. However, you are entering a new life situation and you'll need to find new paradigms, new mentors—new people to model yourself on. You need to clear psychological cobwebs that have accumulated to overcome professional challenges. Efforts to maintain social habits and relationships that you have outgrown could lead to problems.



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