



LITTLE VILLAGE

IOWA CITY'S NEWS & CULTURE MAGAZINE

VOL. 16 | ISSUE 155
MAY 21 - JUNE 3, 2014

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FIRECRACKER 500 BANDS ON THE ESSENCE OF
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INDIE GAMES

MORE PEOPLE ARE CREATING VIDEOGAMES THAN
EVER BEFORE, INCLUDING HERE IN IOWA CITY.
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FARMERS MARKET FEAST

CHICKEN LITTLE GOBBLES IT ALL UP. | PAGE 6

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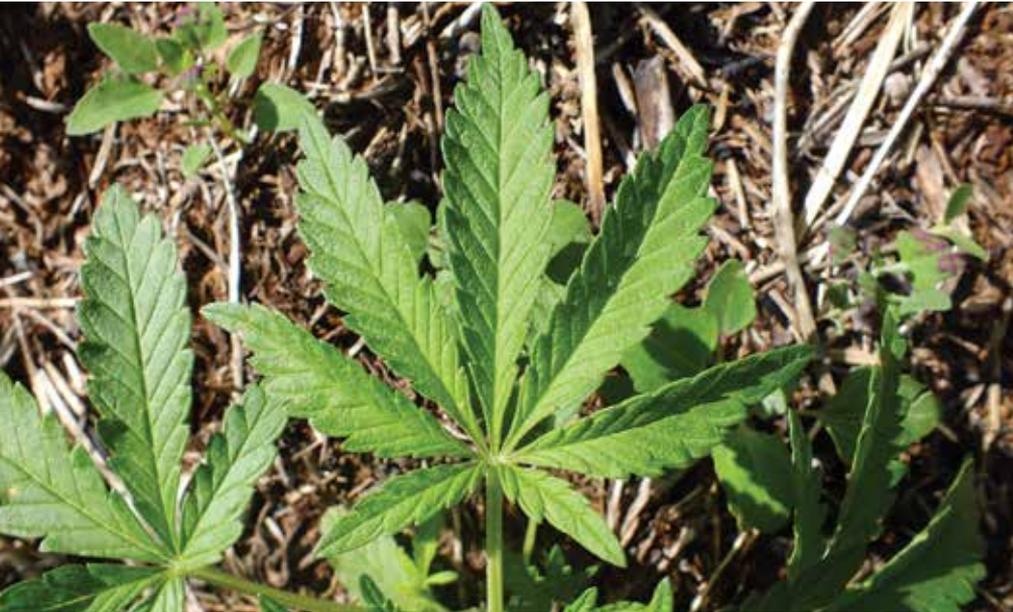
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IN SEARCH OF REASON

Carol and Caroline take a look at one of Iowa's most baffling laws and report back on their field trip to Denver.

BY CAROL DEPROSSE AND CAROLINE DIETERLE



REPEAL THE DRUG TAX STAMP LAW

Iowa has a law that intends to make drug users plead guilty to a lesser charge or suffer the consequences of prison and a large fine: the Drug Tax Stamp law (DTS), Chapter 453B Code of Iowa.

Enacted in 1990, the DTS specifically addresses illegal drugs; all substances legally obtained and sold are exempted, so the law is not a problem for pharmacies. For marijuana, possessing 42.5 grams or more of processed marijuana requires a Drug Tax Stamp that costs \$5 per gram (minimum \$215) to acquire; the tax per living marijuana plant is \$750. Those who fail to obtain a Drug Tax Stamp are charged with a Class D felony, punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of \$7,500; the statute of limitations is six years, twice the length for other offenses of this class.

How does this law, which requires users to admit the possession of illegal substances, not violate the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—the right against self-incrimination? It does so by including this statement:

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the director or an employee of the department shall not reveal any information obtained from a dealer; nor shall information obtained

WHAT'S THE POINT? | Only two Drug Tax Stamps were issued in Iowa in 2013.

from a dealer be used against the dealer in any criminal proceeding, unless the information is independently obtained, except in connection with a proceeding involving taxes due under this chapter from the dealer against whom the tax was assessed.

The vast majority of those using marijuana are not dealers, but if caught with 42.5 grams or more they are considered to be dealers under this law.

Still, this law is practically a violation of the 8th Amendment, which forbids cruel and unusual punishment. Five years in prison, a \$7,500 fine and loss of voter rights as a felon are cruel punishment for having some marijuana in one's house—a plant that is legal or decriminalized in other states.

Since virtually no one obeys Chapter 435B (two stamps were issued in 2013), what function does this law serve? It seems to be a threat that causes people also accused of lesser crimes, like possession of marijuana and/or drug paraphernalia, to plead guilty to these lesser crimes instead of fighting the DTS charge. Agreeing to accept the proffered "plea

agreement" (if you plead guilty to possession, the felony charge will be dropped) removes the possibility of a trial with an acquittal or a jury nullification (refusal to convict), but also removes the threat of prison time, a large fine and a felony conviction for a DTS violation. Which would you choose?

The Drug Tax Stamp law should be repealed. In the meantime, we need to elect a county attorney who won't prosecute the possession of personal use amounts of marijuana. Exercising such prosecutorial discretion would help hundreds of (mostly young) people living in Johnson County.

Furthermore, considerable money would be collected for the general fund if Iowa followed Colorado's lead and marijuana were legally sold and taxed. In January, the first month of legalization, Colorado collected \$2 million in tax revenues from the sale of recreational marijuana. This would dwarf any revenues collected under the Drug Tax Stamp law.

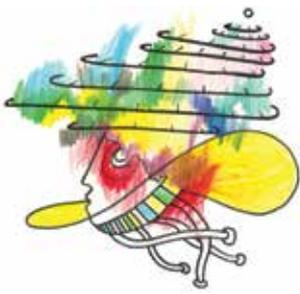
And how does one permanently affix a stamp of any kind to a bag of loose marijuana or to a living plant in the first place?

HIGH CULTURE

Our recent trip to Denver found businesses open, people shopping, clerks running cash registers without apparent error, public transit running smoothly, restaurants serving food, the weather channel reporting local weather and abstract expressionist works hanging evenly on the walls of the Clyfford Still Museum.

In response to the question at the front desk "What brings you to Denver?" our reply "To visit the marijuana shops" brought smiles. The concierges matter-of-factly provided information about shops in the area, as well as advice about where one could go to smoke: "in the alley next to the hotel." There are no public establishments where one is free to smoke marijuana as there are in Amsterdam.

We chose to visit a shop euphoniouly named EuFlora. At the basement level shop our IDs were checked by a security guard immediately upon entry. The place is large,



brightly lit and clean; bottled samples of marijuana are displayed on tables and separated by type: sativa, indica and hybrid.

Each sample is accompanied by a iPad mini that gives potential buyers information about the potency level and type of high to be expected, as well as the known medical uses or negative effects. Buyers are encouraged to “smell before buying.” Smelling the marijuana is done by removing the lids of the display jars, which have inner, separate seals with holes in them.

Legal marijuana is not cheap: \$20 per gram in addition to a hefty tax. A wide array of paraphernalia, various marijuana-laced edibles (candy and cookies), T-shirts and posters are also for sale. In Denver, a limited number of tours of growing operations are available, but none are half-day and all are expensive, about \$350 per person, refreshments included.

Advice from our trip: Enjoy the freedom and have fun while you're there, but do not attempt to bring marijuana back with you. Traveling on Amtrak (as we did) is pleasant, but on the return trip, when the train made it's first stop in Lincoln, Neb. at 3:20 a.m., the police came aboard with a drug dog.

We realized how quickly the sense of freedom enjoyed in Colorado could be turned to one of fear and intimidation as the police knocked on the doors of sleepers, waking people up and asking if they had brought anything back from their visit to Denver.

Daily life in Denver is proceeding normally; legalized marijuana has not resulted in mayhem and crime. The real craziness? While Colorado is concerned that marijuana plants' high value will provoke plant rustling (forget cows!), Nebraska and Iowa assiduously apprehend and punish people who use it. **lv**

Carol deProse and Caroline Dieterle: 85+ years of trying to shake up the system.

Last week I found out that the charges against me (which I have been carrying around like a weight chained to my ankle for 21 months) have been dropped. It seems that I was "overcharged."

What happens when one is "overcharged?" Well, you know. It has happened to you in some store, has it not? The situation gets straightened out. You get your money back.

So what do I get back now? The stress that I lived with since the accidental fire for which I was charged with arson: Do I get the time back, sans stress? Some months to do over? An extra piece of life to live again, without hassles and expenditures? I don't think so. Take away jail time, infections and irritations from filth there, the messing up of my meds that landed me in the hospital with an anticoagulant count that put me at bleed risk. Take away the rash from the plastic-covered bed with no sheets. Take away the smearing of my name. Take away the enormous time spent by those who love me, helping me.

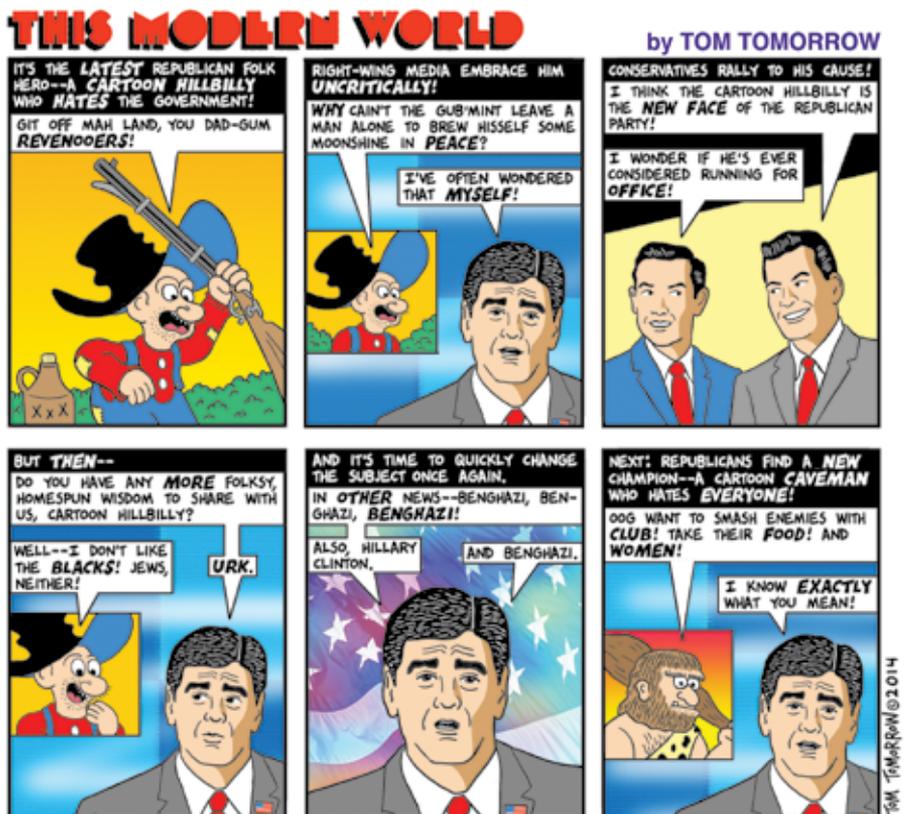
The day in jail that I got to have my few minutes in front of a television with a judge on its screen I sat in the back of the room. I saw the backs of heads, many with complex braids of dark hair on dark skin. So many of those in front of me seemed to go to the same hairdo place. I wondered where it was.

Why do we need to go to jail to find the rest of our community? What would integration look like? Jazz Fest moved to the Broadway neighborhood? A pedestrian mall without a tower of wealth overlooking street people? I trust this new guy, this John Zimmerman who I have never met, because he comes out of the tradition of a peace church, and he was a minister who thought that in order to work for justice he needed to learn some law. So he came here to go to school and then he found out that the progressive reputation of this community was one more lie with which we live.

Let's vote in John Zimmerman to start some change here. Then we can all look at one another and say thank you, some more charges have been dismissed.

Rebecca S. Rosenbaum, Iowa City

Submit letters: Editor@LittleVillageMag.com





CHICKEN LITTLE REVIEWS:

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HAYSTACKS



You know that first perfect spring day after the endless winter? That cloudless day of birdsong, bike rides and bunnies; of budding flowers offering up their sweet stink to bees and passersby? That's the day that makes many people fall (back) in love with Iowa City, and it's the day we know the Farmers Market is near.

Like many things in town, the Saturday Farmers Market has changed, getting bigger and more diverse. From 7:30 a.m. to noon, May through October, it's still mostly contained in Chauncey Swan parking ramp, but you'll find culinary row on Washington Street, adjacent to the ramp. Not only are there more purveyors of fresh produce, decorative items, potted plants and baked goods within the ramp, the number of prepared-food options has multiplied. On any given Saturday, hungry Market-goers can satisfy just about any craving: There is savory, egg, ethnic, crunchy, doughy, healthy, sweet, fried, meaty ... and there's even local wine to chase it down, if that's the kind of Saturday

MARKET MUNCHIES

Maggie's bakes pizzas in their mobile brick oven.

Photo by Adam Burke

you want to have.

Offerings may change throughout the year, as many vendors use seasonal produce and products whenever possible. Local Burrito, for example, features a market special burrito; egg and tortilla are always present, but each week, it's accessorized with whatever looks best in the garden. A few weeks ago, mine had asparagus, green garlic and greens with homemade salsa. It was delicious, although perhaps a bit sparse on the veggies: There were bites that positively sang with their fresh green glory, and then bites of bare egg that held no music at all—and for \$6.50, I want at least an aria, if not an entire symphony. But man, those green bites were virtuosic.

The A.M. fries from The Box Lunch, a shiny food truck that's pretty new in town, are a less healthy breakfast option. Served in



a paper boat, these hand-cut fries are topped with grilled onions, orange cheese sauce and a fried egg, resulting in a sort of unholy breakfast poutine.

Breakfast favorites at the Farmers Market abound. Friends swear by the lemon pancakes made by the lovely people at Griddle Me This, and others venture to the market just for the breakfast tacos from El Banditos. Much of the time, I base my selection on which place has the shortest line, because I don't like waiting. But it's clear by the lines at certain stalls that devotees don't seem to mind waiting for their favorites. And part of the charm of the Market is saying hi to neighbors and friends, many of them in line, chatting and laughing while they wait. Because it's so busy, service isn't doting or extravagant, but the vendors do their best to serve their food with smiles and small talk; it's clear they're happy to be sharing their talents with Market shoppers.

I have to admit that I'm not usually an early bird and usually don't make it downtown until around 11 a.m., which is the perfect time to transition into lunch with a Maggie's Farm wood-fired pizza. Maggie's Farm is one of two Market vendors with portable wood-fired ovens, which they use to achieve sublime perfection in pizza form. The crust is perfectly thin and chewy; toppings are always fresh and sometimes feature market ingredients. And, Maggie's Farm is right near Brass Ring Coffee, which has a pour-over setup for the freshest coffee at the market, so you can get a coffee while they make your pizza. When the pizza comes out of their scorching oven, you can sit on the curb, in the sun, while eating, drinking and marveling at the perfection that is your life at that moment.

Even if you don't want a full meal, you can grab a cup of coffee from Brass Ring, Café del Sol or Wake Up Iowa City, and sip and snack as you stroll the Market. Perhaps you need a doughnut for your coffee; there are a few to choose from, but every once in a while, two Amish women sell their doughnuts at a card table with a hand-lettered sign that says, "HOMADE DOUGHNUTS" [sic]. There are no words for the greatness that is these doughnuts, I promise. Every week, I comb the stalls looking for their fly-by-night operation, since



they're only there if another vendor backs out for the week, and there's no way to know when the glorious doughnuts will be there.

WHEN THE PIZZA COMES OUT OF THEIR SCORCHING OVEN, YOU CAN SIT ON THE CURB, IN THE SUN, WHILE EATING, DRINKING AND MARVELING AT THE PERFECTION THAT IS YOUR LIFE AT THAT MOMENT.

But maybe you'd rather have an Argentinean empanada from Maestro Empanadas for your snack. Or a spring roll, an egg roll or a crab rangoon from either Sushi Kicchin or Saigon Flavors. Or a little handheld pie from Burrowing Owl Bakery or IC Pie (I'm partial to the savory asparagus and mushroom tart), or a buttery rugelach from Regina Bread. Any of these will make your mouth super happy and fuel you for a long, convivial morning of milling, dodging, gabbing and shopping.

Whatever you do, though, stop at La Reyna's stand on your way out, grab a bag of corn chips and some guacamole or pico de gallo and go home. Try as hard as you can to wait to open those chips, because when you do, you're going to eat all of them, and all the delicious dip you bought, too. I prefer to do this in my hammock, soaking up the flower smells and birdsong, reveling in the glorious wonder that is Iowa. **lv**

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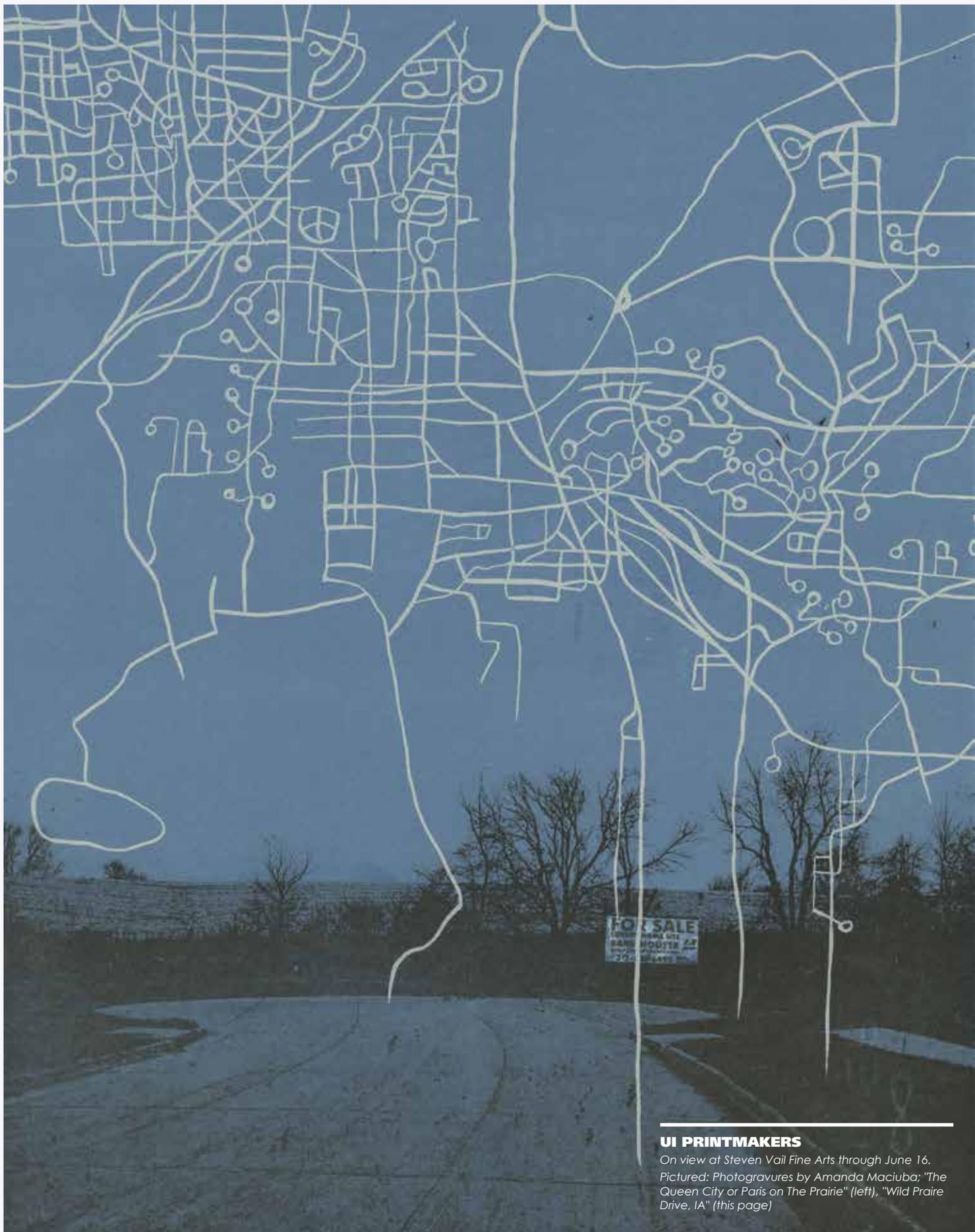
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NONFICTION, A LOVE POEM • BY JILL ABRUZZIO

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It was a porch and he was tall. Why shouldn't a passive person use a passive voice?

And I, little old minimal me, sneakers and a dusty blue ball gown had prayed and prayed to the hopeless gods that this relic, this icon, this creature of blond and muscle might one day be mine. It had a little something to do with his smile, the strength of his adam's apple, and his distinct lack of perfection. This machismo mirror, I knew in my taped-up heart, had something in common with me. In all his sweaty glamor, he was exquisite. Our love would be a leaky teacup, something precious and broken and certainly tenuous.

We looked out over the city in its ruin. The chain link fences arched their backs in the glory of the sunset and danced around the discarded tires, bicycle chains, and the rooftops of buildings long neglected of repair. The creak of seatstays and rumble of scavenged garbage sang a sweet song. And we, breathing deep in our fear of the future, spoke of the simple things.

This is a love story of sorts, I should note.

Tomorrow, I told him, I am taking a plane. And that plane, I added, will take me far away from you. I prepared the valises with tiny dresses and breakable shoes, perfumes and leather, pearls and rot. After all, were I to become a woman, I should finally address my inevitable fragility. The taxi slept in wait,

and I hunched madly over a bottle of gin and a hustle of limes. I smelled him in, swaddled in mothballs and sweat, uncertainty. His chipped tooth glared at me as I looked up his face, all nostrils, stubble, and pores. He stank of man, or what I could perceive of it. I'd never met a man before.

My concern for the betterment of humankind in that moment showed itself the door. Whoever else cared had become my enemy and I would take up bullets and bombs because, more than anything in the world, I was selfish and he was going to be mine. I would have destroyed everything, I would have engendered new worlds. Perhaps that is where I laid the first misstep. Propriety is no matter for the heart. Responsibility, neither.

So in Paris on Bastille Day, I cursed Sarkozy for the rain. Handfuls of wine and a drunken strut down Rue Notre Dame de Lorette possessed me. I cracked my hips on end tables and acted like no one had seen a damned thing. I wasted endless hours on frivolous acts. I lost the tips of my pinkies to knives because I just couldn't think straight. The chefs that tried to break me were no match for one haunting human that chased me right from my dreams to the kitchen where my aching back and rubber soled shoes pushed me from tomato to tomato, leek to leek, nine to five. I learned two things that summer: discipline and heartache. The drinking habits were merely acquired.

I knew my fate: I would one day return home.

I chased shots of Nyquil with Poire William and I grasped the hand rests and prayed the plane would fall. Burying myself in tattered second hand Burberry, I accepted the inexorable. Everything was in shreds.

On the eve of my rape, a night before a little of me was lost, I was sure everything was fine. Little hints of rejection crept in two by two, hurrah, hurrah. Myself and the highball were best friends. We didn't need him and he surely did not want us. Despite that sick smile. I hung off the bar stool, a giggling pendulum of confusion and internal anarchy. There was nothing left to lose; I just wanted a bed to lie my unconscious head. I just needed a floor to drop my boots. Clutching the phone, I had actually dialed the taxi. I will not lie. I did not want it. I did not like it. I did not say yes. But in the moment where it happened, I did not care; I did not care who. This was not my chipped-tooth companion or my hopeless heartache. He was someone altogether different. This is where he won, because I, like many others, was guilty of a lack of self-respect. That was the only clincher. That stink of man and security wafts through the air when you have no soul. I thought to myself, "Yes, yes, I need this protection. Any protection."

Any ounce of self-esteem reduced like a fine sauce to a coulis of sickness. I was spread

thick about the night, a slaughter spooned over a bed sheet. I was not even his. I never would be.

The real heartbreak came with the truth. He, the one who I thought would love me, the one to whom I gave every little drunken daydream in the pits of Paris, he sucked in the air through his cracked teeth. He clenched his fists and spat, whore, whore. Beneath a street lamp in the crooks of a storefront, performing for tattooed ladies, he yelled and pushed. I was a punching bag amongst antique lamps. No one applauds you for your courage or beauty or grace on this stage. Because what I did that night was to hurt him, he was the victim, and I was the perpetrator. The purity he had never loved me for had surely disappeared. I shimmered with dust and dirt and he quaked with vicarious shame. There is more than one form of abuse in this world. I must ask myself who is more at fault, the one who allowed it, the one who performed it, or the one who broke me? And you reader, you surely cannot discern.

A movie called "Hate" from the murky banlieues and the forbidden places of Parisian streets told me, "What is important, it is not the descent, but the landing."

It is trite, but it is true.

Jill Abruzzio

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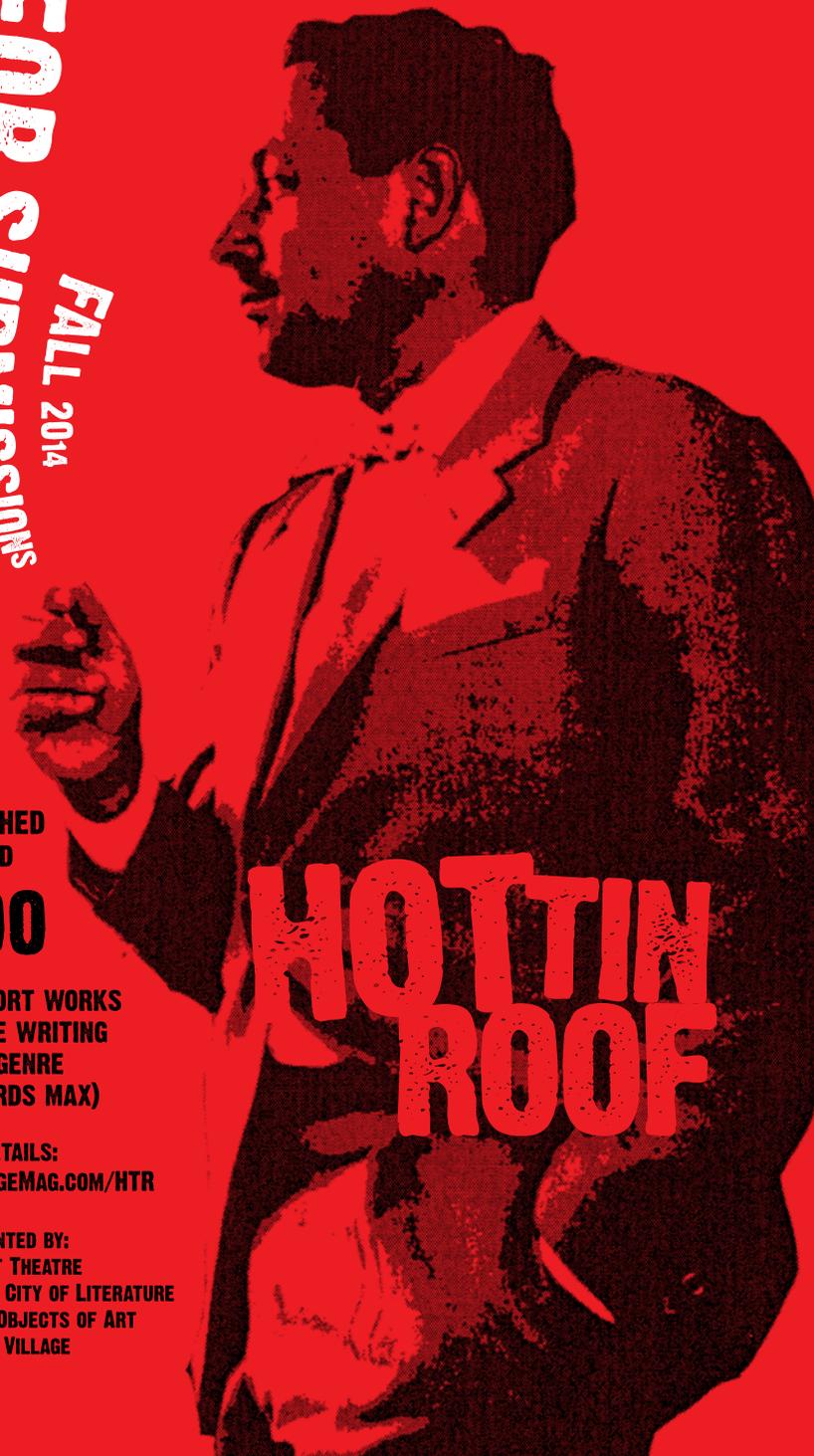
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THE ONE ABOUT THE BLOW JOB LADY

In his last shift before vacation, Vic has a run-in with someone on the No-Haul list. • BY VIC PASTERNAK



I'm stepped out taking a whiz at one of Coralville's dozen gas stations.

Next I make the rounds for water, fresh coffee, smokes. Four hours to go and then I'm out of town for six weeks, maybe longer. I've salted away my ducats and am taking my first vacation in years.

The counter kid asks, "You know where I can find angel dust?"

"Why ask me?"

He shrugs, "You're the cab driver."

"Shave the mustache, Zorro. You look like a creep."

When I get back to my taxi, dispatch has a hot one waiting for me.

"TAKE IT OVER TO APPLEBY'S. #13 NEEDS YOU IN THE LOT." Number 13 is our code for cops. Sometimes PD cuts one loose and we get the call.

Humping into Appleby's, I slow-cruise the building. No cops and nothing in the lot but a red van. Next, a woman leaps out of the van and runs at me waving her arms.

"Let me in!"

"Door's open."

"I said, you let me in your taxi!" A vampire looking for an invite. So I patiently wait on her to yank the door and climb inside. In the flash of domelight, her face looks like the bottom of

BLINDSIDED | No fare for Vic when he's caught off guard by a troublesome customer.

Illustration by Josh Carroll

a foot soaked in water—with two black eyes.

"My boyfriend got arrested but it's not his fault. We told the police I was driving and I told them it wasn't his stuff, I told them it was my stuff."

"Ma'am, I am not the court-appointed lawyer. I am your cab driver."

The lady throws a hand to her face and makes like the tears are brimming over. She just can't take it anymore.

Me neither, and I punch-start the meter.

"He's going to kill me."

"Where are you going?"

"You can't bring me there."

"I don't even know where 'there' is."

She gives me the address of the trailer court way out on the other end of Hwy 6.

"I've got money at the trailer."

"Not good enough."

"My friends have money at the trailer."

"Long walk from here."

"When they find out he's in jail, you don't know what they're going to do to me."

By the lot lamps I can see she was a once-attractive woman, the party girl who aged to

become loose. Wan tones and pockmarks, teeth burned off at the root. A cage of flesh with its spirit detached but still fluttering about inside. A fucked-up junkie.

Fuck it, four hours to go and I'm outa here. I turn out of the lot and head down the Strip.

This is when she chokes me.

Not the first time I've been choked at the wheel. But she's not so much choking me as desperately clutching me about the collar.

"Don't touch the cab driver."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry—don't hit me again."

I haven't touched the lady and I am very clear in spelling that out.

BROTHER, HOW LONG'VE YOU BEEN DOING THIS? WE DO THIS BECAUSE PEOPLE PAY US CASH MONEY TO DO IT.

"Cops already gave you a pass, my bad luck. Don't make me punt you back."

I roar across town from west to east in record time. She chatters the whole way and I hear none of it.

Coming off the highway beside the trailer court, I cut down the third alley between tumbledown shacks. Tree of heaven and narco wagons. Big Wheels and Wiffle ball bats left outside. More than one meth lab has blown up out here, and I count four burn-outs standing on black footings and iron spaghetti. Like toys left out in the night, nobody cares.

An electric blue F-550 with chrome finishes, a diesel stack and KC lights is parked beside the trailer she wants.

"Will you come back here?"

"Why?"

"I need to get out of here, I need to get back to La Crosse. Get back here at six in the morning, can you do that?"

"I get off shift at six."

"Seven, then. Or eight. Oh, I don't care when, just please, you don't know what they'll do."

Now the trailer door opens and I can see a figure standing in the dark of the doorway, a man silhouetted by blue television light

HATE YOUR JOB?

showering the background.

"They won't ever know you're coming."

The meter shows \$22.75 on its big red dial.

"Call it \$20 and pay me."

"But I need a ride."

"Then call a cab."

"I'll wait for you," she says. "I'll pay you for this ride then."

"I need cash. Now. I'm not coming back here."

For a long moment the woman is utterly silent until: "Open your pants."

"Just get the fuck out."

Cut loose of the fare, she does as ordered and leans in the domelight.

"I'll be waiting for you."

Then she hustles for the trailer, up its stairs and past the man in the doorway. I can feel the abyss of him staring into me, but I cannot see into the abyss that is him.

He shuts the door and I spit gravel getting out of there.

Back at the shack after shift, I tell everybody about it, and Dr. Bob laughs his ass off.

"Haha, that's the Blow Job Lady."

"No way, I don't let the Blow Job Lady in my cab. I'm the one who put the Blow Job Lady on the No-Haul List." She's been a permanent member of that illustrious list for years, stemming from reasons worth her moniker.

Dr. Bob is dismissive.

"She pulled that same shit last week—boyfriend in jail, he's going to kill her, scary friend in the doorway. But did you get paid? And by that I mean in cash money?"

"Well, I wasn't going to let her fellate me."

"Brother, how long've you been doing this? We do this because people pay us cash money to do it. Or they go to jail and then pay us money. Maybe this shit is getting to you."

I feel lame for letting the Blow Job Lady in my cab, though how could I recognize her with meth sucking all the shape from her face? What really pisses me off is that I failed to get any money.

Tippling out of the scuttlebutt, I go whiz and reflect on my own worn image in the mirror. Maybe this shit is getting to me. Maybe it's exactly the right time to take a vacation and never come back. **iv**

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GARAGE EXPLOSION

Are there more garage and psych bands today? Or are these labels just more widely applied? Firecracker 500 bands respond.

BY MELISSA ZIMDARS



Get your earplugs ready because the now (consistently) annual Firecracker 500 Festival is happening a month early this year, kicking off what will undoubtedly be a great summer of music listening and day-drinking.

Firecracker brings together a bunch of primarily Midwest garage, psychedelic and punk bands. Spanning three nights (May 29-31) at The Mill, this year features Detroit's Mexican Knives (droning garage), another Michigan band The Hemingers (simple punk/garage songs about tacos and dropping out of school), as well as the return of Bloomington's Thee Open Sex (droning psychedelic).

This year's lineup features a combination of bands I love and bands I have yet to love, and thinking about them all reminds me of a giddy conversation I had at last year's Firecracker with Uh Bones drummer, Joe Montanaro. We both felt that not only are more bands recording albums and touring under the labels of garage and psychedelic, but also that these bands are receiving more attention from music

EX-CULT | *The Goner Records four-piece will headline night two of the Firecracker 500. Photo by Unruly Factions*

critics: Even *Pitchfork* (evil, evil *Pitchfork*) started a garage rock column, "Shake Appeal." This and the fact that psych fests are exponentially reproducing across the U.S. supports the feeling that these genres are both expanding and gaining in popularity. But are there actually more garage and psychedelic bands? Or are these labels just being more loosely applied to groups?

To answer this year-old question, I turned to the musicians who will be performing at Firecracker: Chris Shaw of Memphis' Ex-Cult (aggressive punk), Steve Krakow of Chicago's Plastic Crimewave Syndicate ("power trio spacejams for dayz"), John Ziegler of Omaha's The Lupines (garage, rock and roll) and Nolan Krebs and Andrew Tamlyn of Grand Rapids' Heaters (psychedelic, garage awesomeness). They shed light on the state of garage and psychedelic music, what those labels even mean



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THURSDAY, MAY 29

Heaters (pictured)

Plastic Crimewave Syndicate

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FRIDAY, MAY 30

Ex-Cult

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Mexican Knives (pictured)

Good Habits

SATURDAY, MAY 31

The Velcro Lewis Group

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and whether their local scenes are as weird and ever-changing as Iowa City's.

Do you think there is currently a resurgence in garage and psychedelic music?

STEVE KRAKOW (PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE SYNDICATE): Yes, there were never enough bands to have a Psychfest in Chicago, even 10 years ago, but we have had a local Psychfest here [in Chicago] for the last five years now—I

I THINK WE TAKE SOME CUES FROM EARLY ROCK AND ROLL BANDS (HENCE THE GARAGE ROCK AFFILIATION) AND ADD OUR OWN FLAVOR TO IT.

—**NOLAN KREBS, HEATERS**

think we were first after Austin. "Psychedelia" isn't a dirty word like it used to be when people equated the term with Grateful Dead-like bands.

NOLAN KREBS (HEATERS): Lots of people seem to be into [garage and psychedelic music] these days, which is cool. Most of it seems to be music born from the same old records that we're into, whether it's Hawkwind or The Seeds. So, whatever. We don't have any qualms with it. I'd rather listen to a scuzzy, garage rock band than a lot of other shit that's out there.

JOHN ZIEGLER (THE LUPINES): I don't know. There's even more garage bands now? People complained of that when I was super attentive four years ago. It seemed like things peaked when Jay Reatard and the Black Lips were both touring and alive, maybe just in my own mind or memory. Now, it's just the Black Lips, who I still appreciate, and more bands than I can count.

I can't keep up with the hype; it seems like there is some new, twinkly guitar band every week. And surprise, surprise, I knew it all along, but it looks like the music lends itself very well towards branding and merchandising of cars and cell phones ... And I don't lament that, but I think the smartphone and social media are equalizing music into this college-radio indie gestalt of indistinct imagery and sounds, and it sucks. Image-wise,

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everything is all duded out for this communion of humanity and positive thinking and some vague future of endless party-going (perhaps that's not new), and sound-wise, it's all just fucking twinkly ...

I THINK THE SMARTPHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE EQUALIZING MUSIC INTO THIS COLLEGE-RADIO INDIE GESTALT OF INDISTINCT IMAGERY AND SOUNDS, AND IT SUCKS.

—JOHN ZIEGLER, THE LUPINES

CHRIS SHAW (EX-CULT): I think that aggressive music is getting more attention from some of the bigger media outlets than it used to. Over the past few years, bigger bands that play that type of music have gotten recognition and it's had a trickle-down effect, which is awesome. All different types of underground music is now getting exposure, and that's always a good thing. But people have been playing

punk, hardcore punk, whatever you want to call ... no one ever really stopped from when it started. It's not like all of a sudden [people say] "lets be in a punk, garage or hardcore band," it's just that people are starting to pay attention to it again.

I feel like the terms psychedelic and garage are applied (even in this article!) so haphazardly to anything with a vintage or fuzzy sound that they no longer mean anything. What do those labels mean to you—if anything—and how do you describe your music?

NK: We're not sure what those labels mean either. "Psych" has been a helpful word in describing some of the sonic elements we're into, but I'm not sure it's all-encapsulating or anything. I think we take some cues from early rock and roll bands (hence the garage rock affiliation) and add our own flavor to it. Over-driven swirls of aquatic jangle. How's that?

JZ: We are garage or rock and roll. I don't mind labels so much. What else are you going to actually say? People can't ESP their sentiments about a band direct to your brain yet, but there

might be an app for that soon.

CS: I used to say the term garage music was just an excuse for bands to suck because it encompasses so many different things, and it can be so many different things. I basically just sum it up as "if you suck, you can just label it garage, and it's fine no matter what you're playing." I wouldn't call us a garage band. I think because we are on [Goner], a garage label, that that's the easiest comparison people can draw ...

Garage punk, psych punk, I don't know what those mean either. I like psychedelic music. I think people want to put a label on it so they can decide if they like it, like "I like psychedelic rock, and this is a psychedelic rock band, so I must like them," or "I know I like hardcore punk and I read this is a hardcore punk band, so I must like them." I think we're just an aggressive punk band, we might not fit the cookie cutter definition of what a punk band or a psych band should be, I think we fall somewhere in the middle ...

Regardless of what these labels may actually mean, or how they are externally or

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self-applied, the fact that Iowa City even has a garage and psychedelic music fest is kind of weird to me, considering Iowa City's fragmented and constantly-rotating show attendees and the small number of garage and psychedelic bands currently in town. Can you describe what your local music scenes are like?

ANDREW TAMLYN (HEATERS): There's a weird range of music here in Grand Rapids, anywhere from sludge doom to friendly folk, ultimately keeping it one big ol' family mixing and matching genres, and keeping the weekly house shows thriving with wonder.

CS: People get an idea of Memphis that isn't completely accurate because it is an extremely small scene. So, even when bands that are on the national radar come through, it's a good show if 30 or 40 people come. I mean, there are a lot of good local bands and Goner [Records] has had a lot to do with that. Memphis by nature is just an older music scene. The kids that go to college ... the punk shows just don't attract them. Like, I am probably one of the youngest people that comes around, and I'm

not that young anymore.

JZ: Attendance is a bit iffy in [Omaha]. I have about 11 bands on a list that I would like to play with. [Omaha] is a bit cloistered and paranoid, but I think that goes without saying for any town's scene.

SK: It's fantastic, better than it has been in my nearly 20 years in [Chicago]. Besides psych, there is all kinds of awesome arty bands (Ono, Toupee, ADT), grimey punkers (Running, Basic Cable), heavy bands (Unmanned Ship, Oozing Wound), country (Lawrence Peters outfit), folk (Ryley Walker), you name it. **lv**

For more information about Firecracker 500 Fest and music links for all the bands playing, go to firecracker500festival.com. And, even if you don't do any pre-fest listening, Joe Derderian, the host extraordinaire of Firecracker, is right in saying, "The best way to find new sounds is still in a live setting."

Melissa Zimdars co-hosts The Fuzz Fix every Thursday from 6 - 8 p.m. on KRUI.

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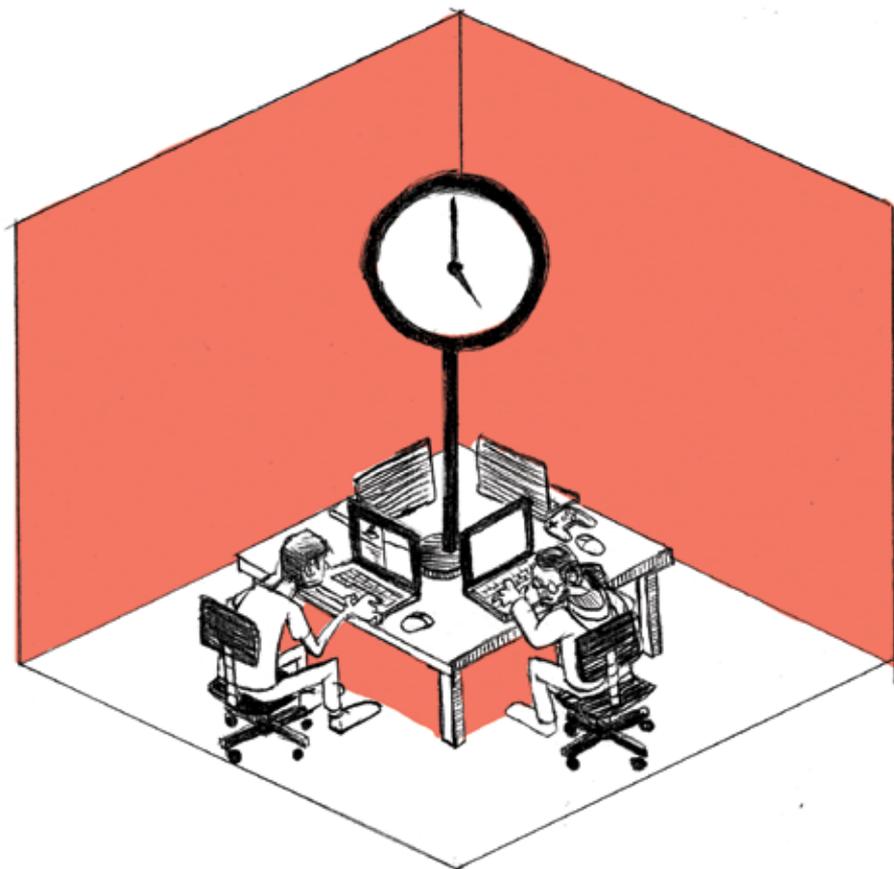


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GAME CHANGER

New modes of videogame distribution have opened the playing field to an unprecedented number of independent developers. • **BY PAT BROWN**



It's an exciting time for video games. In recent years, alongside the rise of so-called "triple-A" games—like the upcoming *Destiny* (2014) that cost exorbitant amounts of money to make—a healthy and diverse independent market has also developed. Games like *Castle Crashers* (2008), *Spelunky* (2009), *Limbo* (2010), *Super Meat Boy* (2010), *The Binding of Isaac* (2011) and *BattleBlock Theater* (2013) have defined a new and important subcurrent of gaming. They rely on a new infrastructure of distribution that allows them to reach players more easily, and that has in turn encouraged the proliferation of independent game studios, including the University of Iowa student organization EPX Studio here in Iowa City.

Gaming hasn't quite become a cottage industry, but the new prominence of

JAMMING AWAY | At EPX Studio's Indie Game Jam, developers worked together on various videogame projects. | Illustration by Jared Jewell

independently developed games is arguably fostering the resurgence of a creative ethic that extends beyond the traditional centers of game production. EPX is open to anyone in the community with an interest in learning about and designing video games. On May 9, the group kicked off its Indie Game Jam weekend with a series of talks by well-known names in indie gaming.

Speakers at the event included Iowa-based game designers Josh Larson (of the upcoming *That Dragon, Cancer*) and Ted Martens (*The Curse of the Necrodancer*, 2013), as well as visual effects artist Byron Caldwell, *The*

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Super Meat Boy (2010)



The Stanley Parable (2013)
Hotline Miami (2012)
Antichamber (2013)
Limbo (2010)



Machinarium (2009)
Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons (2013)

Stanley Parable (2013) creator Davey Wreden and the upcoming *Hyper Light Drifter's* Teddy Diefenbach. Through Skype (with the exception of Larson, who attended in person) these indie game writers, artists and programmers kicked off the weekend by offering advice on game jams and, more generally, on navigating the gaming industry as aspiring creators.

The success of Wreden, whose *Stanley Parable* is one of the most interesting and critically lauded games of the last couple years, may be the sign of changing dynamics in independent gaming. Wreden designed the first version of the game when he was a film student at University of Southern California, teaching himself how to use the tools of popular game developer Valve.

Now that *Stanley Parable* has been re-released as a collaboration between Wreden and programmer William Pugh, Wreden said to attendees at the EPX Indie Game Jam that he's looking mostly to work on his writing, not his programming: "The jobs I'm trying to do and to get really good at, is to write. ... And that's not always a super-prominent role in game design—especially in independent design, where most of the time the person doing the writing is also the person who's leading the project, who's already doing the design of it."

Independent games have often relied on singular visions, on cultivating a sense of artistic intent directed from a person responsible for designing and writing the game. This has led occasionally to a close integration of gameplay mechanics and story thematics, as in the time-bending platformer *Braid* (2008). But Wreden's *Stanley Parable* has shown that compelling narrative-based (or narrative-deconstructing, as it were) games have a place in independent gaming as well.

Collaboration between programmers and people without backgrounds in programming was a recurring topic of conversation at the EPX Game Jam's opening event. The game jam has become a practice among programmers, artists and all the other people that may be involved in making video games, who come together to work throughout a weekend with the goal of having a functional game prototype at the end of it, which might later be developed into a full game.

According to the EPX Indie Game Jam's organizer Ryan Holtkamp, game jams are important opportunities for developers to hone their skills, and be forced into thinking a different way to solve urgent problems quickly and efficiently.

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The emergence of independent communities of people interested in games and game-making, complete with unique practices and institutions like the game jam evidences this new (or perhaps rediscovered) indie game ethics, where videogames are more intimate, local, unpretentious and even homemade. Group events like the game jam, which mix theory, shop talk and pure love of the medium, hearkens, for me, back to the "ciné-clubs" that developed in France in the 1920s and were revived in postwar Europe and America while Hollywood stagnated. These clubs, like EPX, fostered a belief in cinema as something not merely for the entertainment of the masses, but as a medium of expression, a craft to be studied and practiced.

While the video game industry hasn't yet seen a hegemony as stable and monolithic as the eight major studios that ruled Hollywood from the 1920s to the 1960s, it too has organized itself largely around a group of powerful publishers: Activision, Electronic Arts and Ubisoft were the three biggest publishers of 2012, according to Games Industry International. Publishers co-fund the development of games, which may be done by another

company or by an in-house development subsidiary.

In 2003, Valve released their online service Steam, which provided players with the ability to purchase and download games from their creators, shrinking the role of and need for both publishers and brick-and-mortar retailers. In this context, the publishing infrastructure no longer consists of capital-intensive networks of cartridge- or CD-manufacturing and retail distribution; a niche is opened up for independent games to reach the dedicated gamers who will play them. Online console networks like Xbox Live Arcade soon followed Steam's lead in offering independent developers an avenue to users, and the advent of Kickstarter has made crowdsourcing a frequent source of capital for the development of new indie games.

Thus, independent games actually depend on the existence of major media corporations. Indie games, like indie films before them, value a distinct "low-fi" aesthetic that distinguishes them aesthetically and even ideologically, but Holtkamp sees the two sides of the industry as complementary.

"I think both camps have their roles," he

says, "The big Studios will churn out sure bet triple-A titles, and rake in billions on sequels and copies of other fad games, and there's definitely nothing wrong with that. If someone enjoys *Call of Duty*, more power to them." Independent games, with their smaller market of dedicated gamers, can afford to take chances the larger games can't risk.

While the rapid move of games from cartridges and CDs to servers and hard-drives is having some negative consequences, like the increased ease of corporate digital rights management and the decline of used game sales, this newfound preponderance of voices outside the mainstream industry is one positive effect. EPX was founded in Iowa City almost three years ago, arguably as a part of this explosion of activity in gaming less firmly tied to traditional distribution outlets.

Their original goal, according to EPX Events Director Megan Mathews, was to produce one game a year as a group, but they've found more success in this past school year by focusing smaller units of programmers and artists on more contained projects. This weekend's game jam was meant to facilitate work on these projects, which include a set of

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6/8 10a-12p Alan Thompson-Wallace, Painting
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touchscreen games designed for the Iowa City Public Library's new digital table in the children's area.

Holtkamp, Larson and EPX members Nick Shepperd and Chris Boswell used the game jam as an opportunity to continue working on projects for the library, while programmer Evan Balster was there to work on his Kickstarter-supported music program, Imitone. While this model of a game jam differs from the events' usual singular focus, it still augurs exciting directions for the future of gaming. **IV**

Pat Brown is a graduate student in Film Studies, which leaves him only so much time to find The Stanley Parable's 18 distinct endings.

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SAYONARA MIYAZAKI

In *The Wind Rises*, renowned Japanese animator reflects on humanity's capacity to both create and destroy. • BY SCOTT SAMUELSON

May has been christened by FilmScene as “May-azaki” in honor of Hayao Miyazaki, and they will screen four of his masterpieces: *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Spirited Away*, *Howl's Moving Castle* and *The Wind Rises*. It goes without saying that Miyazaki is the greatest animator in film history. He's also one of the greatest filmmakers, period.

His latest movie, according to Miyazaki himself, is his last imaginative flight. *The Wind Rises*—screening at FilmScene beginning May 24—is a fitting summation and final goodbye to his art, akin to Shakespeare's *Tempest* (a title also suggestive of rising wind). It tells the story of Jiro Horikoshi, the maker of the Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter, the plane that initially had a 12-to-1 kill ratio against the Allies and was used for kamikaze missions. The plot evokes the inner life of an artist: his education, his inspiration, his love, his tragedy.

All makers know how someone they've never met, someone who may speak a foreign language or has been dead for centuries, can be one of their most intimate and formative associates. *The Wind Rises* is the only movie I know that captures this mystery of artistic influence. The Italian aeronautical engineer Gianni Caproni appears to Jiro in various exquisite dream sequences to inspire and guide him at crucial moments in his life.

Caproni also delivers the central paradoxical message of *The Wind Rises* and ultimately Miyazaki's art. Jiro's plane will be used for horrible acts of war, but it's part of the beauty of the world for him to make it. All products of

human ambition, including art, will be used for evil, yet we'd ultimately rather live in a world where human ambition is expressed than in a world where it's absent.

What's so distinctive about Miyazaki's art is his vision of this lovely, tragic world, in both the sense of his ability to evoke the observed world in its inner mystery and the sense of his overall worldview.

Though I don't know enough about the history of Japanese art to draw subtle connections, I do see a profound link between Miyazaki and Hokusai, the most famous Japanese artist, who famously spoke of progressing from his youthful mania for drawing figures to deeper and deeper abilities to evoke the visible world until finally, at the age of 110, his every dot or line would jump to life.

Miyazaki's movies have that astonishing ability to make things jump to life, to animate things in the truest sense of that verb. He shows how water gushes from a pump, or wind blows through a field, or clouds drift in the sky, in ways that evoke the lived experience of those things, just as Hokusai makes it seem like there's a real wind blowing the hats off the heads in his drawings.

But equally moving to Miyazaki's animation is his ability to evoke the inner mystery of human nature. His vision of humanity is, for lack of a better word, saintly. He sees in us more suffering but less evil than the overwhelming majority of us do.

Though Miyazaki never rubs suffering in our face, it energizes everything about his movies. In *Totoro*, to take his most innocent

and profound movie, every wondrous encounter with the forest spirits takes place against the backdrop of a mother who's desperately ill in a sick ward.

Our imaginations are used to picturing evil, the source of our suffering, as something monstrous and foreign. If we grow out of such cartoonish conceptions (we often never do), we tend to picture evil as something “banal,” to use Hannah Arendt's word to describe how normal people thoughtlessly carry out the most heinous crimes. But Miyazaki's vision of evil goes beyond the monstrous and the banal. It's close to that of Socrates or the Buddha. On this view, evil is our own ignorance about the great order that sustains us, and every human action is to be regarded with compassion.

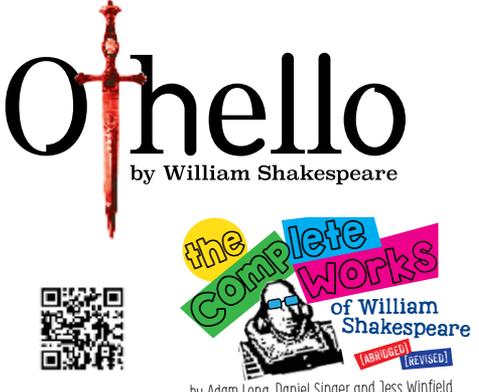
The title of *The Wind Rises* comes from a line by the great French poet Paul Valéry, “Le vent se lève! ... il faut tenter de vivre!” (“The wind is rising! ... we must try to live!”). The wind in Miyazaki's movie symbolizes not just Jiro's desire to fly but all human aspiration to transcend our condition. This fundamental aspiration is beautiful, irresistible and ultimately the source of misery. Has Miyazaki turned away from the suffering of the world, even inflicted it, in order to make his majestic works? C'est la vie, as the French also say.

It's often remarked that Miyazaki's movies are important for children to see because they show a more complex picture of good and evil than what they're used to. They're just as important for adults. To see the world through his eyes, with such understanding and compassion, is to feel the wind rising, is to know in our bones that we must try to live. **lv**

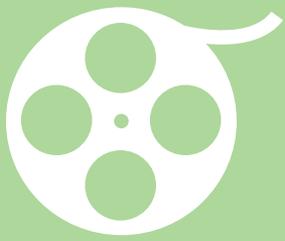
Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College. His new book is The Deepest Human Life: An Introduction to Philosophy for Everyone.



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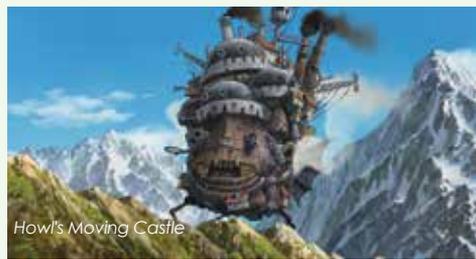


Othello
by William Shakespeare
the complete works
of William Shakespeare
by Adam Long, Daniel Singer and Jess Winfield



The Wind Rises

AIMING FOR THE SKY | In Miyazaki's final film, wind symbolizes the profound human desire to rise above worldly circumstances. (Scan to view trailers)



Howl's Moving Castle



Spirited Away



My Neighbor Totoro



Scan this page with the LAYAR App to view video content.



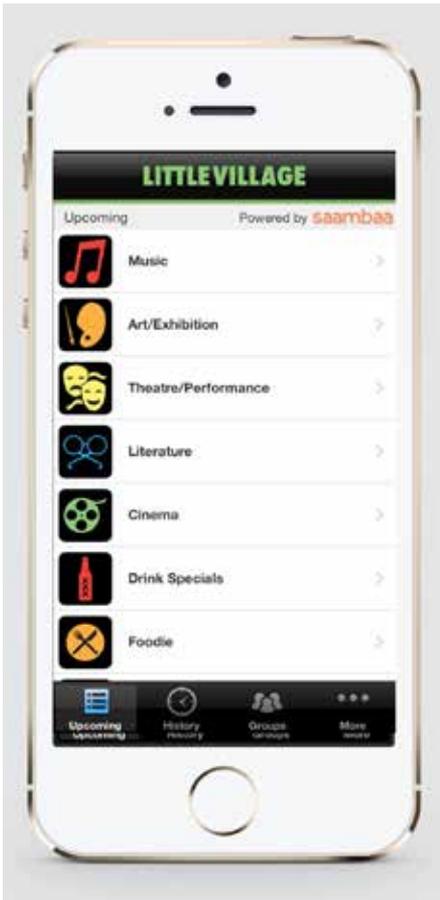
ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE
FILMSCENE—OPENS MAY 30
DIRECTED BY JIM JARMUSCH

I myself would very willingly pay \$100 to watch Tilda Swinton lick a popsicle of human blood. But FilmScene has graciously kept ticket prices at their normal level for Jim Jarmusch's world-weary, hip take on vampires.



DAZED AND CONFUSED
BACKPOCKET BREWING—MAY 29
DIRECTED BY RICHARD LINKLATER

Backpocket Brewing is showing movies in their beer garden. You can grab some brick-oven pizza and a pint and watch Richard Linklater's memory of what it was like to be a teenager in the '70s, aptly titled *Dazed and Confused*.



MUSIC

ONGOING:

SATURDAYS:

Karaoke *Checkers Tavern, Free, 9 pm*

SUNDAYS:

Irish Jam w. Tim Britton *Cafe Paradiso, Free, 3 pm*

MONDAYS:

Open Mic w. J. Knight *The Mill, Free, 8 pm*

TUESDAYS:

Blues Jam *Parlor City Pub and Eatery, Free, 8 pm*

Open Mic w. Corey Wallace *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Free, 9 pm*

WEDNESDAYS:

Open Mic at Cafe Paradiso *Cafe Paradiso, Free, 8 pm*

BSP's Open Jam Wednesdays *Brady Street Pub, Free, 9 pm*

Karaoke w. Emerald Johnson *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Free, 9 pm*

Free Jam Session & Mug Night *IC Yacht Club, Free, 10 pm*

THURSDAYS:

Open Mic *Uptown Bill's, Free, 7 pm*

Daddy-0 *Parlor City Pub and Eatery, Free, 7 pm*

WED., MAY 21

Faculty-Staff Jazz Band *University of Iowa, Free, 12 pm*

Drumming for Healing *Prairiwoods, Free, 6 pm*

Charlie Wiener *Diamond Jo Casino, \$10, 8 pm*

Last Remaining Pinnacle *Gabe's, Free, 9 pm*

Coolzey, Fooch the MC, Animosity from the Uniphonics, Romulan *Gabe's, Free, 10 pm*

THURS., MAY 22

Student Music Recital *Woodlawn Arts Academy, Free, 7 pm*

The Bros. Landreth *Legion Arts CSPS Hall, \$15-18, 7 pm*

Dueling Pianos *Diamond Jo Casino, Free, 8 pm*

Szilence *Gabe's, Free, 8 pm*

Jason Carl *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Cover, 9 pm*

Soul Phlegm, The Evan Stock Band, The Sapwoods *IC Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm*

FRI., MAY 23

Terry McCauley *Cedar Ridge Vineyards, Free, 6 pm*

David Zollo & The Body Electric *Downtown Pedestrian Mall, Free, 6 pm*

Brass Transit Authority *Parlor City Pub and Eatery, 8 pm*

Ralph Kluseman *Diamond Jo Casino, Free, 8 pm*

Rise Waters Rise *Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$5-\$12, 8 pm*

Dirt Road Rockers *Chrome Horse Saloon, Cover, 9 pm*

Corporate Rock *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Cover, 9 pm*

Damn Jhul, Bubble Clap, Gumbz, DJ Spliff *Gabe's, \$5, 10 pm*

Boner Jamz, Tectonic *Blue Moose Tap House, Free, 10 pm*

Crown Larks w. Brooks Strause (pictured), Alex Body

Trumpet Blossom—May 22, 9 p.m. (\$5, 19+)

Crown Larks is yet another band that proves no city does drone music better than Chicago. Harkening back to classic post-rock Thrill Jockey bands like Tortoise and Isotope 217, Crown Larks unusual use of flutes and saxophones spice up their krautrock-ish drone rock. Brooks Strause and Alex Body will fill out the bill. Body promises he will have "real" equipment and things won't "unexpectedly fall apart," so that's encouraging.

—Max Johnson



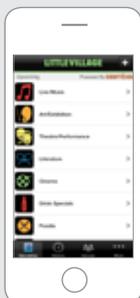
Photo by Zak Neumann

ABOUT THE CALENDAR

THE *LITTLE VILLAGE* CALENDAR serves hundreds of area venues and reaches 150,000 readers per month. Listings are published free of charge at littlevillagemag.com/calendar, on the free calendar app **Best of I.C. (iOS, Android)** and in *Little Village Magazine* (on a space-available basis).

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DETAILS: littlevillagemag.com/bestofic | **QUESTIONS:** calendar@littlevillagemag.com





Erik Whitaker

Big Funk Guarantee, OSG *IC Yacht Club*, \$6, 10 pm
Footloose Friday Nights: Featuring Two Buck Chuck
Fireside Winery, Free, 7 pm

SAT., MAY 24

Dennis McMurrin *The Mill*, \$7, 8 pm
Mark Stuart in Concert *Cafe Paradiso*, Free, 8 pm
Windjam *Brothers Pub*, Cover, 8 pm
Mitch Gordon *Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon*, \$5, 9 pm
Dueling Pianos *Diamond Jo Casino*, Free, 8 pm
Chocolate Crackers *Chrome Horse Saloon*, Cover, 9 pm
Haphazard *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill*, Cover, 9 pm
DJ Soulie *Gabe's*, Free, 10 pm

SUN., MAY 25

Unplugged Music Series: Featuring Billy Heller *Fireside Winery*, Free, 2 pm
Irish Jam w. Tim Britton *Cafe Paradiso*, Free, 3 pm
Marching Band Practice *Public Space ONE*, Free, 3 pm
Fast Clydes *Tabor Home Vineyards and Winery*, Free, 3 pm
Craig Ericson *Sutliff Cider Company*, Free, 3 pm
Open Mic *Charlie's Bar and Grill*, Free, 4 pm
Fly Paper *Parlor City Pub and Eatery*, Cover, 6 pm
Sweet Ascent, You're Too Kind, Helforstout, Milk Duct Tape, Devil in the Details, Leviathans *Gabe's*, \$5, 7 pm
Summer Uncorked w. Crazy Delicious *Fireside Winery*, \$5, 7 pm

TUES., MAY 27

Tom's Guitar Show *Uptown Bill's*, Free, 6 pm
Alpha Consumer *Gabe's*, Free, 9 pm

WED., MAY 28

Bane, Turnstile, Take Offense *Blue Moose Tap House*, \$12-\$14, 5 pm
Burlington Street Bluegrass Band *The Mill*, \$5, 8 pm
Paul Doffing: Freedom from Fuel Tour *Trumpet Blossom Cafe*, Free, 8 pm
Bone, Jugs, and Harmony *Gabe's*, Free, 9 pm

<< Bane w. Turnstile, Take Offense

Blue Moose—May 28, 5 p.m. (\$12-\$14, All ages)
Sure, it's been eight years since their last full-length, but Massachusetts' Bane is as visceral and in-your-face as they've ever been on their latest album, Don't Wait Up. It's promised to be their last album as well, so even if you've lost track of this legendary hardcore five-piece in recent years (or, like me, thought they'd already broke up), this is a perfect chance to re-discover them.
 —MJ

THURS., MAY 29

Brian Johannesen, Ryan Joseph Anderson *Gabe's*, Free, 8 pm
Def Kitty Blinndog, Psychosomatic Reunion, Low Ceilings
IC Yacht Club, \$5, 9 pm
2014 FIRECRACKER 500 FESTIVAL (Heaters, Plastic

Crimewave Syndicate, Maiden Mars, Rusty Buckets *The Mill*, \$8-\$20, 8 pm

FRI., MAY 30

Counterparts, Structures, Betrayal, Villains, KINGS, OHANA, Submerged *Blue Moose Tap House*, \$12-\$14, 5 pm
Lady Lowe *Cedar Ridge Vineyards*, Free, 6 pm
Nolte Academy Recitals *Coralville Center for the Performing Arts*, \$12-\$14, 6 pm
Winterland Downtown Pedestrian Mall, Free, 6 pm
Footloose Friday Nights w. FunkDaddies *Fireside Winery*, Free, 7 pm
Minus Six RME *River Music Experience*, \$5, 8 pm
Midnight Special *Diamond Jo Casino*, Free, 8 pm
Motorboat *Chrome Horse Saloon*, Cover, 9 pm
Powel *11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill*, Cover, 9 pm
Blitzen Trapper *Gabe's*, \$12-\$14, 10 pm
Infrasound Music Festival Pre-Party ft. Ganja White Night, Grimblee, sMILoDon *Blue Moose Tap House*, \$10-\$15, 10 pm



Photo by Robbie Augspurger

Blitzen Trapper I *Gabe's—May 30, 9 p.m. (\$12 - \$14, 19+)*

Blitzen Trapper is the kind of band that brings people together: Hipsters and bros, townies and students all comfortably fit in at a Blitzen Trapper show. It's a hodgepodge crowd that matches the band's hodgepodge sound.

The Portland-based quintet have been playing since 2000, self-releasing three records before getting picked up by Sub Pop Records. Their earliest (and arguably best) records were motley assortments of crazed Americana, with gorgeous vocal harmonies and gentle bluegrass moments contrasted by loose and dirty punk guitar freakouts, sometimes within the same song. Blitzen Trapper has taken the oft-abused Americana genre and injected a melting pot vibe where new and strange sounds are not only accepted together, but expected. VII, Blitzen Trapper's latest record and first release on Vagrant Records, sees the band pushing their melting pot Americana to include some funk and R&B elements, taking cues from somewhat disparate influences such as Stevie Wonder and Prince.

Above all else, Blitzen Trapper knows how to please an audience. Their live show offers a wonderful mix of their hits (I've literally never seen them not play "Furr," their 2008 break-out single, at a show) and new material.—MJ

Beckster Fest Amana RV Park and Event Center Colonies, \$12-\$35, All Day

Nacht Der Maschinen, Drumai, MUSTAFA AVDIC, Matt Thongvanh IC Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm

2014 FIRECRACKER 500 FESTIVAL (Ex-Cult, The Lupines, Mexican Knives, Good Habits) The Mill, \$8-\$20, 8 pm

SAT., MAY 31

Nolte Academy Recitals Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$6-14, 10 am, 12 pm, 3 pm

For All I Am Blue Moose Tap House, \$12, 5 pm

Nolte Academy Recitals Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$12-\$14, 7 pm

Written Warning Brothers Pub, Free, 8 pm

Cody Road Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon, Free, 8 pm

Spazmatics Diamond Jo Casino, \$15, 8 pm

Reflex Blues Cragel's, Free, 9 pm

King of the Tramps, Crystal City, FUZZYLOGIC IC Yacht Club, \$5, 9 pm

Crankshaft Chrome Horse Saloon, Cover, 9 pm

Keep Off the Grass 11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Cover, 9 pm

Walker McGuire Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon, \$10, 9 pm

Beckster Fest Amana RV Park and Event Center Colonies, \$12-\$35, All Day

For All I Am, Chasing Safety, Cursed Sails, Youth In Revolt, Separations Blue Moose Tap House, \$12, 5 pm

2014 FIRECRACKER 500 FESTIVAL (Velcro Lewis Group, Thee Open Six, The Hemingers, Sam Locke Ward & The Garbage Boys XXL) The Mill, \$8-\$20, 8 pm

Catfish Keith Cafe Paradiso, 8 pm

SUN., JUNE 1

Sunday Funday Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon, Free, 11 am

Nolte Academy Recitals Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$12-\$14, 1 pm

Unplugged Music Series: Featuring B.F. Burt Fireside Winery, Free, 2 pm

Nic Arp Sutliff Cider Company, Free, 3 pm

Irish Jam w. Tim Britton Cafe Paradiso, Free, 3 pm

Open Mic Charlie's Bar and Grill, Free, 4 pm

Nolte Academy Recitals Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$12-\$14, 6 pm

Red Cedar Chamber Music World Premiere: 'Three Rivers' Legion Arts CSPA Hall, \$15-\$18, 7 pm

Karaoke w. Emerald Johnson 11th Street Precinct Bar & Grill, Free, 9 pm

MON., JUNE 2

Uke Can Do It! West Music Marion, \$40, 4 pm

TUES., JUNE 3

Acidic, Red Letter Days Blue Moose Tap House, \$8-\$10, 6 pm

Birds of Chicago Legion Arts CSPA Hall, \$15-\$18, 7 pm

Lower Deck Dance Party IC Yacht Club, \$2, 10 pm

The Raskins Gabe's, Free, 9 pm

ART/EXHIBITIONS

ONGOING:

MAY 24 - SEPTEMBER 7: Carl Van Vechten: Photographer to the Stars Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, Free-\$5, 12 pm

Fluid Expressions II Woodlawn Arts Academy, All Day

THROUGH MAY 25:

Papier Francais Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, Free - \$5, 12 pm

Poe: A wilderness of Mirrors Old Capitol Museum, Free, All Day

People of the North Star Old Capitol Museum, Free, All Day

THROUGH JUNE 1:

Complex Conversations: Willie Cole Sculptures and Wall

SAVAGE LOVE

A HOLE NEW WORLD

A doctor weighs in on the potential side effects of moving a man's urethra. • BY DAN SAVAGE

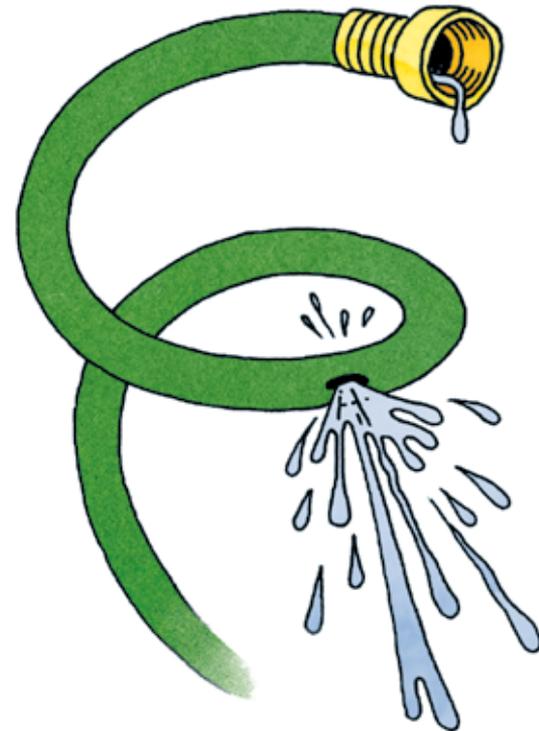
I am a genetic male with recurrent questions about my gender identity. Straddling desires to maintain my stature in the professional world, keep my wife at my side and become who I feel like I am, I have experimented with crossdressing, chastity, antiandrogens and, prior to all that, steroids. While the matrimonial veto has been enacted for some feminine expressions, my wife and I have reached a middle ground where I can pursue sexual and aesthetic androgyny. I have started wearing unisex clothes, stepped up cardio to sculpt a more feminine shape, and am getting hair removal done. My question: I want to keep my sex drive and sexual organs intact, but I want to urinate like a woman with no choice but to sit. There are body-modification communities out there that showcase this type of procedure (urethral reroute/relocation), but I don't know where to start when it comes to tracking down someone to do it for me. Ideally, a legitimate

urologist should do this type of work, but even with my gender-amorphous desires in play, I'm not sure I can put together a justification strong enough for a doctor. Any advice? Do you know any piercers who have done this kind of work?

—Seeking Insights That Take Erotic Rerouting Seriously

“Most urologists aren't qualified to do this, let alone piercers—although I know that there are aggressive ‘body modifiers’ out there. I wind up cleaning up their messes,” said Dr. Keith D. Newman, a urologist and a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. “So my main piece of advice for SITTERS is to have a urologist do this, preferably someone who has experience with this surgery.”

The procedure you're curious about—creating a new pee hole on your taint, behind your balls, which would leave you with no choice



Works *Falconer Gallery, Free, All Day*

Jaroslava Sobiskova: Abstract Paintings *Iowa Artisans Gallery, Free, All Day*

Faces of Freedom: The Czech and Slovak Journey *National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library, \$3-\$10, All Day*

Ellen Wetmore *CSPS Legion Arts, Free, All Day*

THROUGH JUNE 15:

Landscape: Ingalena Klenell and Beth Lipman *Figge Art Museum, Free - \$7, 10 am*

The Saint John's Bible Public Viewing *Prairiewoods, Free, 1 pm*

THROUGH JUNE 22:

Quiet Smiles *Falconer Gallery, Free, All Day*

Iowa Manufacturing: A Family Portrait *Brucemore, Free, All Day*

THROUGH JUNE 29: Manned Mock Mars Mission (MMMM) *CSPS Legion Arts, Free, All Day*

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 5: Arbe Bareis & Crystal J.L. Hird *Cedar Rapids Public Library-Ladd Library, Free, All Day*

THROUGH NOVEMBER 2: Marvin Cone on My Mind *Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, Free - \$5, 12 pm*

THROUGH JANUARY 2015: Celebration! Rituals and Revelry of Life *National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library, \$3-\$10, All Day*

Images Gone W. Time *National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library, \$3-\$10, All Day (End date unknown. Check*

website for details)

Studio Art and Graphic Design Senior Exhibition *Augustana College Art Museum, Free, 10 am*

THURS., MAY 22

PechaKucha Night *Figge Art Museum, Free, 5 pm*

SUN., MAY 25

Closing Reception for the Senior Studio Art and Graphic Design Student Exhibition *Augustana College Art Museum, Free, 12 pm*

THURS., MAY 29

Innovators and Legends and Local Threads Opening Reception & Gallery Talk *Figge Art Museum, Free, 5 pm*

TUES., JUNE 3

Doodlebugs at the CRMA: Impressionism *Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, Free, 10 am*

but to sit when you pee—is known as a perineal urethrostomy.

“It’s one of the numerous steps involved in total gender-reassignment surgery, should the full male-to-female conversion ever be

MY QUESTION: I WANT TO KEEP MY SEX DRIVE AND SEXUAL ORGANS INTACT, BUT I WANT TO URINATE LIKE A WOMAN WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO SIT.

opted for,” said Dr. Newman. “As such, doing this one thing probably won’t preclude further anatomical reassignment in the future. On the other hand, SITTERS has to consider that there are potential complications and consequences that will arise from this altered anatomy.”

And the biggest consequence is a heightened risk of urinary tract infections due to your shortened urethra, SITTERS. The urethra, of course, is the tube that runs from our bladders, where urine is stored, to our pee holes. Women’s are shorter, making it easier for bacteria and other bugs to get up into the bladder and cause infections. But urinary tract

infections aren’t your only worry. “Any artificial orifice has a certain incidence of stricture,” said Dr. Newman. “So the opening might need frequent dilations or more surgery if this complication arises.”

By “stricture,” Dr. Newman means “your new pee hole could shrink, narrow and start to close up.” And by “frequent dilations,” Dr. Newman means “you could wind up shoving steel rods up your urethra to stretch your new hole back open—frequently.” And there’s more!

“There may be less than full diversion of urine (some may still come out the end of the penis) unless the urethra distal to the new opening is closed,” said Dr. Newman. “If it is closed, then we run into issues of what is called a ‘mucous fistula,’ and the urethra beyond the diversion might need to be irrigated from time to time. Similarly, urinary dermatitis may occur—that’s diaper rash—so perineal care and good hygiene will be a must.”

Assuming you’re still interested in relocating your pee hole after reading all that, SITTERS, how do you go about finding a urologist who’ll perform this surgery? You make appointments with qualified urologists, tell them what you want and risk being turned

THEATRE/ PERFORMANCE

ONGOING:

THROUGH MAY 25: Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash *Old Creamery Theatre, \$18.50-\$28, 2 pm*

Woodland Arts Academy Dance Recital *Centennial Auditorium - Sterling High School, 6 pm*

MAY 29 - JUNE 15: The Price *Old Creamery Theatre, \$18.50-\$28, 7 pm*

WEDNESDAYS: Open Mic - Comedy *Penguin's Comedy Club, Free, 7 pm*

FRI., MAY 23

Charlie Weiner *Penguin's Comedy Club, \$10, 7:30 pm*
Love *The Englert Theatre, \$5, 6:30 pm*

SAT., MAY 24

Paperback Rhino Presents: An Improv Comedy Camp *Public Space ONE, Free, 10 am*

City Ballet Spring Dance Concert 2014 *Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, \$8-\$12, 5 pm*

Cassie's Dance Studio Recital *Centennial Auditorium - Sterling High School, 7 pm*

Love *The Englert Theatre, \$5, 2 pm*

Charlie Weiner *Penguin's Comedy Club, \$10, 7:30 pm*

away. “I believe that enough justification for the surgery exists—others may not,” said Dr. Newman. “But it’s the insurance company that will need convincing. Many institutions (most faith-based, but not always) do not allow any surgery for sexual reassignment in adults, so those waters will have to be navigated. And it sounds as if SITTERS is not yet convinced of the validity of this request, so counseling might be helpful.”

One final note...

“Ejaculation will occur through that new hole in a somewhat non-directable way—which could be fun or not,” said Dr. Newman. In other words, SITTERS, after you have this done, you’ll not only be peeing sitting down, you’ll also be coming all over the back of your sack.

On the Lovecast, Dan gets a second-opinion assist from Slate's Dear Prudence: savagelovecast.com.

mail@savagelove.net

@fakedansavage on Twitter

READ THE FULL SAVAGE LOVE COLUMN EVERY WEDNESDAY AT LITTLEVILLAGEMAG.COM

FRI., MAY 30

SPT Theatre Legion Arts CSPS Hall, \$20-\$25, 8 pm
TC Hatter and Marcianna Penguins Comedy Club, \$10, 7:30 pm

SAT., MAY 31

SPT Theatre Legion Arts CSPS Hall, \$20-\$25, 8 pm
TC Hatter and Marcianna Penguins Comedy Club, \$10, 7:30 pm

MON., JUNE 2

Iowa's Rising Star Stand-Up Comedy Contest IC Yacht Club, \$3, 9 pm

LITERATURE

WED., MAY 21

Colson Whitehead Prairie Lights Books & Cafe, Free, 7 pm

THURS., MAY 22

Bridges to Contemplative Living w. Thomas Merton Prairiewoods, \$5, 6 pm

SAT., MAY 24

Corinne Stanley Prairie Lights Books & Cafe, Free, 2 pm

THURS., MAY 29

Ann Kolsrud Prairie Lights Books & Cafe, Free, 7 pm

SAT., MAY 31

Simon Morley Prairie Lights Books & Cafe, Free, 7 pm

CINEMA

OPENS MAY 23: God's Pocket FilmScene

OPENS MAY 23: Jodorowsky's Dune FilmScene

OPENS MAY 30: Only Lovers Left Alive FilmScene

WED., MAY 21

Blue Ruin FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 6 pm
Our Vinyl Weighs A Ton FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 8 pm
Evil Dead FilmScene, \$4, 10 pm

THURS., MAY 22

Howl's Moving Castle FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 4 pm
The Lunchbox FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 6:30 pm
Blue Ruin FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 9 pm

SAT., MAY 24

Howl's Moving Castle FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 12 pm
The Wind Rises FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 2:30 pm

TUES., MAY 27

The Wind Rises FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 6 pm

WED., MAY 28

Sore Losers FilmScene, \$4, 10 pm

THURS., MAY 29

The Wind Rises FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 4 pm

SAT., MAY 31

My Neighbor Totoro FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 10:30 am
Spirited Away FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 12:30 pm
Howl's Moving Castle FilmScene, \$5-\$7.50, 3 pm
The Wind Rises FilmScene, \$5-\$8.50, 5 pm

EDUCATIONAL

ONGOING:

Tuesdays and Thursdays:

Play & Learn at the Downtown Library Cedar Rapids Public Library-Downtown, Free, (see website for times)

THE STRAIGHT DOPE

DO GUN BUYBACK PROGRAMS CHANGE ANYTHING?

Several years ago I turned in a gun for cash during a police buyback program. For me it was a practical exchange. But do these programs have any impact? Are communities with buybacks experiencing less gun-related injury and/or crime? —Tom in San Jose

Generally speaking, no. Gun buybacks are like a congregation declaring their church a nuclear-free zone. No doubt it makes them feel virtuous. But the practical impact is nil.

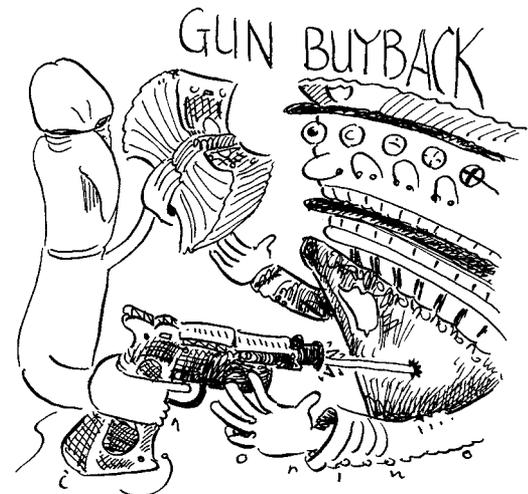
Gun buyback programs operate on the premise that fewer guns in society means fewer crimes, suicides, and accidents—or at least fewer deaths from those causes. Many cities have offered buybacks, but studies of their effectiveness almost always find no impact. Examples:

- A multiyear study of Buffalo's gun buyback programs found a reduction in armed robbery

using guns, but no significant difference in other gun-related crime.

- Buybacks tend to yield a lot of rifles and shotguns (aka long guns), small-caliber handguns, and other firearms not commonly used by criminals or in suicides. In Boston's 1993 and 1994 buyback programs, only 2 percent of the guns retrieved were large-caliber handguns. Despite substantial new incentives for handguns, in 2006 this figure increased to only 26 percent. A Sacramento study found 63 percent of handguns turned in were small-caliber.

No one seriously expects criminals are to



turn in a gun and deprive themselves of a tool of the trade. Upshot: buyback programs take low-risk weapons away from low-risk individuals.

Attempts to improve the effectiveness of buyback programs have met with little success. Unhappy with the response to its earlier efforts, Boston took several steps to improve the impact of the 2006 buyback—offering a \$200 Target gift card for each handgun (but

TUES., MAY 20

Seeing *IS Believing*, *Visio Divina* *Prairiewoods*, \$10, 6 pm

THURS., MAY 22

Make Glass Beads: *Intro to Lampworking* *Beadology Iowa*, \$90, 10 am

TUES., MAY 27

Acupressure for Self Care - *Acupuncture of Iowa*, Free, 7 pm

FOODIE

ONGOING:

TUESDAYS: *Iowa City Farmers Market* *Sycamore Mall*, Free, 3 pm

Wednesdays: *Iowa City Farmers Market* *Ground level of Chauncey Swan Ramp & Chauncey Swan Park*, Free, 5 pm

Waits, Whiskey and... Oysters? *Clinton Street Social Club*, Free, 5 pm

SATURDAYS: *Iowa City Farmers Market* *Ground level of Chauncey Swan Ramp & Chauncey Swan Park*, Free,

7 am

SUNDAYS: *GLBTQ Community Pot Luck and Bingo* *Studio 13*, Free, 6 pm

THURS., MAY 22

Veggie Sushi w. *David Burt* *New Pioneer Food Co-op Coralville*, \$15, 6 pm

THURS., MAY 29

Dinner at Downton Abbey w. *Valrie Martin* *New Pioneer Food Co-op Coralville*, \$20, 6 pm

SAT., MAY 31

Food and Wine Pairing *White Cross Cellars*, \$10, 6 pm
Dogs on Skis Beer Release *Millstream Brewery*, Free, 5 pm

TUES., JUNE 3

Global Climate Change Dinner w. *Uday Kumar and Sarah Vigmostad* *New Pioneer Food Co-op Coralville*, \$15, 6 pm

COMMUNITY

WED, MAY 21

Wednesday Women - *Prairiewoods* May 21, 28

none for long guns) and providing alternate drop-off locations that weren't in police stations. However, it also required everyone turning in a gun to present ID (to keep out-of-staters from cashing in worthless old handguns). Result: the turn-in numbers for 2006 were at best no better than in '93 and '94.

Some will say we need a national buyback program. Ignore the fact that such a program is politically impossible in the U.S.—would it work? To get an idea we can look to Australia, which banned some long guns following a 1996 massacre in which 35 were killed and 23 others wounded by a gunman using assault rifles. As part of the ban, the government launched a nationwide program offering market value for the newly prohibited weapons. The take was 650,000 guns, about 20 percent of the country's firearms.

Granted, Australia was a special case—an island nation can control its borders more easily than most places. More important, the buyback was attached to a gun ban—those who hung onto illegal weapons faced criminal charges.

Even so, the impact of Australia's program is disputed. One study found no benefits at all, while another claimed the homicide rate

decreased 5 to 10 percent. Gun-related suicides decreased significantly, but the overall suicide rate didn't.

True, yet another study credited the Australian buyback with a 74 percent decrease in the gun suicide rate and a 35 to 50 percent decrease in the gun homicide rate. But the evidence for attributing the gun homicide drop to the buyback is unpersuasive. Gun and non-gun homicides fell at the same rate between 1995 and 2006. While gun homicides were somewhat more common than the non-gun kind 30 years ago and are less common now, the reversal happened circa 1988, well before the buyback.

This doesn't mean gun buybacks do no good whatsoever. They put a few bucks in the pockets of people like you who want to get rid of unwanted firearms, and conceivably they reduce accidents from "unloaded" guns lying around the house. But overall, do they reduce gun killings, or killings period? Don't kid yourself. No.

—CECIL ADAMS

Send questions to Cecil via straightdope.com or write him c/o Chicago Reader, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago 60654.

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THU, MAY 22

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Historic Neighborhood Walk - Brucemore Mansion
Country Dancing - Wildwood Smokehouse & Saloon May 22, 29

FRI, MAY 23

Prairiewoods E.C.O. (Evolutionary Cosmic Outing) Walking Group - Prairiewoods May 23, 30

SAT, MAY 24

iMoveU - Journey Church
City Ballet Spring Dance Concert 2014 - Coralville Center for the Performing Arts XXX??
Iowa Renaissance Festival & Gathering O Celts - Amana RV Park and Event Center Colonies

SUN, MAY 25

GLBTQ Community Pot Luck and Bingo - Studio 13 May 25, Jun 1
Iowa Renaissance Festival & Gathering O Celts - Amana



Tallgrass Gran Prix Canwood Derby I Red's Alehouse—May 24, 1 p.m. (\$15)

What do you call an empty beer can with racing stripes, a couple automotive decals, miniature wheels and your favorite number on the side? A canwood derby racer.

Red's Alehouse in North Liberty is hosting the first annual Tallgrass Gran Prix Canwood Derby, an adult-oriented, beer-themed version of the Boy Scouts' pinewood derby, on Saturday, May 24 at 1 p.m. Co-sponsored by Red's, Tallgrass Brewing Company and John's Grocery, the Canwood Derby will not only feature races for traditional pinewood cars, but also races for "canwood" cars made out of empty beer cans. Brandon Ryan, the service manager at Red's, said awards will be given for individual race winners, best designed car and best in show. The grand prize is a private, eight-course beer dinner for the winner and seven friends at Red's Alehouse.

Ryan said all proceeds will benefit the Hawkeye Area Council Boys Scouts of America and The Electric Koolaid Trio will perform on the patio starting at 2 p.m.

In a pinewood derby, miniature cars made of a single block of pinewood are placed at the top of a ramp. Powered only by gravity and their own momentum, they race down a long, straight track.

Registration starts at 11 a.m. at Red's and costs \$15. Entrants must be 21 years old and older. Pinewood derby car kits are on sale for \$5 at John's Grocery in Iowa City and Red's Alehouse in North Liberty. Vintage pinewood derby cars of five ounces or less are also welcome in the derby. —Casey Wagner

NEWS QUIRKS

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN

- Before three men who broke into a lingerie store in Houston, Texas, could steal anything, one with a revolver backed into another holding a rifle. Surveillance video showed the jolt caused the rifle to fire, "which then spooked the suspects," police Officer Jeff Brieden said. Believing they were being fired upon, both armed men opened fire, discharging nearly a dozen rounds, one of which went through a mannequin, before all three fled. (Houston's KHOU-TV)

- Australian police investigating the murder of Russell Hammond, 49, arrested Gareth Giles, 26, after they found his 18-point, step-by-step plan detailing the perfect murder, written two months before Hammond's body was found. Supreme Court Justice Betty King said the murder plan corresponded with the actual killing in "a remarkable way." (*International Business Times*)

DIGGING A DEEPER HOLE

When a sheriff's deputy arrested Blair Kelli Kaluahine, 36, after complaints he refused to stop groping a restaurant server in Palm Beach County, Fla., the suspect vowed

to shoot the deputy. While being driven to the jail, Kaluahine changed tactics, the deputy said, offering him \$3,000 and volunteering to paint and pressure wash his house "if I let him go without charging him." (*Palm Beach Post*)

LIFE'S IRONIES

- Former New York City police officer Gilberto Valle, 30, who was convicted of conspiring to kidnap, murder, cook and eat women, was assigned to cook for his fellow inmates at Manhattan's Metropolitan Correctional Center. The so-called cannibal cop earns 44 cents an hour making breakfast and lunch. (*New York's Daily News*)

- Members of France's biggest pilots' union called a month-long strike to protest the rules surrounding their right to strike. The pilots seek repeal of the law that forces them to give their companies 48 hours notice before any walkout. The airlines explained the notice allows time to notify passengers, but the union insisted it gives the airlines time to find replacements to minimize the walkout's impact. (France's *The Local*)

- Former Illinois State Rep. Keith Farnham, 66, who twice sponsored bills calling for

tougher penalties for child pornography, was charged with possession of child porn. In addition, authorities linked Farnham's email account to an online forum where users chat about their sexual preference. "12 is about as old as I can handle," Farnham reportedly said in one chat. "I love them at 6 7 8." In another, he declared, "I wish I had access to all the vids and pics ever made." (*Chicago Tribune*)

TANGLED WEB

A 30-year-old employee at Japan's biggest travel agency forgot to order 11 buses for a high school outing, so the day before the trip he wrote a note purporting to be from a student threatening suicide unless the trip was canceled. He gave the note to the principal, who decided to go ahead with the excursion as planned. After no buses arrived the next morning, regulators from the Japan Tourism Agency raided the offices of JTB Corp, which promised to punish the worker. The school, meanwhile, rescheduled its trip with a different agency. (*Agence France-Presse*)



SOUNDS OF SILENCE

• Sales of gun silencers are booming, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which noted the market soared 37 percent in 2013, resulting in a nine-month backlog for ATF approval of registrations. Silencers, which sell for between \$750 and \$1,300, are just one way gun owners are accessorizing their firearms purchases, according to gun-industry analyst Ben Shim of CRT Capital Group in Stamford, Conn. Other popular add-ons are flashlights, laser scopes, stock, pistol grips and rail systems for attaching even more accessories. (CNN)

• A new anti-noise law aimed at late-night revelers in Arlington County, Va., bans “wailing” after 2 a.m., also yelling, shouting and screaming. The County Board pointed out it’s the first in metro Washington, D.C., to target “over-conversation,” or the human voice. “We’re not Mayberry RFD,” board member John Vihstadt said, “but we’re not Manhattan on the Potomac either.” (*The Washington Post*)

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THOMAS COMERFORD

thomascomerford.net

Thomas Comerford, formerly of Iowa City and also the band Kaspar Hauser, lives in Chicago now. Comerford stands out from the crowd of rootsy singer-songwriters by virtue of his outrageously tuneful songwriting and

THIS IS MUSIC THAT WOULD BE PERFECT FOR SPARKING A DOOBIE IN TOPANGA CANYON, BUT WATCH OUT FOR THE FROSTBITE HIDING INSIDE THE MELLOW BUZZ.

instinct for the perfect arrangement. He sings in a full-throated baritone, his voice touched by a subtle vibrato. His songs are, like Donnie and Marie Osmond, a little bit country and a little bit rock and roll.

It is—as the name suggests—his second album as a solo artist. The production of this record is completely over the top, in a good way. The cooing backup singers, the banjo and pedal steel, the strings on the fade-out fit



COCAINE LOVE LETTER

THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Cocaine Love Letter
thewhiteelephantband.com

Cocaine Love Letter was born while the band was taking some downtime. Rohr and bandmate Ron Coleman both ended up writing a bunch of acoustic demos during this time and decided to turn them into three albums, which will all eventually be released for free on their website.

“It’s a lo-fi D.I.Y. project we are putting out in chunks,” Chris explained, “We will be releasing a couple more albums worth of songs in the coming months. We want to give each group of songs a little time to marinate.”

The result is a low-key blues and folk rock affair with a contemplative soul. On the refrain of “Bottle,” without the normal White Elephant obfuscation of layered distortion, the vocals are pushed front-and-center to reveal raw road-worn lyrics: “That old bottle’s got me lyin’ again, and I don’t need to tell you ‘cause you know where I’ve been.” These

THE RESULT IS A LOW-KEY BLUES AND FOLK ROCK AFFAIR WITH A CONTEMPLATIVE SOUL.

his songs like a tailored tropic-weight suit. Comerford may be ‘our guy,’ in his feed hat and epic sideburns, but he’s going up against the Eagles, Brian Wilson and Van Dyke Parks and holding his own. There’s even some of the Grateful Dead’s lush ensemble sound to songs like “Silt and Dust.”

I said of his last record *Archive + Spiral* that he was working from Lou Reed’s playbook; It goes for the other coast and has a fully realized ‘70s California sound. This is music that would be perfect for sparking a doobie in Topanga Canyon, but watch out for the frostbite hiding inside the mellow buzz. In “Eternal Return” he sings “I can start drinking again bite into oblivion, until I’m gone and everything’s wrong.” But the song is otherwise so sunny that the bleakness of the words sneaks right past your defenses.

In “Target” he sings “How did we let it get to that? How do we not be a target?” It captures the feeling you’re being let down by the people who have you in their cross-hairs. “I see an actor on the TV, paid to tell me I need some television.”

Thomas Comerford’s songs are all about staring at the void, but with enough humor and human warmth to avoid being sucked in. “I can’t erase, nothing changes,” he says in “Prefer Not To.” It’s a bitter admission of powerlessness, but then the words stop and the song concludes with rising major chords and backup vocalists singing “sha la la.” The music takes over and redeems the bleakness of the lyric, which may be the whole point: words fail, music abides.

—Kent Williams

are sentiments of a more seasoned songwriter. “High on the Hog” is a drinkin’, cussin’, workin’ class blues lament to a woman who has aspirations of upward mobility: “You ain’t worth losin’ but you ain’t worth keepin’ around.” The bottle-neck acoustic slide is a fantastic touch—it puts me in the mood for my vintage copy of *Exile on Main Street*.

Cocaine Love Letter gives us a new sound from White Elephant. Considering that it started as individual projects by Rohr and Coleman, the album is balanced and satisfyingly cohesive, revealing a new depth and maturity to the band that I’m frankly pretty excited about. It will be interesting to see how the next release of these acoustic sketchbooks turn out, and I hope to see this sound incorporated into White Elephant’s next studio albums.

—Mike Roeder



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There's an old moral theory sprung from the idea of original sin which posits that entertaining the notion of doing something bad is just as bad as actually doing it. One can argue on the ethical complexities of this assertion until they're blue in the face, but you'd be hard-pressed to find many who agree that thinking about sleeping with the attractive neighbor is as bad as acting on those thoughts.

Still, I think a little bit of vice is nice—and, when practiced in moderation, can actually be good for the soul. If that sounds like convenient rationalization on my part, consider this sentiment from the Epic of Gilgamesh: "Fill your belly. Day and night make merry. Let days be full of joy. Dance and make music day and night ... These things alone are the concern of men."

Anyhow, enough hedonistic advocacy: Let's get on with things. Here's how this puzzler works: Listed below are two synonyms for two words that rhyme followed by the number of syllables in each of those rhyming words. Your challenge is to guess what the two words are based upon the clues provided. So for example "Have to Yearn" (1, 1) would be "Must Lust." Make sense? Then off you go.

Value Enjoyment (2, 2): Treasure, Pleasure

Wonderful Torpor (2, 2): _____, _____

Erotica Shack (1, 1): _____, _____

Boozier Ruddiness (1, 1): _____, _____

Revere Craving (2, 2): Admire, _____

Demand Avarice (1, 1): _____, _____

Solicit Pleasure (2, 2): _____, _____

Prescription Addiction (2, 2): _____, _____

Intake Acumen (3, 2): _____, _____

Bestial Dionysian (4, 5): _____, _____

Sensual Somnolent (3, 3): _____, _____

Peace, Gourmand (2, 3): _____, _____

Challenger:

Drinks on me. In the spirit of May's Rhyme Time, I have purchased a \$20 drink card at George's which will go to the first person who submits the answers to this month's puzzler to littlevillagerhymetime@gmail.com. Cheers!

ANSWERS FROM THE LAST EDITION OF RHYME TIME:

- Wow, Henry (1, 2) Whoa, Thoreau
- Nice Evergreen (1, 1) Fine Pine
- River Trance (1, 1) Stream Dream
- Enjoying Trekking (2, 2) Liking Hiking
- Señor Oppositionist (2, 3) Mister Resister
- Lagoon Foliage (1, 1) Pond Frond
- Forrest Intonation (2, 2)* Timber Timbre
- Bluff Bubbler (2, 2) Mountain Fountain
- Crazy Self-Reliant 2, 4 Mental Transcendental
- Forest Vicinage (1,1) Wood Hood
- Embankment Aplenty (1, 2) Shore Galore
- Rural Philanthropist (4, 6) Agrarian Humanitarian

—Luke Benson



GOD'S POCKET 5/23



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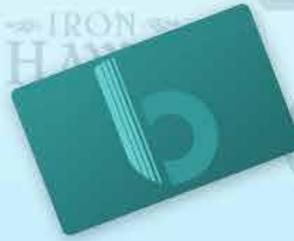


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