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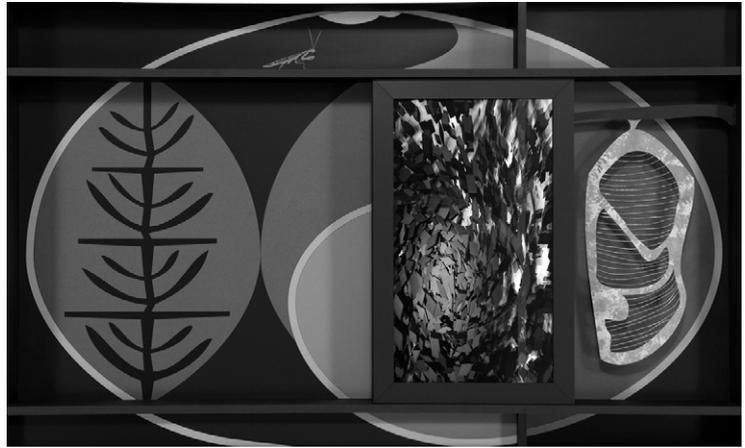
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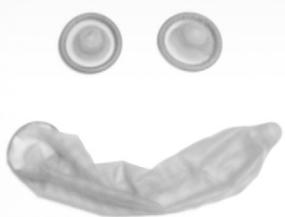
Image: John F. Simon, Jr., *Spiral*, 2007, software, LCD screen, Formica, acrylic plastic, gouache on paper, lacquered wood, 44 x 72 x 6 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

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The future is now

CORRECTION: In our April issue we ran a photo essay on body art. The bio of the photographer did not appear alongside her work. Dawn Frary is a professional photographer and the owner of the Dewey Street Photo Company. She has several tattoos but her favorites are the paw prints of her kitty Sunshine, who passed away last year. You can find more of her work on her blog: deweystreetphotocompany.wordpress.com.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

SALUTATIONS, NORTHERN LAND MASS, AND WELCOME AGAIN TO **GLOX NEWS!**

OUR TOP STORY: A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE HAS BEEN CAUGHT INSERTING HIS PRO-CREATIVE TENTACLES INTO THE BREEDING RECEPTACLES OF **INAPPROPRIATE MATING PARTNERS!**

THE ATHLETE WAS QUICK TO GEN-U-FLECT BEFORE HIS MERCHANT-CASTE SPONSORS, BUT THE IMPORTANT QUESTION **REMAINS--**

--WILL THEY CONTINUE TO SUPPLY HIM WITH THE QUANTITY OF SHINY STONES TO WHICH HE HAS BECOME **ACCUSTOMED?**

IN A **RELATED** STORY, TITILLATING IMAGES OF THE FEMALE SENTIENT WITH WHOM A FORMER **POLITICIAN** ONCE INAPPROPRIATELY MATED HAVE BEEN UPLOADED TO THE **DATANET!**

WE AT GLOX ARE EXTREMELY **SHOCKED** BY THESE EXPLICIT IMAGES, WHICH ARE CURRENTLY SUPERIMPOSED ON YOUR VIEWScreens.

IN **OTHER** NEWS, THE ANOINTED REPRESENTATIVES OF A CULTURALLY ENTRENCHED INSTITUTION DEVOTED TO JUDGING THE CONDUCT OF OTHERS **AGAIN** STAND ACCUSED OF PERSONALLY ABHORRENT BEHAVIOR.

MISTAKES WERE MADE, AND WE HOPE IN ALL SINCERITY THAT SENTIENTS WILL POLITELY **OVERLOOK** THEM!

AS USUAL.

AND **FINALLY--**A CONTROVERSY RECENTLY ERUPTED WHEN OFFICIALS OF THE PARTY WHICH **SHOULD** BE IN POWER WERE SEEN DISTRIBUTING SHINY STONES AT AN ESTABLISHMENT OF INTOXICATION AND SIMULATED EXOTIC MATING RITUAL OBSERVATION!

HOWEVER, THE OFFICIALS ASSURE THEY WERE THERE FOR **LEGITIMATE BUSINESS PURPOSES--**

--AND NO SIGNIFICANT OBSERVATION OF SIMULATED EXOTIC MATING RITUALS **OCCURRED!**

COMING UP NEXT: A POPULAR INFODRAMA ACTRESS ACCIDENTALLY REVEALS HER REPRODUCTIVE APPARATUS TO A SENTIENT WITH A RECORDING DEVICE!

WE'LL HAVE THE IMPORTANT **DETAILS** AFTER THESE MESSAGES!

TOM TOMORROW © 2010 ... www.thismodernworld.com

That Black Iowa Dirt

Schump!

I create two holes in my lawn, two or three inches deep, six inches apart. It's time to let the air in.

Schump!

Six or eight inches away, I press my hand lawn aerator down into the moist ground again. Three-or-four-inch-long cores of mud, looking like grayish-brown cigars, pop out of the top of the tubes as the prongs go down again. It's time to let the air in.

It's a beautiful early spring Saturday, the day before Easter, in fact. The temperature will probably see 70 today, an early gift of the summer to come. The sunshine on my neck is warm, a feeling I've missed for many months. As Christians prepare to celebrate the breath of a resurrected spirit promising new life, and as Jews celebrate their people's new breath of freedom, I work at my personal offices of spring, trying to breathe new air—and re-borning life—into the ground of my home.

By most standards, our back yard is pathetic. We never have and never will use the poisons that make lawns full and gorgeous (and toxic). The four greyhounds for whom the yard is their hunting ground (mostly aspirational), retirement racing track, and rest room have worn much of the grass to a laughable state. Although we've replaced much of the lawn with a prairie

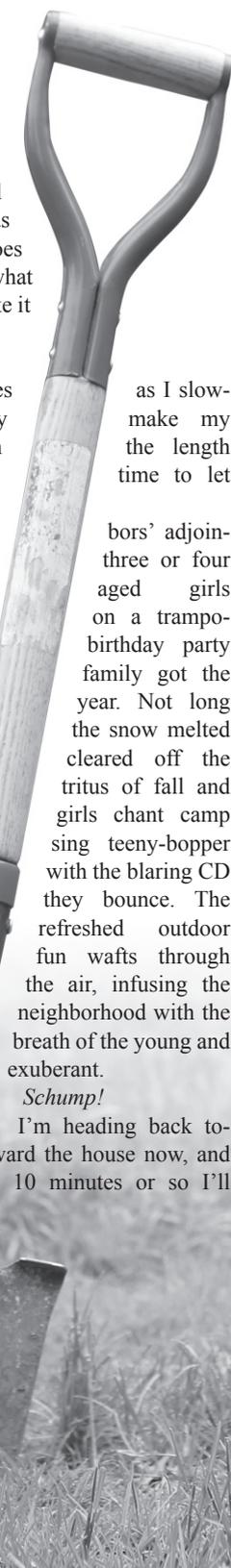
On the prairie, the buffalo and prairie dogs performed these tasks.

patch, three good-sized raised garden beds, and a corner planted with small trees, bushes, hostas and ferns, lawn does remain. I'm doing what I can to at least make it a little less pathetic.

Schump!

A few more holes ly, methodically way up and down of the yard. It's the air in.

In our neighboring back yard, junior-high are bouncing line as part of festivities. The trampoline last ago, the last of off, and they dust and de-winter. The rhymes and songsalong player as sound of



as I slowly make my length time to let bors' adjoining three or four aged girls on a trampoline birthday party family got the year. Not long the snow melted cleared off the tritus of fall and girls chant camp sing teeny-bopper with the blaring CD they bounce. The refreshed outdoor fun wafts through the air, infusing the neighborhood with the breath of the young and exuberant.

Schump!

I'm heading back toward the house now, and in 10 minutes or so I'll

turn around and head back the other direction. My yard is starting to resemble a green and brown giant waffle. But it's time to let the air in.

A lawn service company would come and do this for me in 10 or 15 minutes flat with a motorized aerator. It would also blow petroleum-soaked pollutants into the air and make an ungodly noise. I prefer to use my simple hand device, a 10-dollar green metal tube with two prongs to make two holes at a time—it extends the force of my bodily effort rather than replacing it with gas and gears. It takes a little sweat and a fair amount of time. But a yard is part of home, and the manual offices of spring present their own joy and intimacy as I slowly meander back and forth across literally every square inch of the little plot of ground behind our house.

Schump!

I need to look up at my mark along the fence at the back of the yard or along the house every two or three punches. Otherwise my methodicalness becomes meandering. That's not such a big deal—the pattern isn't that important. But I appreciate the sense of order, and I want to give all parts of this well-worn ground the same chance to let the air in.

The magnolia tree is pregnant with buds. The fuzzy light green knobs at the ends of the branches almost seem to be trembling in their desire to burst open. Hints of white and maroon peek through the tops. The petals will emerge and spread and sing their beauty soon as the buds let more and more of the warming air in.

GRASS CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 >>

In Tandem

Iowa City residents want a few things. They want alternative modes of transportation and a safe, comprehensive bike path that loops throughout Johnson County. At least they wanted these things back in September of 2001 when The Gazette polled citizens for their top ideas to improve the city.

That was nearly 10 years ago, and today, residents are still looking for the same things. The Johnson County Council of Governments (JCCOG) is working to make these improvements happen. JCCOG has outlined and implemented six plans for bicycle trails since 1968.

In Iowa City, workers commute on bike and foot at a rate six times higher than the national average.

“The [older] plans were based on the existing conditions of the day,” Kristopher Ackerson said. Ackerson, an Assistant Transportation Planner with the JCCOG, explained that those plans built the basic trail system that exists today in Johnson County. An updated plan was released in November 2009 to address the current needs of the residents of Johnson County.

“Instead of focusing on trails, it has a broader perspective,” Ackerson said. “It addresses bike parking, education programs, ways law enforcement can improve, and on-street bike lanes.”

This new plan elevated the status of Iowa City among bicycling communities by securing the distinction of “Bicycle Friendly Community” by the League of American Bicyclists.

“It recognizes us for what we’ve done, and it helps us identify things we can do to become the next level up,” Ackerson said, noting that Iowa City is currently at the bronze level of Bicycle Friendly Communities. With the cur-

rent plan they are working toward achieving the silver level of distinction.

Ideally, as a result of this master bike plan, the number of people in Johnson County who bike for recreation and transportation will increase. To date, Johnson County has over 40 miles of bike trails. These trails, along with bike lanes that line city streets, are working toward making Iowa City move a bit more on



two wheels.

Amy Fletcher, an American College of Sports Medicine Health Fitness Specialist and Fitness Specialist at The University of Iowa’s Health Iowa, emphasizes the importance of having trails and bike lanes that are useful.

“It’s not just sidewalks and trails,” Fletcher said. “People will be more willing to go if it goes somewhere.”

Bike lanes on roads should allow bicyclists to travel to the grocery store, post office or work. In Iowa City, workers commute on bike and foot at a rate six times higher than the na-

Bike-to-Work Week

May 16-21

**Sunday,
May 16, 9am**

Breakfast & Ride starting at Geoff’s Bike & Ski, 816 S. Gilbert St.

**Monday,
May 17, 11:50am**

Bike-Bus-Car Race from the Coralville Public Library to the Iowa City Public Library among Coralville Council Member Tom Gill, Iowa City Council Member Mike Wright, and Johnson County Supervisor Jenelle Rettig

**Wednesday,
May 19, 6:45pm**

Ride of Silence to mourn and honor fallen and injured cyclists, beginning at the intersection of Washington and Dubuque streets

**Thursday,
May 20, 5:30pm**

Iowa City New Pi to Coralville New Pi Ride with music, food and door prizes

**Friday,
May 21, FAW**

After-work gathering at Vito’s, 118 E. College St.

For information on Iowa City’s Bike-to-Work Week visit www.b2wwic.org

More online resources for Iowa bicyclists include www.iowabicyclecoalition.org and www.bicyclistsoflowacity.org

BIKES CONTINUED ON PAGE 23>>



Chris Varcadipane lands a rail slide at the Iowa City Skate Park.

“Ok! One more in the rain!”

Seconds later, Matt Pierson drops five feet to the bottom of the ramp as a dozen other skaters look on.

As in most cities, skateboarding is frowned on, or illegal, in most of the prime organic spots for pulling tricks. So, for Iowa City’s skateboard crew, this is their only approved playground.

This year, like every since 2002, when the snow is gone, the Iowa City Skate Park is populated by young boarders honing their skills. And sometimes, even if it’s wet, the show goes on. **lv**

Andrew Sherburne





Jacob Vance soars over a wall bisecting the pool wall.




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DANGEROUS CURVES

I am in a large, crowded and noisy room watching a group of women on roller skates delivering powerful and cringe-inducing hits to one another and taking spills that no amount of protective padding—store bought or God-given—could ever fully protect them from.

By day, they are college professors and paramedics and stay-at-home moms, police officers, construction workers, office workers, massage therapists and college students.

But not tonight.

Tonight they are Animal Mother, Bat R Up, Fannysaurus Wrex, Fonda Cuffs, Furyis Jorge, Hitzy Blonde, Left 4 Deadwards, Joy FullPain, Ophelia Fracture, PsychO AnalyzeHer, Toxic Sugar, Triple D. Zaster, GLADi8Her and Zom B Blokr, among others.

They are Iowa City's Old Capitol City Roller Girls, and whatever caring or nurturing or healing or mothering instincts any of them may have were checked at the door when they arrived.

It's bout night and there's only one thing they're here to do, and if it doesn't involve the kicking of ass and the taking of names, it will just have to wait.

Founded in October 2008, Iowa City's Old Capitol City Roller Girls are three games

into their first full season (with a 2-1 record) and have grown from just five people at their very first meeting to an active roster of 20 "bout-ready" skaters and 12 women comprising their "fresh meat" group of skaters-in-training.

In this time, they've planted deep roots in the community, have earned a reputation as one of the most exciting shows in town and have a large, diverse and passionate fan base to show for it.

Made up of women from ages 20 to 50, the team is open to anyone willing to put in the tremendous amount of hard work necessary to join their ranks.

Tonya Kehoe, the team's co-captain and coach of the "fresh meat" skaters says that they'll "take people at whatever fitness level they're at. Most of them don't have any previous skating experience, and even if they do, this isn't just skating in the park. It takes at least six months of training before they're ready to bout."

That training includes five hours of group practice each week plus assorted "dry land" or off-skate conditioning exercises skaters are expected to do at home to build up their balance, agility and core strength.

"There's a place for everybody. Big and strong? We'll use you. Tiny and skinny and fast? We'll use you."

—TONYA KEHOE

"Injuries are common," she says, "like any full contact sport. So the first thing I teach them is safe falls and safe stops. The concrete floor is hard and isn't going to get any softer. Our number one priority here is safety."

Those injuries have included twisted and broken ankles, bruised ribs, broken fingers and "rink rash," the skaters' term for the abrasions caused when bare skin slides across hard floors at high speeds.

"But that's what all this training is for," she adds, "it's like a boot camp where we get them in shape and teach them how to play. And we'll never send anybody out with the wolves before it's too soon—a lot of people are afraid of that."

Watching the collisions they endure and hits they lay on each other just during practice, I

can definitely see why.

In addition to the half-year commitment just to practicing before they might see action in a bout, each player has to pay monthly dues to participate and has to have insurance coverage that will cover any injuries they suffer.

The skaters are also responsible for purchasing their own "kit" (skates, helmet, wrist guards, elbow pads, knee pads and a mouth guard) that can run from \$250 to \$500, a considerable investment just to join the team.

"We do this because we want to do this," says Laura Claps, the team's bout-day captain as well as a coach. "This isn't high school or college. Nobody is doing this for a scholarship or to fit in. Nobody was pressured into this by their parents. Our own drive is what brought us here."

What is it that drives so many women from such different backgrounds to something so physically, emotionally and financially demanding?

Amber MacMillan, who's been on the team for just over two months, sums it up best. "It's the camaraderie," she says, "it's amazing. Really like a family. Everyone has been very welcoming and supportive even from the first day I just came to watch."

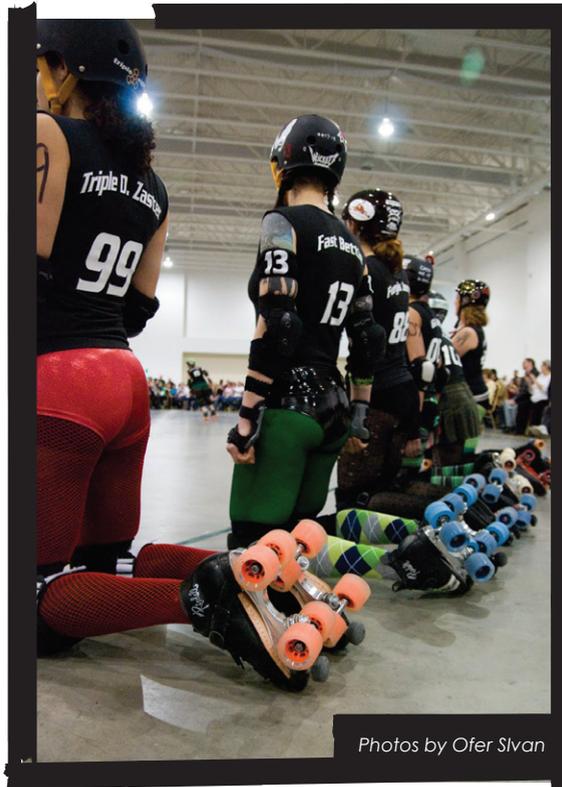
I hear an almost identical sentiment from all of the skaters I talk to.

"All sports have a certain amount of camaraderie," Claps says, "but the bond you make with other women playing roller derby is tighter than any of the other sports I've ever played. We come to practice and literally beat the living shit out of each other; we push each other right up to the brink of blowing up. That's going to create a really tight bond."

"That's what's so great about derby," Kehoe adds, "It is a sisterhood. It's inclusive. It's

non-discriminatory. There's a place for everybody. Big and strong? We'll use you. Tiny and skinny and fast? We'll use you."

"It can be a very tricky thing," Claps adds, "working with so many strong and independently-minded women, but it's also very rewarding."



Photos by Ofer Slvan

To play a fast and (literally) rough-and-tumble sport like roller derby requires a tremendous amount of practice, as well as a very high tolerance for pain.

At one of their practices, held at the Marriott convention center, I watched 30 women of a variety of sizes and ages skate in a circle around the track that's been marked off on

the polished concrete floor in the large empty space.

After a particularly vicious collision—of which there have been many—one of the skaters was slow getting up.

After being tended to by some coaches, she gingerly gets back on her feet and skates slowly towards me while holding her hand to an area just below her hip.

She sits down in obvious pain and

“Hit her so hard she pees,” one of them yells.

picks up a bottle of water.

"What happened?" I ask her.

"I think I broke a fallopian tube," she says between sips of water.

In all the years I've played or watched a variety of sports, this is the first time I've ever heard someone complain of this injury. But I've never been to a women's roller derby practice either.

"When it's bout day, it's their job to knock people down, it's their job to hit hard and it's their job to beat you," says Claps, "If I can prepare them for that in the most brutal way ever I'm okay with that."

The drill she's running, called "Blood and Thunder," is brutal, but it's exciting enough that I could watch it for hours.

DERBY CONTINUED ON PAGE 18>>

WHERE WILL YOU GO THIS YEAR?

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Where's the line?

Iowa City is in the midst of a cultural identity crisis. With the passing of a 21-only ordinance by the city council on April 6, it seems the like the lights of enforcement have turned on way too bright after last call. I encourage everyone to read the transcript of this meeting—it is a brilliant prism of conflict concerning the culture of drinking. However, don't mistake this ordinance for anything other than a serious shift for Iowa City culturally and economically. Frankly, the whole discussion left a bad taste in my mouth like a NA beer.

This is an argument that rages within the confines of the town's own identity blanketed with the economics of partying. This clamp down, this debate, is not just about morals; it is about money. It is about who occupies our store fronts. The businesses this concerns, the very shape of the ped mall is at heart of this legal wrangling. As the town keeps shedding and re-growing its skin, what remains is the body of square feet. What the makeup of the body contains is at question.

The timing of this ordinance is particularly cruel to locally owned businesses. The shift to

city wide 21-only referendum will likely happen in November?

The recently passed ordinance is punishing in its nature. Moreover, I am willing to bet that it won't make a bit of difference in reducing underage drinking. You can't legislate morality. If dangerous drinking can be curbed, it has to be curbed from within the community in question. The undergraduate community has to realize that they can still party hard, but they have

actually belong and contribute to the quality of life here in Iowa City.

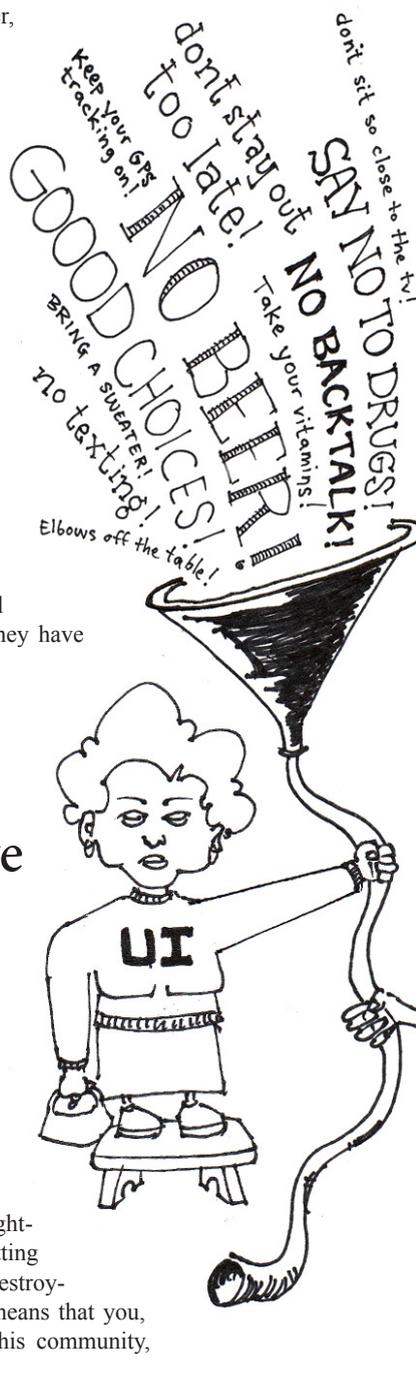
What has our little diamond in the rough become? Let me make a biased 30-year timeline concerning alcohol, the university and the ped mall.

From 1972 to 1986, the drinking age in this state was 19. In 1984, the federal government held the states hostage with the threat of withholding federal highway monies if they didn't raise the drinking age to 21. This was in the interest of uniformity—to eliminate the issue of what was called "bloody borders," the phenomenon of 18- to 20-year-olds driving to a different state in order to drink. In the summer of 1986, the State of Iowa went to 21 as the legal drinking age. This federally enforced change made the United States a minority in

The undergrad community has to realize that they can still party hard, but they have to take care of their own.

21 is set for June 1, the beginning of the slow season for downtown Iowa City. It squeezes the already diminished income even further for local bars. I would argue that the timing of this ordinance is intentional economic shiv to the businesses that rallied the student vote three years ago and successfully defeated a city-wide 21-only referendum. What was the urgency of the April 6 vote when yet another

to take care of their own. It means not leaving your friend passed out on the curb. It means not drunkenly fighting. It means getting home without destroying property. It means that you, as a citizen of this community,



legal drinking ages around the world.

Throughout those changes, bars here in Iowa City were still permitted to allow 19- and 20-year-olds in. Along the way, the local legal trend has been to tighten alcohol restrictions through many angles. It was legislated that a bar patron could only buy two drinks at a time, bars could not have contests where alcohol is a prize, and two-for-one offers were banned. Every bar employee was strongly encouraged to take alcohol awareness classes in conjunction with the ICPD with the hopes of squelching under-the-table serving to minors. The fines incurred for misdemeanor violations like PAULA and public intoxication skyrocketed.

Downtown was once a place where one could buy a set of sheets, get a new hammer and go to a matinee. That all evaporated. The last dozen years have seen the ped mall turn from a retail center to an entertainment center. The two pronged assault on local businesses came with the building of the Coral Ridge Mall and the growing ease of online shopping. That shift was a difficult pill to swallow.

But through sheer tenacity, some unique retail shops survived while many storefronts turned into restaurants and drinking establishments. Along the way, we also got a new public library, a ped mall grocery store and

world: Edinburgh, Scotland, and Melbourne, Australia. Even with gentrification lurking on every corner of Mainstreet U.S.A., Iowa City kept its unique flavor. The university has always had a symbiotic relationship with the town, which ensures cultural diversity and a constant source public revenue for local enterprise.

sity stayed neutral in the 21-only referendum. Three years ago, the City Council didn't support the 21-only referendum. This time around both forces did.

At the April 6 City Council meeting, UI president Sally Mason gave a short but loaded statement in support of the 21-only ordinance. Of all the speakers in the public meetings—a

From this death came widespread change in drinking policy on campus.

There were other forces at work changing the drinking culture here in Iowa City. In 1995, a 19-year-old University of Iowa student named Matthew Garafolo died as a result of acute alcohol poisoning. He had been drinking with his fraternity brothers and reached a blood alcohol level of more than twice the legal limit. This was a preventable tragedy. No one should have to die from drinking.

From this death came widespread change in drinking policy on campus. The frats and sororities were forced to go dry. The whole campus went dry. Even if you were 21, there was to be no alcohol consumed on campus. This

is when the term "binge drinking" come into our local lexicon—and never left. By now, the general definition of binge drinking is five drinks in two hours for males and four drinks in two hours for females.

And while the university scrambled to provide

dry entertainment and alcohol education, the partying continued. It was pushed off campus and into the town. Three years ago, the univer-

statement from the university was by far the most powerful. While Mason admits that, "Alcohol is indeed a common part of the college experience, but too many of our students drink too much in ways that are way, way, way too risky." I totally agree.

But she follows with, "Accessibility is one of several empirically established predictors of high binge drinking rates and simply put, more students consume more alcohol where and when it's easier to obtain." I can even agree with that statement in general—but I don't agree with the implication that it is the bars who are providing this said alcohol. It is a false association to say that if the bars go 21, underage alcohol accessibility will decrease. The statement also implies that in the face of the town's restrictions concerning bars, the bars are still fueling binge drinking. In the light of the fact that with a few infractions of the law the bars' alcohol license would be revoked—I truly believe that underage drinking is something that bar owners take very seriously.

Mason then goes on to state that the university wants to, "redouble our efforts to re-

21 CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 >>

Downtown was once a place where one could buy a set of sheets, get a new hammer and go to a matinee.

fancy condos. In 2008, UNESCO cited Iowa City as a City of Literature, an accolade that is shared with only two other cities in the



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by Andrew Sherburne

May 2010 | Little Village

11

Drunken Nanny State

Once again, the busybodies have stormed the Barricades of Fun, and managed to pass a 21-only ordinance for bars. While I respect the sincerity of their good intentions, I think it's a really dumb idea that will hurt local businesses, without significantly curtailing underage drinking.

My personal reason for hating 21-only relate to how it has affected the live music scene in Iowa City. Back in 1997-2002 I was involved with dance music events under the name Rotation, which, for a brief time, were the biggest club draw in town. We had our rise and fall before the 19-plus law, and were actually able to run all-ages events until 2 a.m. Since a large contingent of high school students were loyal attendees,

I'm not sure we'd have done nearly as well with 19-plus rules. And the paucity of all-ages venues in Iowa City implies that there's no sustainable business model for live venues without liquor sales.

I graduated from high school in 1975, when the legal drinking age was 18. The drinking age was 18 for a five-year period from 1973 to 1978, when it was raised to 19, primarily to keep high school seniors from legally drinking. Being 6'4" at the beginning of seventh grade, I could shop the Iowa State Liquor store without getting carded from the time I was 16, and pretty much anyone who looked like they were out of middle school could get served

in bars. My wife, whose November birthday made her legal for most of her senior year, used to have a beer with her favorite teachers.

There was scarcely a party during my years at Cedar Rapids Washington that didn't feature a keg, often supplied by parents.

When I came to the UI in the fall of 1976, virtu-

after all, is pretty thirsty work. The Resident Advisors in the dorms had a party budget, and I remember such Burge basement debauches as Strip-and-Go-Naked parties, where they'd mix up the eponymous punch of Everclear, gin and lemonade in trash cans. This was, of course, during the brief interregnum between the Nixonian war on young people and Ronald Reagan's abstemious "Just Say No" regime, so alcohol had plenty of competition from other intoxicants. There were door-to-door weed salesmen in the dorms, for crying out loud.

So given the current nanny-state, hand-wringing culture, you'd imagine that the streets were awash in puke and blood, that no one graduated because they were too hungover to take their finals, that no work of any significance was ever accomplished by anyone under the age of 30. But that's not how I remember it.

It seems that then, as now, the hoary rule of thirds applies: For one third of people, alcohol and other substances were a tragedy; for another third, they were consumed as part of a more or less functional lifestyle; and the final third had little or no use for them. The real difference between then and now, at least as I perceive it, is that some students now

don't know any way to drink other than to excess. It's a lifestyle imperative.

I have a few ideas why this might be, but the primary one is that the kids coming into their majority these days have grown up in a

We were the last generation of free-range kids.



Illustration by Andrew Sherburne

ally every student here was of legal drinking age. I had more than one class as an undergraduate that had lab sections in local

drinking establishments. The Pabst truck would be parked in the middle of Dubuque Street on Friday afternoons, and roll free kegs into all the bars for happy hour. At Pizza Villa we drank beer while we made pies, which,

You'd imagine that the streets were awash in puke and blood, that no one graduated because they were too hungover to take their finals.

more fearful, circumscribed and controlled environment. We were the last generation of free-range kids, who could get on the bus and go downtown before we were 10 years old, whose mothers would kick us out of the house every afternoon until dinner time. When

The real difference between then and now, at least as I perceive it, is that some students now don't know any way to drink other than to excess.

Demon Rum lurched into our world, we experimented, puked our guts out, and made our own peace with it, all before we entered college. A lot of people I grew up with are alcoholics or drug addicts, reformed or still raging, but I can't think that we were any worse than the current generation. In some respects we may have been better behaved than the fools I see at closing time on the Ped Mall.

So congratulations to the City Council, and Sally Mason, our Nanny-in-Chief. You got what you wanted. It will do fuck-all to control alcohol abuse, but sometimes you just have to do something so you can feel like you did something. **lv**

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

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duce the harm that alcohol inflicts upon our students." Another totally reasonable goal for the UI. But when she lists these efforts, the first one is, "tougher sanctions for relevant offenses that occur off-campus..." While not saying what that exactly means, it infers that if an underage student lives off campus and gets an alcohol-related ticket, they are also in trouble with the UI. This is a kind of parental oversight that the university is not sanctioned to provide.

This is exemplified when Tom Rocklin, the vice president for student services, made a long-winded statement touting many posi-

No one during this meeting can even mention the word "tailgating." It is the love that dare not speak its name.

tive accomplishments of UI students. He expands on Mason's goals by saying the UI's revised student behavior code, "...will extend the jurisdiction of the code to all of Johnson County for most infractions." He ends with a condescending statement concerning "good choices" and "bad choices."

"Now it is my job to deal with students who have made poor choices, choices that ultimately disappoint them, their families, and me," he states. When did the town and the university become by-proxy parents for students?

The one positive action that the UI has taken is implementing a "Good Samaritan" policy. This medical amnesty ensures that students on

campus can call for medical assistance without the threat of legal repercussions.

And all the while, no one during this meeting can even mention the word "tailgating." With all this discussion about binge drinking and the problems that arise from it, Iowa City's biggest party occurring seven Saturdays each fall will not be acknowledged on official record. No one will even dare to touch the subject. It is the mother of all cash cows for the city and the university. Drinking and football go hand in hand, and to the powers that be, it is the love that dare not speak its name.

At my count, a dozen downtown businesses will be affected by this ordinance. This change would not only affect the youth culture of

Iowa City, something that we resent and embrace all at the same time, it will also have a serious effect on the vibrant music scene. While it seems to be a tiny part of this argument, a tiny part of the economy, who can argue that seeing some band from some tiny

corner of the world isn't special? Throughout my many years of concert going, I saw the past, present and future of music in the crowd and on the stage. Let us celebrate this model. Let us not live in the atmosphere of resentment but embrace who we are now—a town with a nightlife that dances, drinks, and makes plenty of mistakes, while all the time uniquely embracing the great American right to the pursuit of happiness. **lv**

Erin E. McCuskey is under the influence from living in Aachen, Germany—a large university town with a 1,200 year old ped mall where one can drink a beer anywhere, anytime.

Come Together

It's not going to fix the world or anything, but we hope a few people's minds will be changed."

Such is the sentiment echoed by the organizers of the 319 Music Festival, the inaugural event set to take place on May 8 in Wetherby park, tucked into Iowa City's now notorious Southeast side.

"A lot of people don't come over here, so the only thing they know is what they read in the paper, you know, and all that is negative negative negative," continued James Mims, a local music producer and a youth programmer at the Broadway Street

Neighborhood Center of Johnson County (NCJC), which serves as 319's official hub.

"They get this perception that this whole area is negative. And this will be a positive event."

The idea for the fest started as a call to pull together a cluster of local gospel choirs, but only the Salvation Army Choir signed on. Thus its musical gates opened and the festival transformed into an event hosting a diverse array of stalwart Iowa City names—Dave Zollo, Kevin 'BF' Burt, Dave Moore—relative newcomers like hip hop artist/educator Idris Goodwin and folky Der Dey Go, along with a host of other novice and cultivated IC musicians. Genres span from jazz to hip hop to acoustic folk and experience ranges from the talented high schoolers performing between sets to local legend Moore.

"I'm new here, and I don't know what the full story is, but there are certain stereotypes surrounding [the Southeast side]. They're throwing this fest to demystify those views,"

at it and everyone else swarms in to egg it on," Freeman explained. Another skirmish was reported a few weeks later and for the rest of the year, the "Southeast side" continued to make

headlines—and more important, dinner table conversation.

"I read in the press that residents, homeowners and police are going to 'take back this neighborhood.' But from what? From who?" said Freeman. "There's a huge racial divide, a huge class divide even in the Southeast side itself between homeowners, who are predominately white, and renters, who are predominately black. And a class divide between

that same group. So we have a fractured neighborhood, a fractured community."

That the problems in the area continue to be local talking points—whether petty crime

caused by a small group of youth, the curfew debate, or the Iowa City school re-districting woes—only add to this negative mystique. Freeman contends that much of the debate, whether in newspaper comments or around the water cooler, is fueled by people who've never been there.

"When I told people I was working at the



319 Festival organizer Bethany Bender, musician Idris Goodwin and the Broadway Center program director Sue Freeman gather in Wetherby Park on Iowa City's Southeast side.

said Idris Goodwin. "I've also not met a lot of other musicians here, and this is a great music town, so I'm looking forward to it."

Iowa City's Southeast Side has transformed from sheer geographic distinction into a warning label during the past year, a mark that is both unfair and disappointing, according to the NCJC Broadway Center's Program Director Sue Freeman. She saw a distinct shift after the press reported a "riot" last May—the legal term, sure, but one loaded with connotation, especially when dealing with race.

"That started as a football game, where two or three kids start to go

"A lot of people don't come over here, so the only thing they know is what they read in the paper, you know, and all that is negative negative negative."

—JAMES MIMS

Broadway Center, people said I should wear

a bulletproof vest to work, that I should be scared," said Bethany Bender, an Americorp VISTA volunteer who's the coordinator of the 319 fest. "There's this widely held belief that it's a war zone, a ghetto over here, but that's not true at all. This side of town is really diverse. You can't generalize too much."

Bender, along with music coordinator Kristin Allen and a handful of other Eastern

a car or bus fare, or if the bus isn't running, hanging out downtown is the only thing to do—and a lot of people don't get to take part in things like the Summer of the Arts because they don't have transport," Mims said. "It's hard to get whole family on the bus down and back, but now we can say, here's a big event in your neighborhood. Everyone loves live music."

Freeman says that the event is generating excitement.

"People here often don't feel as welcome downtown, and they want people to know

319 MUSIC FESTIVAL

May 8, 12pm-8pm
Wetherby Park
2400 Taylor Dr., Iowa City

MUSICAL ACTS INCLUDE

- Dave Zollo
- Idris Goodwin
- Kevin 'BF' Burt
- Agri Cultor
- Midwest Quality
- Uniphonics
- Dave Moore
- Rae and the Honeybees
- Millz
- Saul Lubaroff and the Funk 4
- Girl Repellant
- Der Dey Go
- Salvation Army Gospel Choir

Iowa Americorp members, are putting together the fest as a required community project during their one-year volunteer term. In addition to securing the musicians and holding tryouts for youth performers, the Americorp group is also responsible for securing the stage (the Iowa City/ Coralville shared stage), the sound equipment (courtesy of Camp Euforia's John Svec), bank sponsorships and other freely given goods—and this includes the music. Everything must be volunteered.

"It's slowly becoming a community driven event—and that's always exciting," Freeman said.

Mims and Freeman, who as NCJC employees and community members have been involved with the Southeast side for years, see the event as having distinct intra-area purpose as well.

"Not a lot goes on here. If you don't have

"When I told people I was working at the Broadway Center, people said I should wear a bulletproof vest to work, that I should be scared."

—BETHANY BENDER

[the Southeast side] is a good neighborhood," she said. "We love to do this kind of big community stuff. Most of the time, we do lots of cookouts in our own parking lot, but now we can move to the area parks and spotlight them. We can say that this is a good community. That we value this community."

Not planning on the 319 festival being the next Live Aid or some cheesy "We Are the World"-type stunt takes the pressure off and allows the organizers to be more honest. And when dealing with false perceptions of their community, honesty is their best defense.

"Can this event promote healing? And all those happy words?" Freeman asked. "Maybe. Hopefully we just get some new people here to say, 'This is a great park. This isn't a war zone. We hear about it as a war zone but it's not.' People here may look different and many not have as much money as you do, but at the end of the day we're all just going to work, raising kids. We're all just getting by." **lv**

Paul Sorenson is Little Village's features editor; co-host of KRUI's Little Village Live, and has lived in Eastern Iowa his whole life. If you know of any community issues that Little Village should address, please email him at paul@littlevillagemag.com.

"We have a fractured neighborhood, a fractured community."

—SUE FREEMAN

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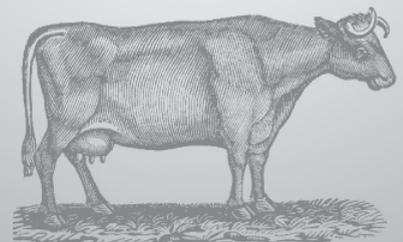
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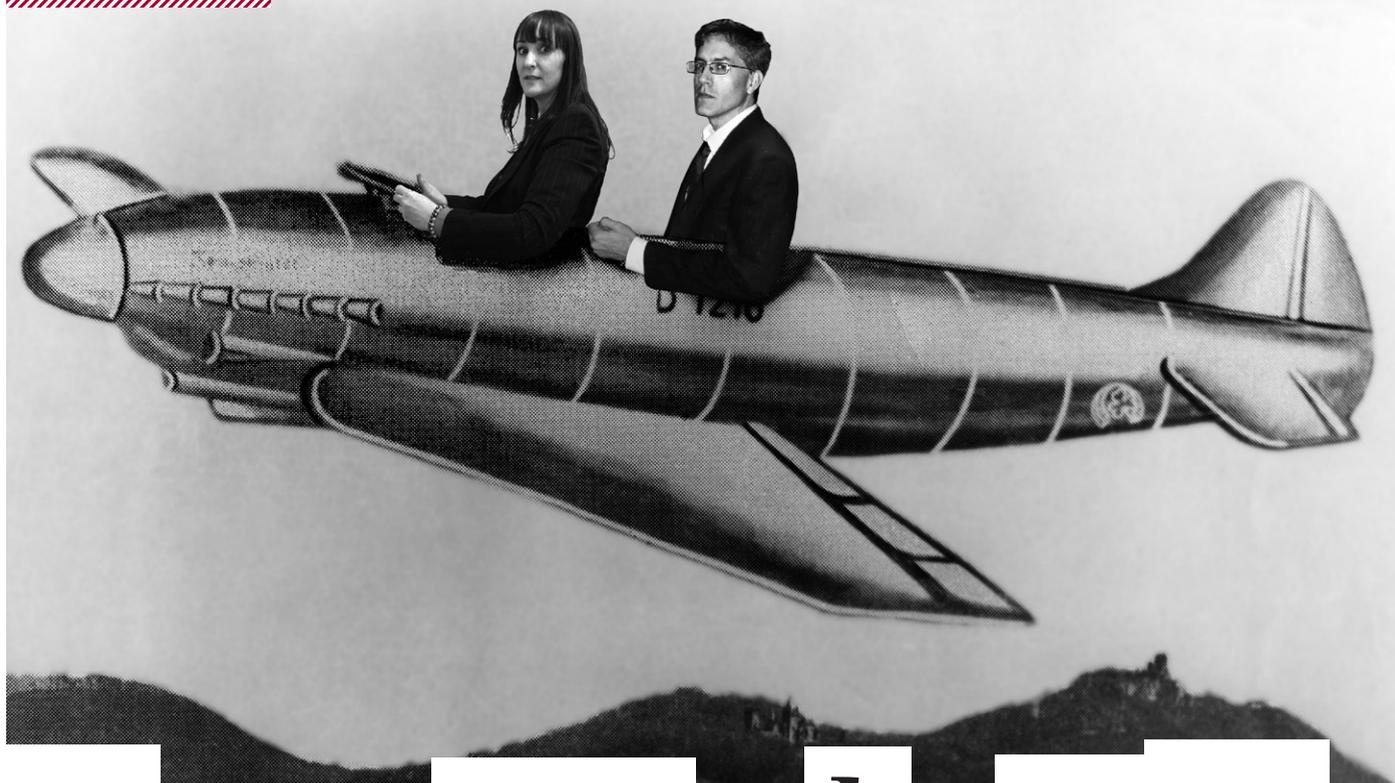
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FUELING The Fire

British collage artist Vicki Bennett balances her avant-garde sensibilities with a dose of goofiness—perhaps more so than some of her other peers in the sound collage underground. The British experimental music magazine *The Wire* describes her music as “a freeform, unfolding imaginary landscape that is liberally peppered with slapstick.” Bennett—who performs under the name People Like Us—demolishes the demarcations between high and low culture, and she has brought her unique aesthetic to highbrow arbiters such as Tate Modern, the Walker Art Center, and the BBC.

On *Music for the Fire*—a new release on the Illegal Art label, home to Girl Talk and others—her musical collaborator is the Bay Area sound collage artist Jon Leidecker, a.k.a. Wobbly. Both have teamed up with Matmos, most notably on the album *Wide Open Spaces*, and Wobbly has worked with like-minded artists such as Negativland and Otomo Yoshihide. He has also imploded minds on *Wild Why*, his frenetic solo album.

Next month, People Like Us and Wobbly

will release their newest collaboration, and it's clearly their best. At its heart, *Music for the Fire* is a deeply weird work of art. Both funny and disturbing, it's a collaged concept album about the dissolution of a relationship, all told through samples from the music of others. Unlike labelmate Girl Talk, who lets the listener revel in mashed up hooks, this duo performs a kind of *musical interruptus*. They give us just enough of, say, a soft rock classic to make it recognizable, but then put it through the sample shredder, often with beautiful results.

Little Village: How did your initial live improvisations lead to what became *Music for the Fire*?

Vicki Bennett: People Like Us & Wobbly started collaborating in 1998 doing live collage improvisations, mainly on Californian radio and some gigs. The great thing about radio is you invariably get a lot of time to try

“We both like destroying nice things and making nice things out of complete rubbish.”

—VIKKI BENNETT

out new things and it doesn't have the pressure of a bunch of people staring at you, plus the sound quality is perfect since it's a studio set up. Through a bunch of radio shows back-to-back over a week one can break a lot of ground, and the initial compositions for *Music For The Fire* came from a session that we did on KFJC. We then went on to perform live and gradually discover what was working while doing the concerts.

Jon Leidecker: We've offered free downloads of some of the radio shows and concerts that feature the material from this album as works in progress. That original KFJC session always seemed to point us towards a studio album. The improvs kept producing «songs» we could try out in different ways, each time with different samples, and then we meticulously pasted all the best parts together. If the pacing works, it's because we broke those songs in before audiences.

LV: How many samples did you use, and can you talk about how you worked with the wide variety of material found on *Music for the*

Fire—which ranges from pop hits to spoken word recordings?

VB: I'm sure Wobbly has a list of sources, because he remembers the sources and name of everything, whereas I'm far more vague in my memory of these things! My sources were probably at least 200 if you count every single sound bite, not that I want to.

JL: I added at least another several hundred, but then I think they all had kids so who knows.

VB: The sources were collected over time to



“Most of our work happens live, and then Vicki and I took turns on finalizing.”

—JON LEIDECKER

use for various radio improvs, rather than for this project alone. So it happens that Jon and I very much were focusing on sources to do with things going wrong, or tragedy—and so it became unknowingly rather thematic.

JL: And once we found the theme, we began to aim. We'd edit the live shows down to the core topic and the connections would come out.

VB: The pop and spoken word that we sourced from could be altered slightly to have a rather darker connotation. We found things of interest if they already had a certain ambiguity to them, at least to us.

LV: *You live in different countries. Can you describe your compositional/collaborative process?*

VB: On the whole a lot of these edits were made in the same room—and we collaborated through the live improvising, gradually building

foundations that we gave vague names that we knew we had certain samples for. This way of doing live improv involves thinking of things you can come up with that would make the other person respond, or just as likely laugh, and you don't tell them what you are going to do until you do it in the broadcast or concert. You have a creative conversation by going back and forth with sources, eventually the composition emerges without talk.

JL: Improvising is social, editing is solitary. There's a potential for software to change this, but currently most of the editing software is designed to facilitate the individual's total control. I'd love to see networked editing programs continue to develop, but it's taking forever because I think it's truly antithetical to every ingrained conception of the individual composer that we have. In any case, most of our work happens live, and then Vicki and I took turns on finalizing.

LV: *What was your compositional strategy, particularly in the way you used very familiar sources, playing them just enough to be recognizable but then at the last minute pulling them apart, mid-chorus?*

VB: Well you can't have too much of a good thing, can you? And this is too much of a good thing. And you can't have it. We both like destroying nice things and making nice things out of complete rubbish. There is something about exploring every possibility of something simply by rearranging it exhaustively.

JL: Music that seems hopelessly kitsch often becomes emotionally devastating after it gets smacked around just a little bit. It's tough love.

VB: What we do is surprising in it's emotional content and the messages within the often-random juxtapositions are frighteningly poignant and tragic. I actually didn't want this album released for at least a year, and Jon had to fight me to agree—because it's one cutting album as far as I'm concerned.

JL: It's a very, very dark album. I had some doubts about releasing it as well, but I got to feeling that the ending isn't cynical or defeatist—the comedy is tied closely to the tragedy, but hopefully in a way that forces someone to laugh off any of the things they might otherwise be prone to wallowing in. But they definitely aren't cheap laughs. **lv**

Kembrew lives and works in Iowa City, and is currently attempting to keep it real.

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>> DERBY FROM PAGE 9

It's a "last woman standing" affair that involves all the skaters skating in a circle with kitchen sponges clenched under their armpits as they try to knock each other down with hip-checks. The sponges are there to train the skaters to keep their arms tucked in while they skate.

All artists practice what they perform but I've never seen an actor or a violinist covered in the constellations of purple and yellow and black bruises that almost every skater here is sporting.

"It's all fun," she says, "I'm notoriously hard to knock down."

When I see her in their first bout, this becomes abundantly clear.

On bout night, what was formerly just a big empty space has been transformed into a bona fide roller derby arena with seating for 600 people.

One hundred percent of this transformation was the work of team members and their families who arrived at noon to start setting up.

"Some of us got here early to set up and

Past recipients have included the Boys and Girls Club, Girls on the Run and the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP).

Before the bout begins, each player is introduced by the announcer, who reads the fictional bio each skater has created for herself, while she takes a lap around the track giving high-fives to the fans.

Adopting fictional "nom de skates" and bout night alter egos has been a part of the sport for as long as anyone can remember, and it adds a dramatic and theatrical flair to the sport not seen anywhere else except for pro wrestling.



They're used to it though it and it shows—these are some truly tough women.

As soon as a skater drops a sponge, falls or gets knocked to the ground, they're eliminated. But they stay right where they were eliminated, and the remaining skaters now have to skate around this ever-growing group of human obstacles. One by one, the remaining skaters fall and their grounded teammates shout encouragement to those still skating.

"Hit her so hard she pees," one of them yells.

Mostly though, it's encouragement. Barked orders softened with positive reinforcement.

Claps is the one of the bigger skaters on the team and one of the few remaining skaters as the drill goes on. Her teammates seem to particularly relish the chance to see her eliminated and enthusiastically cheer on the remaining skaters trying in vain to knock her down.

It doesn't help though, and once again she's the last skater standing.

some of us will stick around afterwards to help break it all down," skater Quinn Dreasler tells me. "It really is a family affair. When the doors open in a bit and we start letting people in, my mom will be selling the tickets."

When I arrive for their first home bout the crowd was numbering well into the 700s—the final tally was actually 831—and with the exception of a couple of Hawkeye football games I've been to, it's the biggest event I've ever been to in the Iowa City area.

Although every penny the team generates from ticket sales, fund raisers, sponsorships and selling merchandise already goes back into supporting the team—no player receives so much as a dime for all their hard work—the team is working toward becoming a certified nonprofit organization.

Charitable giving accounts for a big part of their budget and at each home bout, the team presents a generous check to a local charities that have a "pro-women" mission statement in line with their own.

"I think I broke a fallopian tube," she says.

In order to insure that no two players anywhere have the same derby name, new players have to submit their names for approval to the International Rollergirls' Master Roster, a comprehensive list of nearly 20 thousand names compiled from the nearly 700 roller derby teams now playing worldwide.

I was shocked to learn there were that many teams in action but given the fact that derby is an exciting and fast-paced sport that provides

good role models for young girls, plenty of violence and attractive women to appeal to men, and almost no team anywhere charges more than \$10 for a ticket, it makes a lot of sense.

This sport is decidedly not pro wrestling, however.

"That's a misconception a lot of people have," Claps says, "That this is like pro wrestling on skates. That's it's all thrown elbows and tripping each other and kicking folks and all kinds of nasty stuff, but it's not. Are there occasionally fights? Sure. But that's not what we—or this sport—are about. There are still some teams like that and that's how it might have started, but those are teams that play on a banked track not teams playing under WFTDA (Women's Flat Track Derby Association) rules like we do."

One skater in particular, **G L A D I 8 H E R**, seems to particularly relish the chance to fire up the crowd during her pre-bout intro. Her mouth guard and big infectious smile gives her a Cheshire Cat grin that the crowd will see a lot more of once the bout begins and she starts scoring points.

Claps tells me that this kind of showmanship is "something that can't really be taught, that's just

who she is." It works though, and the crowd eats it up.

Don't be fooled though by their demeanor. Some of the hardest hits and most impressively graceful bits of sneaky snaking I see come from skaters that have the same calm expression on their face while they're playing as they do when they're in the dairy aisle at Hy-Vee.

I've seen them there, these are our neighbors.

Each bout has a theme. Their first home bout was the St. Patrick's Day themed "Four Leaf Clobber," and their second was "Malice in Derbyland." At each bout all the players, as well as many of their fans, dress in costumes inspired by the theme, and this shared pagantry truly blurs the line between the fans and the players.

Announcers provide a running color com-

mentary throughout their bouts, and they employ a fair amount of double entendres ("look at these naughty, naughty girls slamming into each other") that put a smile on the face of the adults and sail harmlessly over the heads of the many children in attendance.

Sex appeal has always been a big part of the sport of roller derby, -and the women on the team do look really good in their fishnets and short-shorts, but it's really just an added attraction, a bonus bit of flair and flash secondary to their impressive athleticism and toughness. (Even the custom wearing of fishnets and stockings had its roots in the physicality of the sport as they significantly cut down on the amount of "rink rash" players will suffer sliding across the floor when they fall.)



The Old Capitol City Roller Girls' next home bout is "Better To Get Knocked Down than Knocked Up," sponsored by Avoid The Stork (www.avoidthestork.com) an organization that promotes safe reproductive health choices.

For more info and a complete schedule visit their website www.oldcapitolcityrollergirls.com

Although I've been told by a number of players that there's "no crying in derby," it looked like she was, but, I'll find out later, she tore the ACL in her knee and will miss the rest of the season so who could blame her?

Everyone cheers when she's finally lifted onto a stretcher and wheeled to the ambulance that's on hand for all bouts.

While she's being wheeled away she raises her hand and gives a thumbs-up signal to the crowd.

They crowd erupts even more when she does this and it perfectly sums up how I feel about roller derby: thumbs up all the way.

Once she's healed, I have no doubt she'll don her skates and come down to face off against the Old Capitol City Roller Girls once again, and I have no doubt I'll be in the audience when she does.

How could I miss it? **lv**

After researching this article Yale Cohn seriously considered the feasibility of shaving, buying some falsies and a wig and trying to join the team.

After their bouts they mill among the crowd talking to friends and family and pose for pictures with their fans. The ease with which they inhabit the fictional bios they've created for themselves even now—off the clock—makes me wonder if, for some of them anyway, the fictional bios are their real identities and it's who they are the rest of the time that's the fiction.

It's inspiring to see the many young girls who approach them for autographs after each bout, knowing that they have real and local role models to look up to, rather than vacuous Hollywood celebutantes best known for leaving the house without wearing underwear.

The crowds they draw for their bouts are unquestionably the most diverse ones I've ever been a part of as long as I've lived in Iowa.

Local farmers wearing their "Saturday best" overalls and feed caps wait in the beer line be-

Midwest-by-Midwest

Experiencing this year's Mission Creek Festival after having just returned from SXSW brought a few things to mind. First, there can be no argument: These are two of the best-run and brilliantly programmed festivals around.

Hosting a mind-boggling assortment of shows simultaneously at various venues around a city-center hub is a concept SXSW pioneered 23 years ago in Austin, Texas. The musical feeding frenzy would never work, however, if organizers didn't go to the trouble of making sure that each act was of the highest caliber. Because SXSW planners work so hard to create a great schedule, that festival has grown into the wonderful monster it is today.

Mission Creek's crack team of producers has set our own festival on a similar track, growing an event that one day could—as SXSW does today—help define a city.

Mission Creek founders Andre Perry and Tanner Illingworth have had to be proactive in building a successful festival. They scout shows and festivals locally and around the country (including SXSW); they listen to music blogs, their friends, old-fashioned CDs. The point is that they don't rely on tastemakers like *Pitchfork*—they immerse and educate themselves to become tastemakers.

Both festivals are geared toward the musically adventurous, people hungry to discover something new. The fact that this quest is geared around live music, an ephemeral experience at the mercy of equipment failure and off-nights, only makes it that much more heroic.

Probably the most musically adventurous of anyone, the artists themselves, also use festivals to discover new music. Northampton, UK chanteuse VV Brown, who played SXSW for the first time and emerged as one of this year's select buzz acts, discovered a band

on the same bill as his band, The Diplomats of Solid Sound. (The Diplomats graced both festivals this year.)

My own top discovery of the year came at Mission Creek: tUnE-yArDs, who rechristened Gabe's with an amazing jam of world music, loops and punk energy.

And speaking of VV Brown, Andre and crew were savvy enough to bring her to Mission Creek just in time for a show before an adoring crowd at the Blue Moose on April 2. Next year, she'll probably be priced out of the market.

So what's in store for Mission Creek? Could it become a mini-SXSW, drawing audiences and media attention from outside the area? SXSW made its name partly because its founders were journalists who leveraged a national network

of independent newspapers. *Little Village's* growing involvement is promising.

At this point Andre isn't making any claims or predictions. Neither is he ready to say the festival has played a role in any recent cultural uptick.

"It's really a critical mass, a lot of things coming together," he said, "people booking clubs, promoting house shows, etc." Describing the Iowa City scene as an "intense feedback loop," he said Mission Creek "helps remind us of all the cool stuff that's happening around Iowa City during the rest of the year."

But there's no reason why Mission Creek couldn't become a launching pad for local and regional acts. SXSW started off as an event showcasing the best of what Austin and surrounding Texas had to offer. Though it has grown far beyond that, local musicians remain a focus. Mission Creek has wisely kept a spotlight on the local scene as well.

Mission Creek could drive a larger cultural

Shame Stevens performing at the Englert



Photos by Matt Butler

My own top discovery of the year came at Mission Creek: tUnE-yArDs, who rechristened Gabe's with an amazing jam of world music, loops and punk energy

called Octopus Project while in town. She said she was looking forward to playing Mission Creek because of the students. "They're so animated and fresh," she said, adding, "Both festivals are a platform for discovery for me as an artist."

At last year's SXSW, Iowa City's Doug Roberson discovered The Pepper Pots, a Motown/ska/reggae act from Spain that played

Poison Control Center at the Mill during the Mission Creek Festival.



Mission Creek helps remind us of all the cool stuff that's happening around Iowa City during the rest of the year.

recording studios. And that helped attract jobs, workers and all sorts of economic and cultural vitality. Mission Creek could help do the same for Iowa City.

And Mission Creek has SXSW beat in some areas. As great as Austin is, it currently has no SXSW venue as homey as the Mill (fried egg sandwiches anyone?), as intimate as Public Space One or as stately as the Englert. The city's

unsurpassed literary reputation also lends extra credibility to the festival's growing literary component.

My only suggestion is that Mission Creek consider a name change. Naming it after a similar event in San Francisco makes about as much sense as calling it SXSW. How about Midwest-by-Midwest?

Todd Kimm is a writer who works at CSPS/ Legion Arts in Cedar Rapids.

identity for Iowa City, a force so far limited to University of Iowa writing programs.

Mission Creek's Greg and Pieta Brown show at the Englert made the best case yet for the town possessing its own musical legacy on par with the rich line of Texas singer-songwriters centered around the late Townes Van Zant, which early on SXSW helped bring to national attention and mythos.

SXSW played no small part in making Austin a place where musicians want to live—to find audiences and musical peers, labels and

>> GRASS FROM PAGE 4

Schump!

What I'm doing warms me physically, but it also warms me emotionally. It is an act of care, so important to home. At the same time, it reminds me of how our modern life is so distant from the normal processes of nature. For plants to grow, the air needs to be let into the ground, the soil needs to breathe and drink in oxygen to nourish the city of roots that lies beneath the soil.

On the prairie, the buffalo and prairie dogs performed these tasks as part of daily life. The buffalo's hooves tilled the surface as they ran,

The soil needs to breathe and drink in oxygen to nourish the city of roots that lies beneath.

and the prairie dogs dug their systems of underground tunnels—all helping to let the air into the rich humus that was home and life to the bluestem, the blazing star, the prairie orchid. My lawn is the furthest thing from the native prairie grasses, and my deliberate, mechanical hole-punching is light-years away from the naturalness of buffalo roaming and prairie dog housing starts. Still, I also feel a connection with those magnificent creatures, large and small, and the spectacular landscape long gone. That inspires my labors.

Schump!

It's spring. It's time to let the air in. **lv**

Thomas Dean lives in Iowa City and owns not one small-engine tool or implement.

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O Mother, Where Art Thou?

It's always risky making generalizations involving gender. But what's life without a little risk? Motherhood is the social role most likely to devour a person's identity. It seems much easier for a father to take off the father hat. When a mother wakes up in the middle of the night, her first thought is usually, "Are the children safe?" In Korean director Bong Joon-ho's new movie *Mother*, playing at the Bijou May 7-13, the main character is rarely named. She is all mother.

main characters—all at the same time. In fact, the emotions get so intermingled, you often don't know what you're feeling. We have the word "bittersweet," but English would need a considerably more monstrous compound to describe how a Bong Joon-ho movie makes you feel. If anything, the emotions in *Mother* are even more mixed, though in darker hues than the movie about a flesh-eating monster.

Mother is about a twenty-something by the name of Do-Joon who suffers from an

incidence, he's accused of a murder. Lacking the mental wherewithal, he allows the eager-to-convict interrogators to coerce a confession from him. His mother then takes it upon herself to find the real killer and free her son.

Critics have called *Mother* Hitchcockian, but that's not quite right (unless they're thinking of the weirdness of Norman Bates's maternal bond). There are indeed squirm-inducing moments of suspense, but that's not Bong Joon-ho's game. He uses the murder mystery genre much like he used the horror film genre—to plunge into the complexity of fam-



Hye-ja Kim stars in *Mother*.

Bong Joon-ho came to the world's attention a few years ago with *The Host*, a one-of-a-kind horror movie about a flesh-eating monster that mysteriously kidnaps a girl. But viewers like me fell in love with it because of its uncanny sense of the mysteries of family life, its human warmth, and its quirky nobility. There are numerous scenes in *The Host* that make you giggle at, empathize with, and feel horror for the

unnamed mental malady. (Is Korea the last place on earth where deviations from mental normalcy aren't immediately shot, tagged, and drugged?) Sometimes people call him a retard, and then he attempts to karate kick them. Do-Joon lives with and—in creepy-tender-telling moments—sleeps curled up next to his mother. Though she does her best to keep watch over her doe-eyed boy, Do-Joon falls under the sway of a local hood and sometimes gets into trouble with the cops. After a strange co-

The floor of the plot keeps falling out from under us, and each time it does we fall deeper into the beautiful-smothering-protecting-horrible love this mother feels for her child.

ily ties. Though the movie strings us along as a whodunnit, the floor of the plot keeps falling out from under us, and each time it does we fall deeper into the beautiful-smothering-protecting-horrible love this mother feels for her child.

One of the many things I love about *Mother*—and *The Host*, too—is its unerring feel for the place of food and drink in human life. In both movies, there are a number of scenes of people just eating, alone or together, but we feel in those simple moments what their stories are all about. In *Mother*, there's also a lot of drink-

ing. The social classes are kept afloat—just barely—on a river of booze. One of the most striking scenes visually and symbolically is of Do-Joon peeing against an alley wall. His mother has been calling after him to take his medicine. She catches up to him and pours it into his mouth as his piss streams down the alley.

Kim Hya-Ja is brilliant as the mother. We feel her maternal attention almost as powerfully as we felt our own mother's watchful eye when we were three. But what makes her performance truly first-rate is that she gives little peeps here and there of



Bong Joon-ho

the woman lurking deep inside her consuming motherhood. For instance, at one point during her investigation, she has to hide herself away behind a closet's curtain, as a suspect and his girlfriend come into the room and begin making love. What she then does with a

The emotions get so intermingled, you often don't know what you're feeling.

few movements of her eyes is worthy of the Korean equivalent of an Oscar.

The first scene of the movie is weird: a woman in her late fifties dancing like a teenager in a field of wheat. What is she doing? The last scene is also of this old woman dancing like a teen. The puzzle now has been solved. She's untied the deeply tangled knots of motherhood from her heart. **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.

>> BIKES FROM PAGE 5

tional average. Improving bike lanes and trails, increasing access to bicycle parking, and supporting safe commutes will help increase the numbers of bike commuters.

Iowa City's annual Bike-to-Work Week is May 16-21. It is the focal point of JCCOG's Bike Month. Bike-to-Work Week, a tradition that's been on and off again since the 1980s will continue to boast several popular events. Geoff's Bike & Ski will host a breakfast and ride. A bike, bus and car will race from the Coralville Public Library to the Iowa City Public Library. The Mayor's Ride, a large group bike ride, will pedal from Iowa City to Coralville. There will be a Ride of Silence to remember fallen and injured cyclists and promote the rights of bicyclists. The week will come to a close with an after work gathering in the Ped Mall to celebrate another successful Bike-to-Work Week.

The recent improvements in the bike lanes and trails around Johnson County foster an environment that promotes physical activity.

To date, Johnson County has over 40 miles of bike trails.

Environmental approaches have been shown to greatly increase healthy behaviors among citizens. Having access to trails enables people to be more active. Thirty minutes of daily exercise meets the current federal guidelines for physical activity. Aerobic exercise, like biking, improves cardiovascular health, which can potentially reduce the exerciser's risk of heart disease and obesity.

The bike paths that weave through our city are a definite perk to citizens of Johnson County. The paths wind along the river and through neighborhoods, breaking people out of a sedentary lifestyle and bringing them out into the community to be active. Eventually, JCCOG hopes to fill in all the trails in the county and have a continuous network. Bike trails make it nice and easy to go pedaling through the Corridor and get those 30 minutes of daily physical activity while enjoying the increasing warmth and foliage of spring. **IV**

Kelly Ostrem graduates this month. This is her last jaunt as a writer for Little Village, but fear not! She plans to take her health mission on the road and continue to promote active lifestyles. See where the road takes her at www.twitter.com/KellyOstrem.

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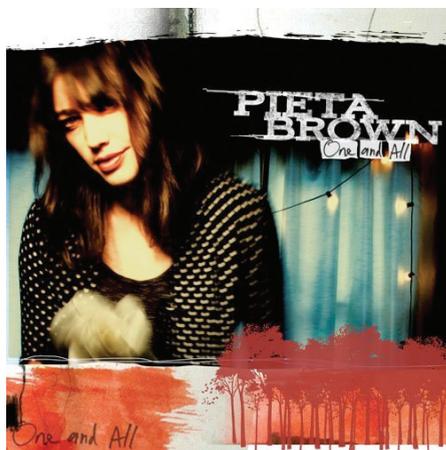
Sat, May 22	9pm
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Thu, May 27	9:30pm
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Pieta Brown

One and All

Red House Records

www.pietabrown.com

One and All, the sixth full-length from Pieta Brown, finds the folksy at her most relaxed and confident. *One and All* feels like a commiseration at The Mill: It's easy, fluid and full of prospective delivered in a comfortable drawl.

The album opens with a double-shot of hopeless romanticism. "Wishes Falling Through the Rain" and "Other Way Around" trade on the same idea—at some point justice should or will prevail. "Wishes" works on a more personal, poetic level, and pleads more than hopes for equity. Brown teases out blurred images of loneliness ("Shadows, just pictures on windows / Your face, soft as the light goes) as guitarist Bo Ramsey doles out minor key fills complimenting her ultimate sentiment: "All this love can't be in vain."

"Other Way Around" is the different side of the same coin. Brown offers up certainty, "Someday it will be the other way around," she sings coolly over the bright shuffle of a brushed snare and a nimble, finger-picked acoustic guitar. This is the sort of seasoned

assurance she can give now. Brown brings enough gravity to "Other Way Around," with her steady delivery, that this doesn't come off as a platitude but a gentle pat on the back.

However, even the best barroom conversations can wander into unfamiliar and clunky territory. Brown dove-tails into an Earth-Day-anthem toward the end of the record, which finds her digging into

a vernacular ("future shock") that not only sounds odd alongside the other lyrics on the album, but even rubs violently against the more basic binaries in the song (factories versus flowers). "Grass Upon the Hill" is one of the album's more musically interesting tracks, sticking out a bit because the bite in Brown's voice is matched in grit from the backing band, but her words never seem to match her passion.

Brown is at her best when she rocks back in her chair and tells you how broken hearts work and that time—and whiskey—heals all wounds.



Samuel Locke Ward & Darren Brown

From the Privilege of the Grave

Grotto Records and

Mission Freak Records

myspace.com/samuelllockeward

The fact that you can hold this album in your hands is astounding. *From the Privilege of the Grave* faced nearly every hurdle imaginable—from technical and logistical issues to legal and financial difficulties. That it was worth the wait, is still more astounding.

Samuel Locke Ward (Miracles of God) and Darren Brown (Violent Femmes/Boy Dirt Car) have collaborated on nine Ward-composed tracks. The partnership has given Ward's songs a moody depth I have never heard from him before. Ward's gotten sad and even introspective, however, his usually lo-fi approach puts most of the emotion on a gut level. His distinctive whine and shambling guitar licks are all intact. But rather than muddling his tried and true formula, Brown and Ward's additions, including creepy scrapes of a slide guitar, field samples and heaps of hiss and distortion, actually imbue and strengthen the songs. *From the Privilege of the Grave* is dense; sadness, fear and anger are heightened, especially on the re-

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cord's striking second half.

Album-closer "Freeze" will be counted among Ward's best material. He mumbles threats over a tom-heavy plod with a minor-key guitar line stumbling alongside, but the foggy layer of feedback and reverb wafting around the bottom of the mix make the song

Sprawling musical meanderings serve as palate cleansers for the playful and almost frightening songs at the heart of the pieces.

that much more eerie. "Freeze" and a couple other cuts feature Brown and Ward going off into great, noisy breakdowns and outros; drums careen off beat as whistles and hisses swell and guitar lines swing violently into Metal Machine workouts before righting themselves to regain track of the song or fade into another piece. Ward's compositions lend themselves well to these diversions, the sprawling musical meanderings serving as palate cleansers for the playful and almost frightening songs at the heart of the pieces.

Only the snot-nosed anthem "Hold onto Your Hatred" seems to shun the sheet-metal percussion and ambient touches. It may have had a more comfortable home on another Ward release.

John Schlotfeld is really going to miss Iowa City and it's bery of talent. If you want to discuss Iowa City's fertile music scene or restaurants he should try when he moves to Chicago, get at him at john.schlotfeld@littlevillagemag.com.



Johnny On Point

Keefin It Real

Self Released

www.johnnyonpoint.com

It's not that electronic music isn't that accessible. It's accessible enough to show up in

television ads, to be co-opted by Madonna, and to have its sound and production techniques borrowed by indie bands. The real problem is its relentless abstraction. It doesn't have an attractive singer in front emoting into a microphone. This isn't a problem in the world outside the United States, however, where House and Techno get housewives and insurance salesmen through the day. It's a peculiar atavistic attachment to a po-faced strummer in the spotlight that keeps electronic music on the margins here.

Johnny On Point's new CD *Keefin It Real* doesn't do anything to bring dance music out of the shadows, but I doubt that's his intent. He doesn't bother to conform to any genre I know—they're not House, Techno, Dubstep or what's currently mis-labeled Electro. The only thing I can really call him is a stone-cold sound geek. Each of these brief tracks tries out a few musical ideas just long enough to get the point across, and then it's done. The CD is organized as four four-part songs or suites, but I don't really see how the parts relate musically to the whole.

Of the four, I'm most partial to the opening group, "Kluuck Pt 1-4," as it's the most moody, and contains the most varied textures, from

The only thing I can really call him is a stone-cold sound geek.

seriously damaged guitar sounds to flanged tablas and vowel-filtered synths that sound like alien voices. "Jop-Remix" follows with punky Prodigy-like breakbeats before dipping briefly into a speedy techno interlude, followed by a segment with some vocals, followed by a distorted beats and bass bit. "912PM" has more guitar and another brief vocal segment.

You can tell a lot of energy and enthusiasm went into this CD, and I'd love to see what he does live. But over the course of the CD, I felt exhausted by their ADD "one damn thing after another" compositional techniques. Every track on this CD has many good ideas worth further exploration, but blink and you might miss a good one, and something you like less jumps in to replace it. But hey, you can download the whole album free from johnnyonpoint.com so it's your own damn fault if you don't check it out.

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

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Bike-to-Work Week

May 16-21

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Iowa City, you're beautiful. You've got style, you've got grace. But even on your best hair days, even in your favorite shirt, your hottest skirt, your slickest shoes, your tightest jeans... you're better-looking on a bike.

Iowa's 8th Annual Bike-to-Work Week is May 16-21. According to the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, last year's event drew pledges from 2,395 commuters statewide. Probably many more participated without registering, but if those 2,395 bikers all followed through with their pledge, they saved an estimated amount of resources greater than 3,500 gallons of gasoline and

\$7,000. See, sometimes more green for your environment really does mean more green in your pocket!

Now, if you and your co-workers take all that money and pump it into your local happy hour, imagine how much fun you and your local economy could be having this May 16-21.

Employees, please spread the word around the office and try to get everyone on board (er, bike). Employers, please consider investing in the health and happiness of your staff by incentivizing participation in Bike-to-Work Week. For a list of the week's events, check out the Active Life column on page 5.

Biking makes you happier and more attractive, it saves the environment and it saves money. Now *that's* hot!

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

Bad Fathers w. Andy Frasco, May 1 • David Davis and The Warrior River Boys, May 2, 1pm • Poison Control Center w. Datagun, Beati Paoli, May 2, 6pm • Oberamergau, Lipstick Homicide, May 4 • Stardeath and White Dwarfs w. So Much Fun, May 5, 7pm • Alexis Stevens w. Bree Nettie, Nikki Lunden, Danika Holmes, May 6 • Noah's Ark Was A Spaceship, May 7 • Dr. Eli Calico Medicine Show, May 8, 10pm • Black Blondie, Stephanie Nilles, May 11 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, May 12, 7pm • Horse Feathers w. Vagabonds, May 12, 10pm • Natural Talent Showcase ft. Beth Ann Gavin, May 13, The Beaker Brothers, May 15 • Local Natives w. Suckers, May 18 • Etymon w. Nebula Was, May 19 • Sam Tyx, May 20 • The Tallest Man On Earth w. Nathaniel Rateliff, May 21, 8pm • Wylde Nept, May 22 • 10-4 Eleanor, Arliss Nancy, May 25 • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, May 26 • Final Alibi w. Kiriko & Jeffrey C. Capps, May 26 • The Pharmacy w. Baby Birds Don't Drink Milk & Vehicle Blues, May 27 • Shame Train w. Mike Mangione, May 29

Orchestra Iowa

www.orchestraiowa.org

Strings Attached, Westminster Presbyterian Church, May 1, 7pm • Phoenix Rising, Sinclair Auditorium, May 15, 8pm • Phoenix Rising, West High School, May 16, 2pm

Public Space One

129 E. Washington St., Iowa City

publicspaceone.wordpress.com

Old Style Rock, May 1, 8pm • Finn Riggins, more TBA, May 9, 8pm

Red Cedar Chamber Music

www.redcedar.org

Victorian Parlor Concert on College St, May 8, 7pm

Riverside Casino

3184 Highway 22, Riverside

www.riversidecasinoandresort.com

Rick Springfield, May 22, 8pm

University of Iowa Music Dept.

www.uiowa.edu/~music

See website for locations/student performances

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Tiger Hatchery, Lechuguillas, Locals, May 2, 10pm • Shearing Pinx, Nu Sensae, Heavy Times, Supersonic Piss, May 18, 9pm • Skeletonbreath, Old Scratch Revival, 12 Canons, Olivia Rose Muzzy, May 19, 9pm • Heavy Times, Dunebuggy, May 20, 9pm • Capricorn Vertical Slum, June 2, 9pm

Yacht Club

13 S. Linn St., Iowa City

www.iowacityyachtclub.org

Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted

Dennis McMurrin and the Demolition Band, May 1, 10pm • Funkma\$ter, DJ Rich Rok, May 6 • Dead Larry, Bumpus, May 7 • Heatbox, D. Bess, The Hue, May 8 • The Gglitch, May 14 • Jon Wayne & the Pain, Messy Jiverson, Smokin' Joe Scarpellino, May 20 • The Mayflies, Slewgrass, May 21 • Phish Tribute with Dr. Z's Experiment, May 22 • Mad Monks, Fitzgerald, May 29 • Mountain Standard Time, Smokin' Joe Scarpellino, June 2

THEATER/DANCE/ PERFORMANCE

City Circle Acting Company

Iowa Children's Museum, Coralville

www.citycircle.org

Baltimore Waltz, May 7-9 and 14-16, Fri/Sat at 7:30, Sunday at 2pm

Hancher Auditorium

www.hancher.uiowa.edu

See website for temporary locations

Michael Cooper, Masked Marvels & Wondertales, May 9, 2pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Cirque Stupendo Talent Show, May 8, 5pm • Dr. Eli Calico Medicine Show, May 8, 9pm • Natural Talent Showcase, May 13, 9pm

No Shame Theatre

Theatre B, UI Theatre Building

www.noshame.org

Fridays in May, 11pm

Old Capitol City Roller Girls

Coralville Marriott

www.oldcapitolcityrollergirls.com

Cedar Rapids Roller Girls, May 8

Penguin's Comedy Club

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

www.penguinscomedyclub.com

Check website for showtimes

TC Hatter, Richard Reese, Apr. 30-May 1 • Here Come the Mummies, May 6 • Dr. Jim Wand, May 14-15 • Claude Stewart, May 21-22 • Darryl Rhodes, May 28-29

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night

10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City

www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com

Shows start at 9:30pm

Mark Fradl, Jay Harris, May 5 • Matt Golightly, Josh Alton, May 12

Theatre Cedar Rapids

4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.theatrecre.org

Still Life with Iris, May 14-23

The University of Iowa Dance

Space/Place Theatre, North Hall

www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa

Undergraduate Dance Concert, May 6-7, 8pm • Dance Forum/UI Youth Ballet Spring Concert, May 15-16

The University of Iowa Theatre

Main Theatre Building, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~theatre

Check website for locations and showtimes

New Play Festival: Child's Pose by Louisa Hill, May 3, 2pm • Las Hermanas Padilla by Tony Meneses, May 3, 5:50 & 9pm • Norm by Sheela Kungal, May 4, 2pm • Gilgamesh's Game by Jen Silverman, May 4, 5:50 & 9pm • Hard and Fast: A Love Story by Jess Foster, May 5, 2pm • One Plum by Lisa Leaverton, May 5, 5:30 & 9pm • Lightning Birth by Andrew Saito, May 6, 2pm • Workshop: Blood Ties by Tali Ariav, May 6, 7pm • Columpio by Joe Luis Cedillo, May 7 5:30 & 9pm • Staged Reading: Tro Musikk by Janet Schlapkohl, May 8, 2pm • Achilles, Scourge of Man by Kevin Artigue, May 8, 5:30 & 9pm

WORDS

The Haunted Bookshop

203 N Linn St

www.thehauntedbookshop.com

Erin Hart, False Mermaid, May 16, 1pm

The Mill

120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City

www.icmill.com

Talk Art - Writers' Workshop, May 5, 9pm

Prairie Lights

15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City

www.prairielightsbooks.com

All "Live from Prairie Lights" readings at 7pm unless noted

Peter Bognanni, May 11 • Ina Lowenberg, Sandra Hudson and Claudine Harris, May 18 • Max Allen Collins, May 20 • Arra Lynn Ross, James Cihlar, William Reichard, May 21

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~nathist

UI Explorers Lecture Series: Sarah Larsen, May 6, 7pm

CINEMA

Alexis Park Inn

1165 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City

www.alexisparkinn.com

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

Bijou Theatre

IMU, UI Campus, Iowa City

www.uiowa.edu/~bijou

Fish Tank, The Third Man, Apr. 30-May 6 • Mother, Fallen Angels, May 7-13

Englert Theatre

221 E. Washington St., Iowa City

www.englert.org

The Princess Bride, May 9, 3:30 & 7pm • Revenge of the Nerds, May 16, 7pm • Raising Arizona, May 23, 7pm • A Midsummer Night's Dream, May 30, 7pm

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~nathist

To Fly or Not To Fly?, May 9, 2pm

KIDS

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History

Macbride Hall, UI Campus

www.uiowa.edu/~nathist

Storytime Explorers: Ducks, May 16, 2pm

U.S. Cellular Center

370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids

www.uscellularcenter.com

Elmo's Green Thumb, May 11-12

MISC

Iowa Center for AIDS Resources & Education

Chauncey Swan Parking Ramp

www.icareiowa.org

23rd Annual New Pioneer/ICARE Pancake Breakfast, June 6, 8am-1pm

Iowa Renaissance Festival

Middle Amana Park

www.AmanaColonies.com

Festival, May 29-31

Curses, Foiled Again

Albert Bailey, 27, and a 16-year-old accomplice phoned a bank in Fairfield, Conn., and said they'd be by in 10 minutes to pick up \$100,000 in large bills. Their call warned no dye packs and threatened "a blood bath" if the money wasn't ready. Bank officials immediately notified police, who showed up in time to stop the suspects after they picked up the money but before they could make their getaway. The robbers got what they wanted but "didn't expect police to be in the take-out line," police Sgt. James Perez noted, adding, "You can't make this stuff up." (*Connecticut Post*)

Unkosher for Passover

Cigarettes may contain traces of pig blood, according to Dutch researchers, who found cigarette companies using pig hemoglobin to make filters to trap harmful chemicals before they enter smokers' lungs. Although cigarette manufacturers voluntarily list the contents of their products on their web sites, those are proven-dangerous ingredients. They lump pig's blood under undisclosed "processing aids," which "do not functionally affect the finished product," said Australian public health professor Simon Chapman, who pointed out Jewish, Islamic and vegetarian smokers would find inhaling pig's blood "very offensive." (*Australian Associated Press*)

Look Ma, No Eyes

- Turkish pop singer Metin Senturk, who has been blind since he was 3, wept for joy after learning that he had become the world's fastest unaccompanied blind driver. His average speed of 292.89 kph (181.59 mph) broke the previous record of 284 kph, held by a British bank manager. Former rally driver Volkan Isik followed Senturk in a separate vehicle and guided him by radio. (*Reuters*)
- Collier Sims, 24, won the first known blind-fencing competition, held at the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Mass. "A lot of the fencing actions that we do, we can apply them to everyday life," said the competition's organizer, Cesar Morales, fencing coach at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Mass., explaining that learning to use a fencing foil is similar to learning to use a white cane to navigate. (*The Boston Globe*)

Green Acres

Detroit officials plan turning a quarter of the 139-square-mile city into fields and farms. Mayor Dave Bing said the city faces a \$300 million budget deficit and dwindling tax

base, and can't continue to provide police and fire protection and other city services to all areas. The plan to "downsize" the heavily industrial city calls for large demolition swaths to cut through 91,000 vacant residential lots and 33,000 empty houses in blighted neighborhoods, creating pockets of green, semi-rural surrounding surviving neighborhoods. The biggest obstacle to implementation is getting hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government to buy land, raze buildings and relocate residents, since the city has no money. (*Associated Press*)

Well-Heeled Thief

South Korean police arrested a 59-year-old man suspected of stealing shoes, which Koreans customarily remove before entering homes, restaurants and funeral parlors. A subsequent search found 170

boxes packed with 1,700 pairs of expensive designer shoes, sorted by size and brand. "Shoe

theft is not unusual here," Detective Kim Jeong-gu said. "But we gasped at this one."

The suspect, identified only by his last name, Park, is a former used-shoe vendor, convicted twice in the past five years of pilfering shoes. He was on parole when police spotted him outside the Samsung Medical Center funeral parlor. They observed him return several times pretending to be a mourner and swapping cheap shoes for expensive ones. (*The New York Times*)



Reasonable Explanations

- After police arrested Anthony Coffman, 28, for using a hunting knife to cut open meat packages in a supermarket in Edinburg, Ind., and then throwing the raw meat on the floor, Coffman explained he's a vegetarian and gets upset when others eat beef. He insisted God sent him to ruin the meat, adding he was trying to save little girls from food he believes would make them "chubby." "He thought if he could save one chubby girl, he's done his job," police Deputy Chief David Lutz said. (WRTV News)

- After a late-night argument with his wife, Gerald Lancaster, 84, fired a gunshot as she left their home in Houston, Texas, then went back inside. He didn't come out when police arrived and remained inside for nearly six hours, even after a SWAT team arrived on the scene and tried to coax him out with phone calls and pleas from a bullhorn. At one point, they even fired tear gas into the home, but he still didn't come out. Finally, officers broke through the door and arrested Lancaster peacefully. He explained to authorities that he hadn't responded to their efforts because he was asleep during much of the standoff and didn't realize police officers had surrounded his home. (*Houston Chronicle*)

Avoirdupois Follies

Ads and catalogs using plus-sized models don't work with their target audience, according to a study investigating the link between model sizes in ads and the

self-esteem of consumers looking at the ads. "We believe it is unlikely that many brands will gain market share by using heavy models in their ads," said Naomi Mendel of Arizona State University, who worked with researchers from Germany's University of Cologne and Erasmus University in the Netherlands.

Not only does the lower self-esteem of overweight consumers lessen their enthusiasm to buy products touted by people who look like them, she explained, but also "normal-weight consumers experienced lower self-esteem after exposure to moderately heavy models." (*Arizona State University News*)

Slightest Provocation

Jacoby Laquan Smith, 33, admitted beating up his quadruple amputee girlfriend, but only after she hit him first because he yelled at her for blocking his view of television. Tiesha Bell, 28, "punched me in the groin," Smith told a court in St. Paul, Minn., then hit him with a coffee canister, a bedpan filled with urine and her wheelchair. Bell conceded there was hitting on both sides, declaring, "We both need anger management." (*St. Paul's Pioneer Press*)

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

How accurate are lie-detector tests?

What's the effectiveness of a polygraph? Police departments still use them, and the feds still screen applicants using polygraphs, but the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled them invalid. Surely they can't tell if you're lying, and surely not all lies produce the exact same physiological response in every person.

—Rob

Lie-detector tests aren't completely worthless. How's that for an endorsement?

The polygraph, the most common lie-detection instrument, works on the assumption that the body reacts involuntarily to the stress of lying. It measures reactions such as changes in skin conductance, pulse rate, blood pressure, and breathing while the subject is asked a series of questions. The questioning process can take several forms. One early version was the "relevant-irrelevant" technique, which mixed queries like "Did you murder [name of victim]?" in with stuff like "Is today Tuesday?" Lies in response to the relevant questions would supposedly make the needles jump. The problem with this approach was that in such a context even an unfounded accusatory question could be stressful, producing a false positive.

The "comparison question" technique tries to get around this problem by making all the queries accusatory. In a sex-crime investigation, for instance, a suspect might be asked embarrassing control questions such as "Have you ever committed a sexual act you were ashamed of?" along with questions pertaining more directly to the case. The idea, which has a certain devious ingenuity, is that the innocent will show a greater response to the control questions (either because they're lying or simply flustered), whereas the guilty will show a greater response to the pertinent questions (which for them are more consequential).

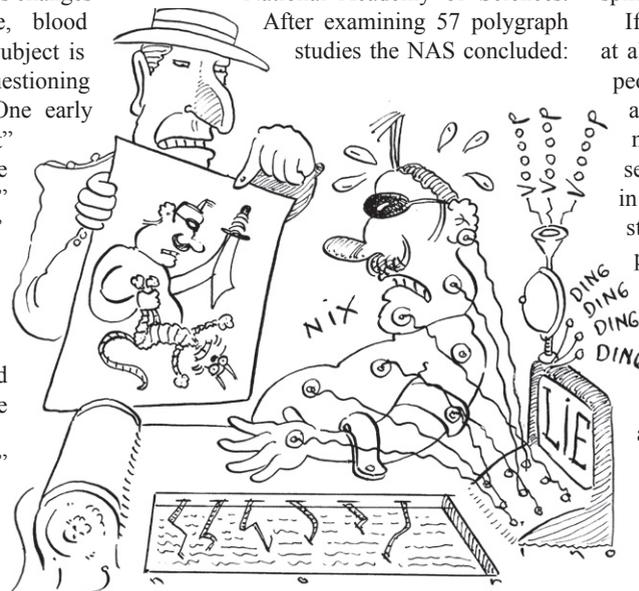
The "guilty knowledge" testing method tries to discover whether a subject is privy to inside info about a case—things that only someone involved would know about. For example, suspects might be shown assorted photos of guns to see how they respond to the one that

happens to show the murder weapon.

Besides investigation of crimes and the like, the other big use for polygraphs is general screening by employers looking to weed out iffy job applicants or catch workers in otherwise undetected wrongdoing. Pre-employment screening is common in law enforcement: one study found nearly two-thirds of agencies administered polygraph exams to applicants and rejected about 25 percent based on polygraph results alone.

Do the tests work? Depends how you define *work*. Probably the most comprehensive look at polygraph accuracy is a 2003 report from the National Academy of Sciences.

After examining 57 polygraph studies the NAS concluded:



"In populations of examinees such as those represented in the polygraph research literature, untrained in countermeasures, specific-incident polygraph tests can discriminate lying from truth telling at rates well above chance, though well below perfection." Their analysis of the 30 most recent polygraph data sets showed an overall accuracy of 85 percent, and an analysis of seven field studies involving specific incidents showed a median accuracy of 89 percent.

For screening purposes, though, the NAS found polygraph tests had too high a margin of error to be genuinely informative. If you made your criteria loose enough to catch most of the bad guys, you were overwhelmed with false positives; if you raised the bar enough to thin out the false positives, you missed too many bad guys.

And what about those countermeasures the NAS mentioned? Yeah, that's a problem too. Because polygraph tests rely on physical reactions, if you can control or mask your reactions at key moments in the questioning, you may be able to throw off the readings enough to produce an inconclusive result. Countermeasure techniques are surprisingly simple: they include discreet physical motions like pressing your toes against the floor or biting your tongue and mental tasks like silently counting backwards from 1,000 by sevens. The goal is to increase your baseline stress level enough to hide any revealing spikes.

If polygraphs are so fallible, why use them at all? In part because testing can intimidate people into confessing, deter bad behavior, and create an impression (however misleading) of vigilance. In other words: security theater. Heeding the NAS report, in 2006 the U.S. Department of Energy stopped blanket screening of its existing and prospective employees. Polygraph tests are now saved for specified instances—say, if someone fails to report a relationship with a foreign power.

Advocates of lie-detector tests foresee the day when technological advances will improve accuracy to the point where test results could be admitted as evidence. Much attention has been paid in recent years to functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI. In its simplest form, fMRI lie detection works by scanning your brain to find out which areas are most active while you're being grilled; supposedly lying and truth-telling cause different areas to light up. No doubt due to the impracticality of using multimillion-dollar machines for everyday criminal interrogations, there haven't been many large-scale studies of fMRI accuracy. But the ones I've found show an accuracy rate of 76 to 92 percent—to be generous, about the same as you get with old-fashioned equipment at a fraction of the cost.

—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.

ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR MAY 2010

FOR EVERYONE—The future is kicking in. Pressures are ratcheting up, the pace of change is increasing. Also, the general level of turmoil will increase, increasing opportunities to put changes in place. Practical obstacles to change are falling away. Those in favor of change have the planetary winds at their back and the planetary bit between their teeth. There is no end in sight. Just about everyone accepts that big changes are needed - or inevitable. But all this is very stressful. Our minds and emotions are in overdrive. Stay abreast of developments, but schedule in a bit more R&R. Avoid overindulgence as a way to escape the pressure.

♈ ARIES—Count to ten. Your impatience this month is high, even for you. You'll want to light a fire under everyone and hope for the best. But the obstacles to quick resolution of just about anything are too numerous and too big. Instead, you must hunker down. It's going to be a long and potentially stressful battle, and right now, your allies are few. But your personality is sparkling and your enthusiasm and powers of persuasion are significantly enhanced. Still, you'd best practice staying patient and calm. Financial prospects are encouraging.

♉ TAURUS—Stay within bounds. You will continue to be amazed by how much freedom of movement you enjoy amidst the present tension, turmoil and uncertainty. Your increased charm and good luck will be further enhanced by heightened charisma. But there is a catch . . . or two. Your good fortune will last as long as you work for the greater good. If you seek personal advantage, your luck could evaporate. Quickly. Use your personal charms to create harmony in your environment. Romantic 'experimentation' will set the rumor mill in motion, in a bad way.

♊ GEMINI—Preoccupations. Your mind is overflowing with ideas and inspiration, some of it kind of deep. You're also acutely aware of the difficulties that everyone is facing. You have a lot of influence, though. Your thoughts and words are echoed everywhere you go. People need your help putting things in perspective. No matter how complicated your thoughts and feelings, you need to keep it simple, honest and fair, or the rumor mills will start churning. Some will use any reason to discredit you. Financial and professional pressures will soon ease significantly.

♋ CANCER—Facilitate. Your own inclination to worry about things that will not directly affect you could be your biggest problem this month. People are going through some tough changes because of circumstances beyond anyone's control, especially at work, and you are picking up on that. But the reality is that you are in a good position to further your own long-term goals. Use your sensitivity and understanding of the issues to help others adapt. Spend wisely. Upcoming planetary changes could tighten Cancerian budgets, or introduce a little unpredictability. Practice stress-reduction techniques.

♌ LEO—Delay helps. You might be experiencing frustration and impatience, but delays could very well be working in your favor. The planets will soon be moving into positions far more favorable to Leo. Trying to force things through now, instead of waiting, could easily make things worse, if it isn't just a complete waste of effort. Things are complicated, and they will remain so, but in the coming months, you will find yourself in much greater harmony with the flow of events. Meanwhile, participate in efforts to re-think and revise plans.

♍ VIRGO—Long-term optimism. Virgos are being cast as cheerleaders for difficult, but necessary, long-term efforts. Higher ups want you to be the ambassador for a series of innovative projects. Don't be discouraged by the size of the enterprise. You are surprisingly well-placed to achieve this goal. Growth in income could slow down, soon, however. Focus on changes that enhance assets and income stability. Your current task as ambassador for new and difficult (but necessary) projects will help in financial areas. A recent tendency to fatigue easily will pass as summer begins.

♎ LIBRA—Transition. For a while, Librans will be free of recent pressures. Financially, you will also have much more room to maneuver. Use this time to make needed changes because the pressure will ratchet up again later this spring. The hectic pace of change in work areas will abate. Long-term, your work life will become significantly easier, simpler, and more profitable. However, you will soon be associating with more innovative, unconventional and unpredictable people. Key partners will also show a degree of restlessness, assertiveness and independence not apparent before. Brace yourself.

♏ SCORPIO—Intensity. Excitement (perhaps even a little turmoil) among close friends and acquaintances in your neighborhood could increase the pressure on you to take a stand, or accept an arrangement that you think is doubtful. But you can achieve a great deal by working indirectly, through people with influence in the community. You can even bring about welcome changes in the attitudes of anyone who is pressuring you. Still, it could get tiresome. For the foreseeable future you'll be in greater harmony with all healing processes. Expect improvements in your health.

♐ SAGITTARIUS—Resolution. From now on, you will be in greater harmony with the forces of change, generally. Tensions that have simmered for a long time will reach a satisfying resolution, soon. Some resolutions will arrive on their own. Your ability to command an audience and convince others is at a high point, too. However, romantic issues will remain difficult to resolve. The planets want you to seek greater understanding before giving the go ahead. The issues are pretty deep and require close attention. A romantic misstep now could cost you dearly.

♑ CAPRICORN—The long haul. The challenges now showing up at home, at work, and in many key relationships are here to stay for awhile. You'll have to steer a steady and careful course in waters that will get pretty rough from time to time. The decisions you finally make will affect work and home life. The planets suggest that you adopt a determined but patient approach. You've done nothing wrong. It's just time to deal with a number of genuinely important issues and they cannot be finessed, or rushed, or avoided.

♒ AQUARIUS—Important decisions loom. The winds of change are blowing hard through the world you know and love. Soon, the growing pressure to change will bring actual change and you will need to make some choices. As you emerge from a lengthy time of relative seclusion, be sure to do some reality checks. Many of your favorite beliefs might be out of sync with current reality. Your home and family are under definite protective influences, for the time being. There'll be plenty of room to maneuver. Distant resources are temporarily available.

♓ PISCES—Pressure, with options. Dramatic changes will soon begin in financial areas. Some options will be taken off the table, new opportunities will arise. Some of these have solid potential. Your options are actually fairly numerous. But you must mold the available material into a profitable whole. You'll need to make hard choices. However, if you leverage community resources properly, things will fall into place more easily than you might think. You will need to use credit more wisely. Bring long-term financial affairs into line with realistic expectations, and vice versa.



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