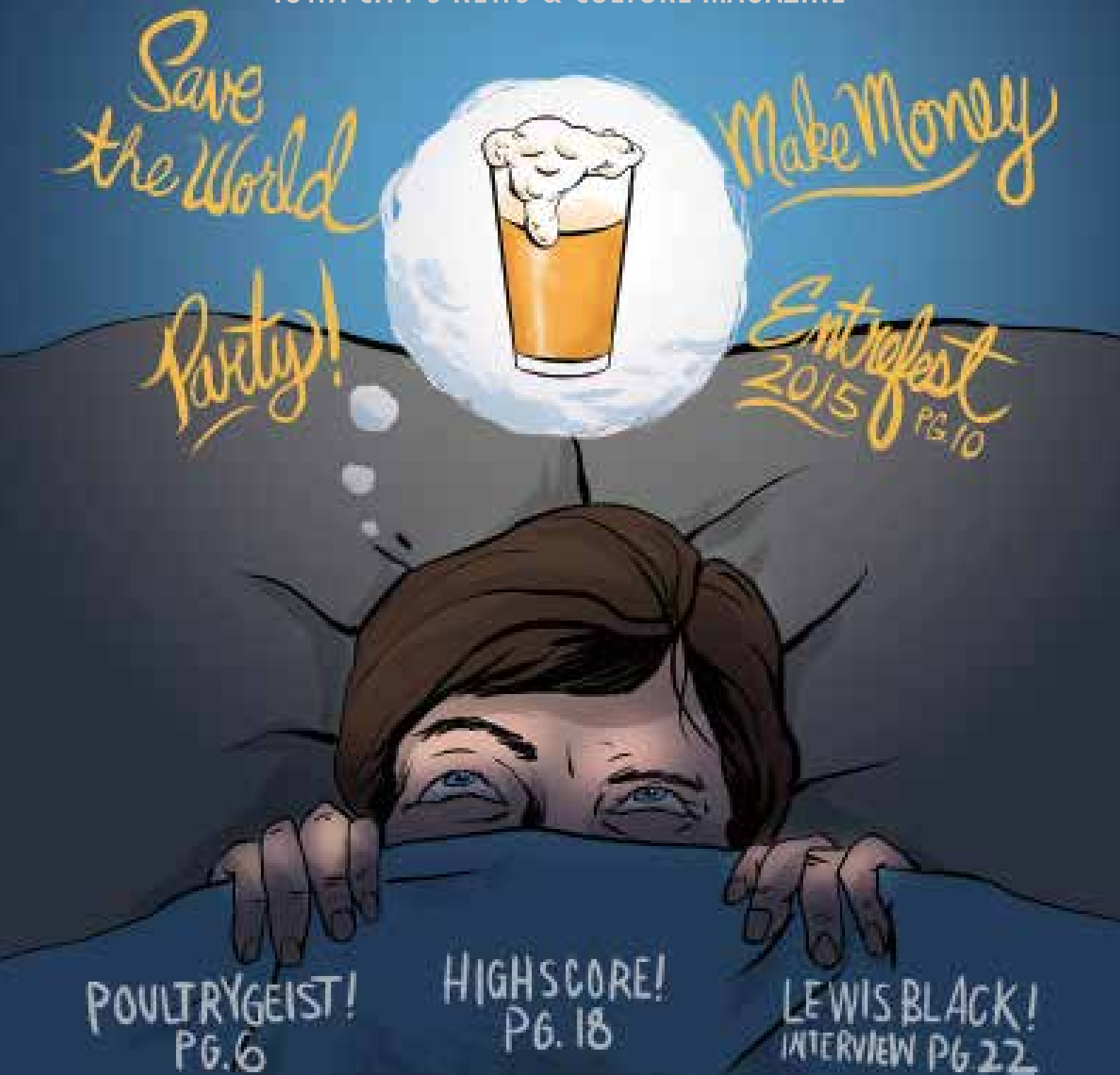
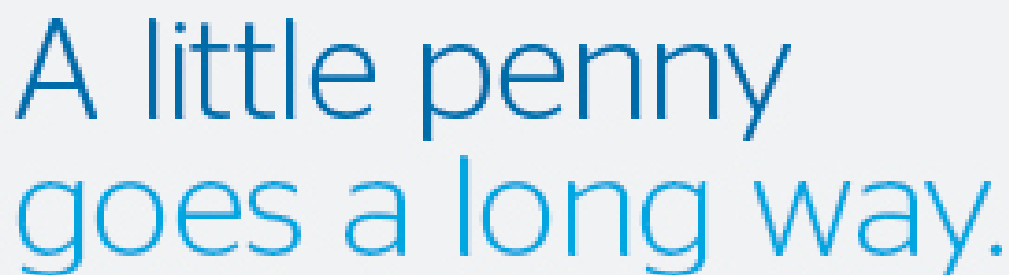


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IOWA CITY'S NEWS & CULTURE MAGAZINE





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Photo by Chris Bock

6 BIRD FLU

Avian flu continues to spread in Iowa. When will it stop and what preventative measures are being taken?

10 ENTREFEEST

Finnegans' founder and CEO Jacquie Berglund explains how drinking beer can do good.

C O N T R I B U T O R S

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16

POETRY

Daniel Khalastchi talks about his Jewish identity and new book *Tradition*.

12 - Chicken Little
14 - Hot Tin Roof
21 - Best of IC Events
31 - Pro Tips



18

INDIE GAMING

Local developers hold their own at EpxCon.

32 - Venue Guide
33 - Advertiser Index
34 - News Quirks
36 - The Straight Dope

22

A-LIST

Lewis Black leads a lineup of can't-miss events.

37 - Crossword
38 - Savage Love
39 - Local Album Review



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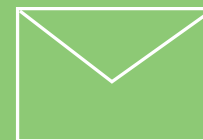


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Iowa landowner offers details on Bakken pipeline prostitution allegations

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Using Cuervo as your barometer for agave spirits is like drinking Milwaukee's Best to determine if you like beer. —Jack

IOWA'S BIRD FLU BURDEN

Health officials plan to exterminate over 25 million birds on Iowa farms in an attempt to contain the spread of the H5N2 virus, and this is creating its own problems. • **BY JOHN MILLER**

Over 25 million birds at 52 north-west Iowa farms have been, or will soon be euthanized in an attempt to prevent the spread of the H5N2 virus, a highly pathogenic strain of Avian Influenza, aka “bird flu.” Most of the facilities affected by the virus are large, commercial egg-laying operations, but the virus has also spread to a number of turkey farms and one broiler farm, which raises chickens for meat. No human has ever been infected with H5N2.

Though Iowa has been hit hardest by the outbreak, the USDA reports that farms in more than a dozen states, including Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Wisconsin and most recently, Nebraska, have reported confirmed cases of H5N2 infection.

On May 1, two-and-a-half weeks after the first case of H5N2 was confirmed in Buena Vista County on April 14, the total number of birds to be killed in Iowa surpassed the 15 million mark, leading Gov. Terry Branstad to declare a state of emergency.

Officials from state and federal agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS), the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Iowa Department of Public Health, have yet to determine what is causing the rapid spread of the virus.

Dr. James A. Roth, Director of the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University, has tracked the spread of the virus for years. Alongside his colleagues at ISU, Roth wrote the Foreign Animal Disease Preparedness guide (FADP), which provides detailed guides on what to do when a flock becomes infected with avian influenza.

With the FADP guide in hand, officials had a containment plan in place before the current H5N2 bird outbreak, but according to Roth, no one

could have predicted how rapidly it would spread. Roth says that early on most researchers believed the virus was spreading through

migratory bird droppings, but given its “unprecedented” infection rate, he says they’ve begun looking into other routes, including the possibility that it’s traveling through the air.

“When you have one big infected flock,” Roth said, “the air coming out of that barn might have virus, quite a bit of virus, in it and it might blow to other barns. Other things they’re looking at are the feed, and yes, wild birds, also.”

Early findings from a pilot study released by the University of Minnesota on May 8 seem to reinforce the airborne hypothesis. Though researchers say the results of preliminary tests on air samples gathered from three Minnesota farms show that H5N2 can be aerosolized, it will take time to confirm that this is the primary means of transmission from farm to farm.

Roth said that as of May 7, he believed the outbreak was winding down, and that as temperatures in the area continued to rise, the virus was likely to die out. On May 8 his optimism was proven to be unfounded, however, as IDALS announced that it was investigating seven more probable cases of farms infected with H5N2. Within days those cases were confirmed, adding more than four million infected birds to the tally.

As the death toll continues to rise, officials at the DNR and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) struggle to find safe ways to dispose of the sheer volume of infected bird carcasses. The average egg-laying hen weighs about 3.6 pounds, and 25 million of them will soon be euthanized. That’s more than 45,000 tons of dead birds, not including the other, roughly four-

and-a-half million dead turkeys. In total, 40 percent of Iowa’s egg-laying hens will die.

So far, the government has employed four primary methods to dispose of



Illustration by Jared Jewell



the birds: Composting, burial on site, incineration and disposal at local landfills. According to Roth, each method comes with its own set of risks related to increasing the likelihood that the virus will continue to spread, but a combination of the four will be necessary due to the quantity of carcasses. He is confident that the EPA and DNR will work hard to ensure that all birds are disposed of safely.

Each containment method comes with its own set of risks.

On-site burial is the simplest method of disposal, but it's only possible in select cases due to the possibility that the decaying birds could infect the water table. EPA-approved landfills circumvent this issue, because they have liners buried beneath the waste they store. As they decay, biological material from the dead birds seeps onto the liner and can be collected and treated.

However, some EPA-approved landfills have been declining to accept the bird carcasses. The landfills are privately owned, and are often built in close proximity to large-scale chicken farms. By accepting the birds, they argue, they would be opening themselves up to lawsuits from farmers if the birds in their landfills infect the surrounding flocks. It's a practical concern, given the fact that no one is entirely sure how H5N2 spreads. On May 6, Iowa DNR Director Chuck Gipp and Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey sent a letter to landfill owners, asking them to accept birds to help combat the growing crisis.

According to Roth, most of the time, turkeys can be composted because of how they're housed while alive. After the turkeys at an infected farm are euthanized, it's possible to line



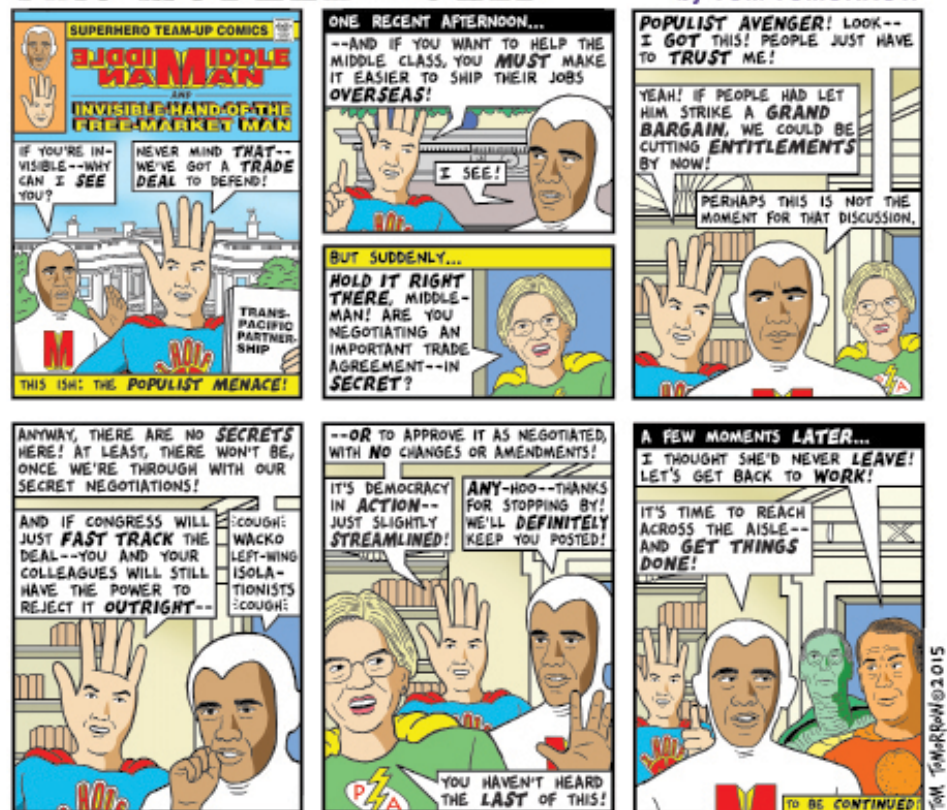
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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





them up in the center of the turkey house, cover them up with organic material and wait for nature to take its course. The organic materials interact, the temperature rises and over the course of several months the virus is killed off.

Incineration is a much faster solution to the disposal problem, but officials once again run into issues with the overwhelming volume of dead birds. Since Iowa didn't have any large-scale incinerators on hand at the outset of the outbreak, the DNR issued three temporary permits to Massachusetts-based company, Clean Harbors, so that they could set up their incinerators and begin burning carcasses. The company is set to burn several million birds, according to the DNR, and they may be given an additional incinerator permit, if need be.

As the virus continues to spread, many Iowans are concerned about how this might impact the economy. If the outbreak were to end tomorrow, which doesn't seem likely, Iowa, which just over a month ago was the nation's leading egg-producer, will have lost more than 40 percent of its egg-laying chickens. That means egg prices could go up, but it also means corn producers will have less farms to sell feed to for some time, since the infected farms will take years to get back to the pre-H5N2 capacities. It also means a lot of Iowans will lose their jobs.

"These premises employ a lot of people, and the processing facilities employ a lot of people," Roth said. "We're still in the middle of it, but this is going to have a huge economic impact." **lv**

John Miller is an Iowa City-based freelance reporter. He's a University of Iowa grad and can't wait to ride in his first RAGBRAI this July.



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BUSINESS, BENEVOLENCE AND BEER

Jacquie Berglund, CEO and founder of Finnegans beer, discovered her calling heading up a Minnesota brewery that works to combat hunger.

BY AMY MATTSON

For Jacquie Berglund, brewing beer is more than a business. It's a form of community activism.

Berglund is the CEO, founder and 'Rambunctious Social Entrepreneur' of Finnegans, a Minneapolis-based craft beer company that puts 100 percent of its profits toward the purchase of fresh, locally grown produce, which is then donated to food pantries across the Midwest.

Earlier this year, the company announced plans to expand to the Hawkeye State, where it now serves Irish Amber and seasonal Blonde Ale to the thirsty, and produce to the hungry in partnership with the Food Bank of Iowa.

"It makes sense to focus on the Midwest and now Iowa, because we're agricultural based," said Berglund, who will speak at Entrefest—Iowa's entrepreneurship conference that takes place in downtown Iowa City from May 20-22. But more than that, the social entrepreneur notes that she feels a certain connection with Iowans.

"There is this like-minded openness," she said. "It feels like a great fit."

That's a big change from roughly 30 years ago, when Berglund was still searching for a "great fit" when it came to her career. A Twin Cities native, the entrepreneur moved to France in 1990 to pursue a masters in international relations.

Once there, she accepted a position with the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, helping Russian government officials establish market economies. While Berglund had anticipated it would be her dream job, the reality was far different. While there, however, she observed that much of the change going on was happening at the grassroots level, which is when she began to explore potential paths as an entrepreneur.

But it wouldn't be until she moved back to the Twin Cities in 1997 that Berglund would find her calling. As fate would have it, an old

friend, Kieran Folliard, was opening a group of Irish pubs and wanted Berglund on board as director of marketing. It was from that partnership that Finnegan's was born.

Originally dubbed Kieran's Irish Ale, the brand originated after Berglund took a trip to Washington D.C. and heard a speech given by Billy Shore—the founder of an anti-hunger group. "He was the first person I heard talk about having a for-profit company fund non-profit activities," she explained. "I was sitting there listening to him, and I thought, 'That's the smartest thing I've ever heard!' It was like my hair was on fire."

So Berglund took her enthusiasm back to Minneapolis and pitched a radical idea to

Folliard: What if they created their own beer, rolled it out in their pubs and gave the profits back to the community?

Folliard took the bait, and the beer became a popular local brew. But Berglund was convinced they could do better. "I thought, 'If we really want to make a difference, we need to have this in every pub in Minnesota,'" she said.

Recognizing Berglund's passion for the project, Folliard offered to sell his share of the beer business for a dollar, so she could pursue her penchant for social entrepreneurship full time. Berglund hasn't looked back since. She

promptly changed the name of the beer to Finnegans in order to more effectively market to a wide swathe of restaurants and pubs and set about the monumental task of selling her product.

"I really wasn't as scared as I should have been," she admitted. "I was too dumb to know better. Instead I thought, 'This is going to be fun. It's going to be great.' I was blissfully ignorant of all the challenges."

Many of those challenges came in the form of rejection. "Fifteen years ago, the craft beer thing wasn't even happening" Berglund explained. "Nobody even knew what a social entrepreneur was. So when I would walk in



ENTREFEST HIGHLIGHTS

Entrefest is a three-day conference in downtown Iowa City with hundreds of presentations and events aimed at highlighting and fostering entrepreneurship in Iowa. Most events require a pass to attend, but some are open to the public. More information at entrefest.com.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20

9 a.m. How Improv Can Make You a Better Entrepreneur with Zach Parker

1 p.m. Opening Keynote with Ben Milne

3 p.m. Supporting & Fostering More Artists, Makers, Creatives and Mainstreet Entrepreneurs with Enoch Elwell

4:30 p.m. Crafting Your Narrative with Matt Steele and Chad Simmons

THURSDAY, MAY 21

8 a.m. Morning Plenary Session with John Pappajohn and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds

10:30 a.m. The Power of a Connected Community in Driving Innovation with Julie Lenzer Kirk

3:30 p.m. Double Bottom Line: Ventures in Social Entrepreneurship with Jacquie Berglund, Rahul Gupta and Steve Shriver

6 p.m. Iowa craft whiskey & beer tasting

7:45 p.m. Work Hard/Play Hard Fashion Show at the Hotel Vetro (**Open to the public**)

8:30 p.m. Finnegans beer tasting with Jacquie Berglund

FRIDAY, MAY 22

10:30 a.m. Built In Iowa with Dr. Terry Wahls

10:30 a.m. Managing Success and Failure: Lessons From Iowa Sports Legends with Lisa Bluder, Tom Brands, Mark Farley, Nate Kaeding and Sandra Clubb

2 p.m. Closing Keynote with Seth Godin at the Englert Theatre (**Tickets for the public are \$30**)

"Fifteen
years ago ...
nobody
even knew
what a social
entrepreneur
was."



and talk to a beer distributor [and explain I donated 100 percent of my profits], they would look at me like I had four heads. Also, I was a woman, and there weren't many women in the industry at that time."

When Berglund was starting out as a woman in the craft beer industry—then and now, a male-dominated field—she says she did her best to ignore the obstacles, but admits there were definitely times when she was treated disrespectfully and encountered inappropriate comments.

"I've grown a lot thicker skin than when I started. I used to feel bad and go get in my car and cry. But I do that a lot less now. Thankfully!" Berglund chuckled. "Not everybody is going to like you, you know? You have to be true to thyself."

Berglund continues to credit much of her

success to her attitude. "I have a ton of enthusiasm and positivity. It takes a lot of that kind of stuff to keep you going on the dark days."

"I think we sometimes get into thinking as a victim, which I've always tried to avoid," she said. "I take gender out of the equation. I just tell myself, 'I've got to compete with everyone else. I've got to be better.'"

Through the many challenges, Berglund has persisted, aided by the help of volunteers and mentors. Today, the company has grown from just Berglund to a team of six staff members, who made it possible for Finnegan's to donate 81,000 pounds of produce last year across all of the four states where their beer was sold: Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

This year, Berglund expects to sell 10,000 barrels of beer, or 137,800 cases, all profits

FINNEGANS FOR GOOD Jacquie Berglund created a business model where all of the brewery's profits are donated to local hunger relief agencies. Photo by Chris Bock

of which will go to purchase organic produce at market rates from community supported farms. Her business model is one that she calls both scalable and sustainable: Profits created locally end up directly in the hands of local growers, whose produce then makes its way onto local food pantry shelves.

"I totally believe that we can make profit and do good," she said. **lv**

Amy Mattson is a freelance writer, editor and transplant from Minneapolis who enjoys a good imbibing session now and then. Contact her at amy.e.mattson@gmail.com.

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HAYSTACKS



The flavors of Vietnamese food—garlic, lemongrass, ginger, star anise, cloves, cinnamon, chilies, fish sauce—are some of my favorites. Thankfully, and at long last, there is delicious, complexly flavored Vietnamese food in the Iowa City area, at Coralville's Pho Zaika. Pho Zaika, also known as "I ♥ Pho," opened early this year next to the Coralville Hy-Vee.

The family-run restaurant offers a limited yet satisfying menu that centers around pho, a traditional Vietnamese street food. Though it takes many forms in both Vietnam and the U.S., traditionally, pho is a rich, lightly spiced and herb-flecked beef broth, full of thin rice noodles and bits of meat and served with a side of sauces, fresh vegetables and herbs that diners can add to suit their tastes.

Though Pho Zaika's broth isn't as richly meaty as it could be, it is redolent of herbs and spices, and it's easy to modify it to suit your tastes, using the aforementioned sides. I like to add lots of bean sprouts, all the basil and cilantro they offer, and a few rings of jalapeño, along with a squirt or two of sriracha and hoisin and just a splash of fish sauce. Diners can select their choice of meats, or they can go all-in with the "house special pho," which contains round steak, brisket, tendon, tripe and meatballs; I prefer the simplest version, featuring only tender slices of round steak. The addictive combination of savory broth and chewy rice noodles is a comforting,

PHO FUN If you have a giant appetite for flavor, Pho Zaika can satisfy. Photo by Adam Burke

nourishing distraction on a leisurely Sunday.

Pho Zaika also offers chicken pho, which is on par with its beefy counterpart in terms of flavor and nuance; be forewarned that there

The addictive combination of savory broth and chewy rice noodles is a comforting, nourishing distraction.

will be bones in the meaty chunks of chicken that accent your soup. In keeping with the lowbrow nature of this traditional street food, it's totally okay to pluck a piece from the broth and chew the meat off the bones—and you'll want to, as the meat is tender and succulent.

Recently, Pho Zaika expanded their small menu to include com tam, which means "broken rice," referring to the pile of steamed, broken grains of rice that serve as the centerpiece of the dish. Joining the rice on a vast platter is a gigantic pork chop that has been marinated in garlic and fish sauce and grilled

to caramelized glory. The pork is flanked by a fried egg, a slice of egg-and-pork meatloaf, fresh cucumber, shredded pork skin, savory dipping sauce and a palate-cleansing, mildly sweet and delicate broth. While it can be confusing to determine the order in which to eat this array, what matters is that you eat it—I have no idea how they get the pork to be so flavorful, but its depth and balance of garlicky, savory flavor is phenomenal. Pho Zaika also recently started offering Vietnamese curries, which are more mild than their Thai relatives but similar in their use of coconut milk and lemongrass. Mix the last of your curry sauce with rice, and it becomes a savory sort of rice pudding that will both thrill and comfort you.

The decor and atmosphere at Pho Zaika are charming yet eclectic. On any given visit, a subtitled Vietnamese martial arts film may play on one of the dining room televisions, while dining-room music runs the gamut from LeAnn Rimes to Vietnamese soft rock. There are inspirational quotes often written on the chalkboard by the cash register—most recently, diners were implored to "Try what

you have not tried...Does not matter!!!"—and notes taped to the tables inviting customers to ask for more vegetables for their pho if they desire. The front-of-house staff members, who serve as hosts, servers, bussers

and cashiers, are usually friendly and always accommodating, though proper protocol in the dining room is unclear: Is it correct to order at the counter, or will there be table service? Will I receive a check, or do I go up to the counter to pay? These little snags in presentation and service are inconsequential, ultimately, in a restaurant where the food is both spellbindingly delicious and wholly satisfying. **lv**

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FOR EDWARD HOPPER • BY CONNOR MADIGAN

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Hadley said that was the hardest part of packing—jiggling those damn curtain rods from their little homes without scratching the paint off the windowsill, saving the new owners' floor from a salt shaker's shake worth of flaked away oil-based egg-shell chips.

I thought the hardest part was hoofing end tables out to the truck bed or negotiating with Hadley about the decorative pillow legion we had raised over the years. Or, maybe, the hardest part was not burning the house to the foundation in our wake, like a pair of wanderlustful cow-pokes backlit by their own private sun, in search of the next dusty burg, the next watering hole where insects paddle on the surface and Hadley can dig her toes into bottom-mud.

But in the truck—after we didn't burn the old house down—Hadley wondered if the sun would come through the window in our new place like it did at the old. I knew what she meant. How a solid wall of sunlight squeezed through the curtain's lacey gaps, smearing swirls and swells, composed of light and lack of light, on a bare wall.

That was hard, too. Hadley and I used to spend Sunday mornings in bed, marking our time together by tracking the sun-mural's motion. It disintegrated and bloomed across the room—never the same—until the rays spilled over the bed, tattooing our two bodies with a single mystic pattern. **lv**

Connor Madigan was raised in Massachusetts, schooled in Iowa and dives in the Mariana Trench when he needs to get away from it all. This piece published in collaboration with earth-words, the University of Iowa's original undergraduate literary review.

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CRAFTING TRADITION

Poet Daniel Khalastchi spoke with *Little Village* about his new book *Tradition*, the importance of dialogue in his poetry and the religious persecution his father had to endure as an Iraqi Jew.

BY ARASHDEEP SINGH

This month, McSweeney's press published the poetry collection *Tradition* by Daniel Khalastchi, a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the current associate director of the University of Iowa's Frank N. Magid Center for Undergraduate Writing. In a format similar to Khalastchi's previous collection *Manoleria*, the poems of *Tradition* feature an unnamed narrator navigating a world that is as dark as it is absurd, while the role and reach of tradition are depicted with respect to both personal and religious identity, as well as to poetry itself.

A series of poems in *Tradition* feature a conversion rabbi guiding a narrator through various practices of Judaism, usually depicted with the rabbi behaving in a bizarre and sometimes seedy fashion. A central theme of these poems seems to be a sense of disappointment in the anachronistic nature of religious traditions. Would you agree?

I certainly would. While the book focuses its attention on the observances and customs connected with the Jewish faith, my hope is that the collection as a whole pushes forward the idea that holding on too tightly to any single set of beliefs for the sake of tradition can actually end up being detrimental to the very family/relationship/community it's trying to keep in tact. I don't have anything against organized religion, but it's always struck me as troublesome when people are raised with the understanding that those who don't subscribe to a particular ideology must be living incorrectly; when acceptance of others is based on things like familial lineage or what dietary/sexual/hygienic "laws" you follow rather than on the content of your own character, we are encouraging stereotypes, segregating the population and asking for trouble.

I was curious why the rabbi in these poems is a conversion rabbi. Does this reflect a distance on your part from the religious practice of Judaism, as opposed to the cultural identity?

When I first started writing these poems, I was at a point in my life where the idea of marrying someone outside the faith was becoming a real possibility. While this didn't bother me personally, it was clearly

something that impacted my family (parents, siblings, grandparents, etc.) and caused a strain on certain relationships. According to Jewish law, a person is only considered a Jew if they are born to a Jewish mother or if they convert (which is, as it turns out, a pretty involved process).

As I began thinking more critically about what religion and cultural identity meant to me, I became fascinated by the idea of a character who could embody the various pressures I was feeling from the people around me while also shining a light on the arcane aspects of a belief system that seemed full of empty traditions. While I myself am still a practicing Jew (and one that identifies strongly as such), I'm also a questioning one.

The character of the conversion rabbi gave me a chance to explore my own misgivings about the Jewish faith, and my hope is that readers of *Tradition* will relate to the thoughts/concerns/predicaments raised in the book regardless of what background(s) they come from or what religion(s) and culture(s) they identify with.

The poems on both religion and romantic relationships in *Tradition* feature several absurdist elements—fantastical depictions, non sequiturs, shifts into seemingly irrelevant minutiae. Grounding the poems with absurd features seems to create a mood of distance and ambiguity around topics that are otherwise laden with a sense of emotional gravity. Does creating that distance allow you to express yourself more authentically?

I think that's partly the case. Writing about big subjects like religion and failed relationships can fall pretty quickly into the hard-to-climb-out-of cliché swamp if you're not careful. Because I knew I wanted to explore large thematic ideas that have been discussed by many other writers/artists/scholars, I needed to find a fresh way of approaching a relatively stale conversation.





For me, the absurdity and humor in these poems is less about creating distance for the sake of authentication or ease of expression, and more about illustrating the concept of avoidance. If you've never tried it, talking to your family or significant other about theology and the merits/irrationality of following any kind of religious doctrine can be quite difficult. Sometimes when I'm in those situations, all I want to do is change the subject, make a joke or pretend (for a few minutes at least) that I'm in a grocery store buying bananas rather than at my parents' dining room table telling the people who raised me that I'm throwing their traditions out with last week's brisket.

Could you elaborate on the role that dialogue plays in the poems of *Tradition*?

For this particular book, I was interested in providing strong narrative elements (fleshed out characters, detailed settings and scenes, etc.) as a way of counterbalancing some of the more surreal/grotesque/topically sensitive material that pops up throughout the manuscript. As I began drafting the poems, I found myself drawn to the idea of dialogue, and I made a concerted effort to explore that further.

I think I fell into using dialogue because

LOCAL ISSUE

TITLE: *Tradition*

AUTHOR: Daniel Khalastchi

GENRE: Poetry

PUBLISHER: McSweeney's

RELEASE DATE: May 2015

I was reading so much fiction at the time; I was (and remain) captivated by writers like Leonard Michaels and Roberto Bolaño, and I think dialogue began to feel like the best way to share intimate conversations between characters while also bringing imagined voices to life.

Dialogue allows a reader to feel like they are part of the scene, like they are in the proverbial sound studio as the band cuts the record. For me, more so than any other aspect of the craft, dialogue is the most actively engaging tool a writer has at their disposal. As a poet, it wasn't something I had explored much in the past; now I worry I'll never give it up.

In "Poems for My Father," you describe your father's escape from Iraq in 1970. Do you feel being only one generation removed from religious persecution affects your sense of Jewish identity significantly?

Most definitely. When thinking of the profound ways my father was made to suffer because of his religious beliefs—forced to leave his family, to give up his homeland, to risk his life so that he could escape severe torment and tyranny—I become acutely aware of just how easy my own life has been. The knowledge of his history makes turning away from/questioning/challenging the traditions he suffered to uphold incredibly difficult, and (if we're being honest) painful.

Being only one generation removed from that type of persecution is always present in my mind; I am thankful to the people who helped my father escape Iraq, and I am grateful to the state of Israel for providing him and his family the opportunity to live freely and without fear. Regardless of how observant I am, or who I marry, or what I do/don't eat when no one's looking, I will always identify as Jewish, and I am immensely proud to be the son of a man who fought so hard for the right to think and live as he sees fit. **IV**

Arashdeep Singh is a writer and comedian based in Iowa City.

'TRADITION' ON TOUR Daniel Khalastchi's *Tradition* was published by McSweeney's this month. He will do a book tour over the summer and early fall. Illustration by Cheryl Graham

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Local designers are bringing attention to Iowa City's burgeoning video game design community. • **BY PAT BROWN**

Local designers are bringing attention to Iowa City's burgeoning video game design community. • **BY PAT BROWN**



SURE SHOT Game designer Lisa Brown, a former employee of Insomniac Games—known for *Sunset Overdrive* (pictured above)—spoke at this year's EPXCON.

For the past several years, gamers have been in the midst of what will surely be looked back on as the heyday of independent gaming.

The number of available indie games continues to increase, in large part thanks to online distribution and crowd-funding sources like Kickstarter. But if you find yourself, a couple years from now, wondering where all these indie games are actually coming from, the answer might be closer to home than you expect.

Indeed, if the student-run animation and gaming studio EPX's annual conference EPXCON (pronounced "ep-ex-con") is any indication, Iowa City's importance as a cultural hub may soon extend to the world of indie games. This year, its fourth, the conference drew speakers from a variety of high-profile gaming and animation studios, and exhibited the work of local artists and game developers. Eager attendees were treated to presentations by animators from Pixar (Chris Burrows) and LAIKA (Ty Johnson, who worked on 2012's *ParaNorman* and 2014's *The Boxtrolls*), as well as game designers from a number of independent video games.

EPXCON co-director Megan Mathews says one of the goals of the event is to “engage and enhance our animation and game development community at Iowa.” To this end, EPXCON emphasizes the more social aspects of professional conferences: Attendees are encouraged to find guest speakers and ask them questions after the presentations; the pizza in the

Play Lounge never seems to run out; the Play Lounge itself is an open space that facilitates not just communal gameplay, but conversation. Saturday's session even ended with a party at Forbidden Planet, our local bar and arcade, to which all were invited.

On display in the Lounge were games by independent or local developers like Iowa City-based Virtually Competent, whose games, like their logo, have a decidedly retro feel—the 8-bit aesthetic common in the indie game world. A couple, notably *DikDik* and *Lonk's Awakening*, are playful remakes of other portable games (a minigame in *WarioWare, Inc.* for Game Boy Advance, and *Flappy Bird*, respectively), but their best game, *Skull Shot*, is remarkably original: It's a challenging multiplayer game involving rapidly descending platforms and skeletons who hurl their own skulls at flying creatures. Virtually Competent offers their games for free play on their website, virtuallycompetent.com.

Also on display in the lounge were digital shorts by animators at the University of Iowa. Assistant Professor of Animation Peter Chanthanakone, who is the faculty advisor for EPX, taught the Intro to Animation course from which many of the shorts came, in fact. He also directed and produced one of the

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animated shorts, *DancePro*, which featured several animated characters breakdance such recognizably Iowan places as the steps of the Old Capitol Building.

Chanthanakone will be presenting his animation at the Society of Animation Studies in London in July.

What is particularly remarkable about this animation is how it was created. Peder Goodman, one of the students who worked under Chanthanakone's guidance, says *DancePro* made use of a 3D scanning program to capture the environments, and used appropriated Xbox Kinect devices to perform motion capture on real dancers without the need for "markers." (Markers are the little balls you see plastered to Andy Serkis's face on *Lord of the Rings* behind-the-scenes specials.) Although motion capture using markers tends to be more precise, Goodman says markerless motion capture has the benefit of being cheap and fast.

"The most expensive part is the program," Goodman said. "Other than that, it's just one or two Kinect controllers."

I was particularly struck by the fact that Xbox's body-sensing Kinect controllers were used to create the animation. These controllers were originally designed purely for consumption, as a new way to interface with products already packaged and sold. *DancePro*, on the other hand, strikes me as an inspiring example of how such devices can be put to creative ends.

Independent game designers who gave presentations at EPXCON, meanwhile, came from a number of different backgrounds and



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fields. Lisa Brown, formerly of Insomniac Games (known for *Sunset Overdrive* [2014]), and Hanger 13's Harrison Pink, formerly of Telltale Games (*The Walking Dead* games [2012]) both discussed their unique experiences working within the industry. Speaker Greg Wohlwend has designed over 20 games, largely for mobile formats—most notably *Threes!* (2014). The presentations focused on advice for a variety of areas, both theoretical and practical—story and character design, business practice, sources of inspiration, resilience in the face of the eternally difficult task of making a game.

Also in attendance was Devon Scott Tunkin, the co-founder of Young Horses, a Chicago-based independent game studio whose game *Octodad: Dadliest Catch* (2014) was picked up for distribution by Sony as it launched the Playstation 4 last fall. *Octodad* is a game that succeeds in large part thanks to its execution of a simple, yet golden, premise: The player's character is an octopus masquerading as a human who must, at all costs, keep his family and others from discovering the truth. The

game compels the user to perform seemingly simple tasks, but with purposely awkward controls that reflect the difficulty of living in a human world as...well, an octopus.

Skull Shot is remarkably original, involving skeletons who hurl their skulls.

Tunkin earned his bachelor's degree in art and art History from the University of Iowa. After graduating from Iowa, Tunkin was part of a group of DePaul University graduate students that designed the first version of the *Octodad* game in 2011. In both versions

(*Octodad* and *Dadliest Catch*), the design of the main character's impossible body was Tunkin's primary responsibility for the project. And said body, in all its weirdness, is the game's focal point, as well as its best—and simultaneously most frustrating—feature.

"The game gets frustrating really quickly," Tunkin acknowledged during his presentation. "Some people just power through that, but some people just rage-quit."

With a variety of speakers and opportunities to engage with people making games right here in Iowa City—not to mention free pizza—EPXCON 2015 showed that video games

aren't as alienating and corporate as they sometimes seem. In fact, they can be downright communal. **IV**

Pat Brown is a graduate student in Film Studies at the University of Iowa.



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SETTING SATIRE ON FIRE

Little Village talked to Lewis Black about how Marco Rubio has things ass-backwards, where Bill Maher goes wrong on Islam and the state of today's political satire. • BY ARASHDEEP SINGH

With his bulging eyes, gritted teeth and skin quaking with so much tension that the blood literally seems to be boiling beneath it, comedian Lewis Black's ability to illustrate his rage has an almost iconic status. However, his longevity in comedy seems to have less to do with how animated his rage can be and more to do with how honest it is. Rather than safely pandering to the political center for laughs, Black openly declares himself an anti-corporate democratic socialist and reserves some of his sharpest comedic barbs for the issues he's most passionate about, such as poverty and health care. Before finding success in comedy, most notably in his segments for *The Daily Show*, Black worked as a playwright honing his satiric sensibility on dark, absurdist comedies. He's recently returned to playwriting while continuing to perform as comedian. On May 29 and 30, Black will perform stand-up comedy at the Riverside Casino in Riverside, Iowa.

The presidential campaigning for 2016 is starting up in Iowa. Is there anything that you're even remotely optimistic about with regard to this election?

I would be much more optimistic if they weren't starting now. They continue to push the campaigning earlier and earlier. This is

like extreme sports. It's extreme politics. No one stops running for office. They don't do anything but run for office.

Do you have any optimism about Bernie Sanders entering the presidential race? He's a candidate you've talked about favorably and one who you identify with politically.

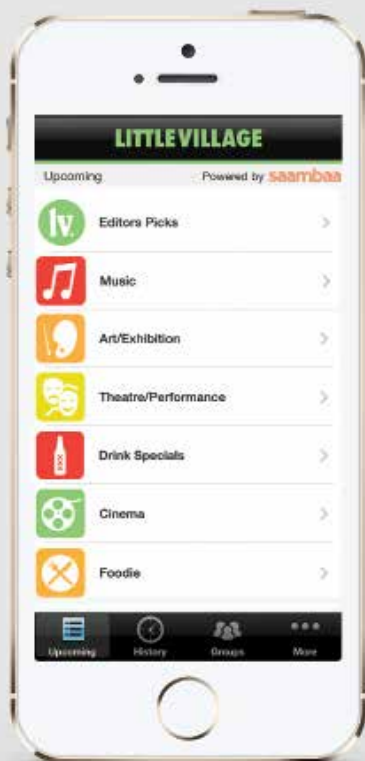
I happen to like Bernie Sanders. He's a democratic socialist and so am I. There is almost no existing democratic socialist party in the country now. There are like 10 of us. Socialist is a word today that is worse than any swear word.

Anyone I've ever said, "oh boy, that'd be great if he won or she won" has lost. So I better keep my mouth shut about Sanders. It is not my job really to publicly talk about it. But I have to say, people might want to take interest in a candidate who is not funded by corporations.

You've described socialism as being rooted in America's Christian history. Can you elaborate on that?

Socialism is enforced Christianity. The idea of charity is great and the idea of tithing is great and all that, but obviously not enough is being done and this is a way to do it. I don't think it works in this country at all, but that's because I don't think we like each other enough to do things that need to happen. I'm just talking about sitting in meetings.

Do you think we've become too polarized



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as a country. Is it a lack of concern for each other that's grown over time?

I don't think we've become less concerned. I think we, the people, are concerned. They, the leaders, have no idea of how to govern anymore. The leadership doesn't know how to lead. And its leadership that lets people vote against their own self-interest.

Are there any influences that led toward making social and political satire the focus of your comedy?

"Reading really good satire can be like taking a drug. It rearranges the way you look at things."

Paul Krassner wrote a magazine called *The Realist* which was a really extraordinary, unbelievable satire for its era. Reading really good satire can be like taking a drug. It rearranges the way you look at things.

Is there satire today that you're particularly impressed by?

I think Colbert did great stuff on his run. I thought it was one of the most extraordinary things I've seen on television. To play that character—it's counter, I believe, in many ways to what Stephen's thoughts are. I thought

that was extraordinary. I think Jon Stewart did some great work. Many of *The Daily Show* correspondents who'd been there since the beginning did some great pieces.

Comedians like Will Durst and John Fugelsang are really good. My friend Kathleen Madigan, who wouldn't consider herself a social satirist at all I think, has done some stuff that is extraordinarily funny along those lines.

Larry Wilmore's new show will grow into something, if Comedy Central keeps its nose out of it. There is a lot of it around. *The Onion*. Andy Borowitz of *The New Yorker*. Bill Maher has had his moments.

Do you have any thoughts on Bill Maher's criticism of Islam, criticism which he's become increasingly vocal about. It's put him at odd with some of his fans, but do you think he's making a point as a social critic?

I just think he's wrong. I don't agree with him. I came to this with my own thinking about ISIS (always a great way to spend an afternoon). This has nothing to do with religion. All religions reach a certain point where the people, become so upset that they lose their minds. And every religion has shown a sign of that. Every one.

The ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel are batty in terms of a lot of things. You call yourself a Christian, and you protest the death of a soldier because they're allowing gays in the military. It goes across the board. It's not religion. These aren't religious acts. They're acts of people who have lost their minds. You end up

calling someone an Islamic terrorist. They're not. They're a terrorist. They're not connected to anything.

On stage, does your anger ever interfere with what you want to do comedically?

Yeah. Essentially my act is having to be more crazy than the environment around me. That's my job. And then sometimes I'm pushed. Now they're pushing me way too far, and I'll find myself really enraged. But I'll just point it out to the audience. If you point it out to the audience to let them see you've gone there—even though you are conscious of it—they trust you. So I'll make fun of myself. But they kind of get a kick out of that anger. Nobody else really does it.

Turning back to the presidential election, are there any candidates in particular who've really gotten on your nerves?

Marco Rubio. He announces he's going to run for president, and he immediately goes after Hillary Clinton. And I don't really like Hillary Clinton. But he is saying she's the past. We need someone who is going to take us to the future. And he's the one who is going to take us to the future. And I'm sitting there thinking he doesn't get it.

Not only do we need to get back to yesterday, we need to get to the day before yesterday. That's how far behind we are. Don't tell me about the future. What are you going to do? Magically make racial tensions disappear, Marco? The future is to go back and pick up the strands that have been staring you in the face and start working on them. Asshole. **IV**

Arashdeep Singh is a writer and comedian based in Iowa City.

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EDITORS' PICKS

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COMMUNITY: EntreFest, Englert Theatre, \$199 - 299, see website | See Page 8 for highlights.

/MUSIC: Head North w. Bonfires, Gabe's, 6 pm | New York's Head North takes over Gabe's for a night of pop-punk.

/LITERATURE: Josh Kalscheur and Seth Abramson, Prairie Lights, Free, 7 pm | Kalscheur, whose work has appeared in Boston Review, Slate, jubilat, The Iowa Review and Best New Poets 2013, will read from his poetry collection Tidal. Abramson, a Writers' Workshop grad, will read from his collection Metamerica, and Thievery.

THURS., MAY 21

/MUSIC: Drunken Logic, Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm | Indie folk/punk band performs in support of their sophomore album, Long Day's Journey to the Middle.

/LITERATURE: R.M. Ryan, Prairie Lights, Free, 7 pm | Ryan reads from his autobiographical novel There's a Man With a Gun Over There, detailing his experiences as an anti-war activist drafted to Vietnam.

/FOODIE: Iowa's Culinary Heritage Kiddo Cooking Class, Public Space One, suggested donation \$5, 3 pm | PS1 to host a cooking class geared towards kids 5+, taking a look at how the Iowa pioneers may have prepared their food.

FRI., MAY 22

/MUSIC: Yelawolf, Blue Moose Tap House, \$25 - 99, 7 pm | Alabama rapper brings his unique brand of southern rap, blending classic rock, bluegrass and party anthems into his own hip-hop style.

Hack Sabbath, Gabe's, \$8-10, 10 pm | Iowa-based tribute band perform Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne classics.

Dan DiMonte and the Bad Assettes w. Vibes for Tribes, Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm | Iowa City based multi-instrumentalist blends nearly every genre you've ever heard of in support of his debut album.

Joe and Vicki Price, The Mill, \$12, 8 pm | Energetic country/blues duo perform guitar driven music in the same vein as Muddy Waters.

/CINEMA: Slow West, FilmScene, see website for times | John Maclean's take on the American Western sees its main character team up with Michael Fassbender as he searches for his former lover while attempting to stay one step ahead of a bloodthirsty bounty hunter on the same trail.

SAT., MAY 23

/MUSIC: Mayflies Yacht Club, \$ 7, 10 pm | Americana band performs a delightful mix of blues and country guitar.



/CINEMA: Grey Gardens (pictured), FilmScene, \$6.50 - \$7.50, 1 pm | Documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles intimate portrait of mother and daughter duo Edie Beale, cousins of Jackie Onassis who left their high-society lifestyle to live together in reclus.



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SUN., MAY 24

/MUSIC: Red Molly w. Tim Shelton, CSPS Hall, \$15 - 18, 7 pm | Americana trio known for their acapella ballads and the distinct bluegrass touch of their folk music perform with the support of Tim Shelton.

Fruition w. Ragged Union, Gabe's, \$10, 9 pm | Portland band performs their distinct brand of bourbon-soaked americana with the support of bluegrass outfit, Ragged Union.

David Lindley, CSPS Hall, \$17 - 21, 7 pm | Guitarist David Lindley combines elements of folk and blues with African, Arabic and Celtic music traditions among many others.

/CINEMA: Grey Gardens, FilmScene, \$6.50 - 7.50, 1 pm
/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: In the Morning Light: Evolution of the Butterfly!, 7 pm | Performer Victoria Apoko Olango tells the story of the butterfly through dance at PS1.

/LITERATURE: Heidi Pitlor, Prairie Lights, Free, 7 pm | Pitlor reads from her novel The Daylight Marriage, a crime mystery about a missing woman and a failing marriage.



Photo by Rick Donhauser

/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: Churchill (pictured), May 28-31, Old Creamery Theatre, \$12 - 30, times vary | English actor and Iowa transplant Andrew Edlin performs his one-man show about the life and times of Sir Winston Churchill, the British prime minister who guided the UK through World War II. Edlin has been performing this play in different venues since 1997. —JS

FRI., MAY 29

Photo by Penny Cahill



/MUSIC: Catfish Keith (pictured), The Mill, \$12 - 15 8 pm | Head-bobbing blues music brought by bottleneck slide guitarist Catfish Keith, an inductee into the blues hall of fame.

WED., MAY 27

/MUSIC: Burlington Street Bluegrass Band, The Mill, \$5, 7 pm | Iowa City based bluegrass band performs.

THURS., MAY 28

/MUSIC: Jack Lion w. Local on the 8's, The Lowdown, The Mill, \$7, 9 pm | Iowa City's own combines jazz and electronic music to create a hazy yet stimulating atmosphere.

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EDITORS' PICKS

/MUSIC: Jazz After Five featuring Steve Grismore, The Mill, Free, 7 pm | The premier spot for Iowa City jazz lovers, showcasing compositions new and original for all to enjoy.

Dead Emperors w. Ice Hockey, The Savage Hacks, The Blendours, Gabe's \$6, 10 pm | Dead Emperors celebrate their one year anniversary as a band with a night of high energy rock music.



/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: Hansel & Gretel and The Impresario, May 29 and 30, Englert Theatre, \$10 - 13, times vary | Old Capitol Opera is back with a packed summer season. First up is a weekend perfect for people who are curious about opera, but hesitant to devote several hours to "trying it out." For two days in

May, audiences can come to the Englert Theatre to see two different operas—each of them shorter than the time it takes to go grocery shopping for a Memorial Day barbeque.

Parents who want to introduce their children to opera can do no better than Hansel & Gretel. Engelbert Humperdinck wrote the original in 1893 after his sister asked him to help her write Christmas songs for her children. This version is condensed to one hour, featuring a cast of adult and child singers.

Later in the evening is an update of Mozart's opera The Impresario. This is a comic tale of a theatre company that hires two actresses who end up competing for the coveted lead role. Iowa City writer Franklyn Tomas updates the opera to a modern setting, pares it down to one hour and four roles, and gives it a new English translation. Even with a makeover, this version still retains the feel of a singspiel, a German form of opera that retained more spoken dialogue than Italian opera. —Jorie Slodki

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BEST OF IC

/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: Lewis Black, Riverside Casino, \$36, 8 pm | Comedian and The Daily Show regular Lewis Black performs for his The Rant is Due stand-up comedy tour.

SAT., MAY 30

/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: Lewis Black, Riverside Casino, 8 pm | \$36 - 56 Comedian and The Daily Show regular Lewis Black performs for his The Rant is Due stand-up comedy tour

/MUSIC: Soul Phlegm w. Live Broadcast, Doctor Murdock, Blue Moose Tap House, \$6, 9 pm | Soul Phlegm blends together blues, funk and good old rock n roll, crafting a melodic yet heavy sound.

Alanna Royale w. Kansas Bible Company, Yacht Club, \$8, 10 pm | Soul and rock and roll bands from Nashville, Tennessee perform.

/LITERATURE: Skeeter Wilson, Prairie Lights, Free, 4 pm | Set in East Africa just before the onset of colonialism, Wilson's novel Crossing Rivers deals with family, race and tribal relations in a time of huge social upheaval.

David Morice, Prairie Lights, Free, 7 pm | Morice will read from his new collection Poetry City, which interacts intimately with his decades of experience living and writing in Iowa City.



/CINEMA: Iris (pictured), FilmScene, \$6.50 - 7.50, 1 pm | Albert Maysles last documentary before his death, a portrait of Iris Apfel, the 93-year-old fashion icon who has been a mainstay in the New York fashion scene for decades.

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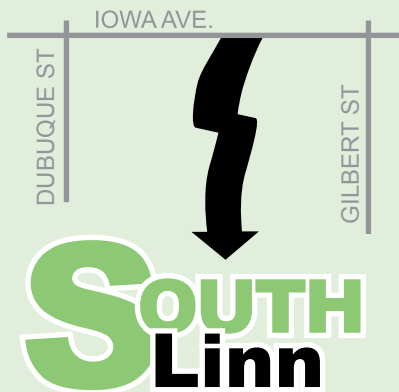
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SUN., MAY 31

/CINEMA: *Iris*, FilmScene, \$6.50 - 7.50, 1 pm | *Maysles* documentary of fasion icon Iris Apfel.

/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: *In the Morning Light: Evolution of the Butterfly!*, 7 pm | Performer Victoria Apoko Olango tells the story of the butterfly through dance at PS1.

MON., JUNE 1



Photo by Eva Rinaldi

/THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE: Mick Foley (pictured), Penguin's Comedy Club, \$27.50, 7 pm & 9 pm | Former WWE star and author Mick Foley to perform a lively set of stand up comedy.

TUES., JUNE 2



Photo by Dan Winters

/LITERATURE: *A Night with Nick Offerman* (pictured), Englert Theatre, \$35, 7 pm | Nick Offerman returns to Iowa City to celebrate the publication of his second book, *Gumption*, which highlights the actor's personal pantheon of great Americans.

/FOODIE: *Lebanese Party Fare*, New Pi Coop Coralville, \$15, 6 pm | Tarek Karam and Lila Peltkian demonstrate how to prepare several party favorite dishes from Lebanon.

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MONDAYS

Stories for Scooters, Cedar Rapids Downtown Library, Free, 9:30 am **Play & Learn**, Cedar Rapids Ladd Library, Free, 9:30 am **Toddler Storytime**, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10:30 am **Spoken Starlight Story Time**, Cedar Rapids Downtown Library Free, 6:30 pm **Dance Church**, Public Space One, Free, 7 pm **Open Mic**, The Mill, Free, 8 pm **Catacombs of Comedy** Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm

TUESDAYS

Toddler Storytime, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10:30 am **Scott Barnum Trio**, Motley Cow Cafe, Free, 5:30 pm **Play & Learn**, Cedar Rapids Downtown Library, Free, 6 pm **Blues Jam**, Parlor City Pub and Eatery, Free, 7 pm **Line Dancing Lessons**, Robert E. Lee Recreation Center, \$5, 7 pm **Comedy and Open Mic**, Studio 13, Free, 10pm

WEDNESDAYS

Story Time, Cedar Rapids Downtown Library, Free, 9:30 am **Preschool Storytime**, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10:30 am **Theology Brewed**, Journey Church, Free, 7 pm **Open Jam and Mug Night**, Yacht Club, \$5, 10 pm **Open Stage Wednesday**, Studio 13, Free, 10 pm

THURSDAYS

Preschool Storytime, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10:30 am **Zenzic Press Open Studio**, Public Space One, Free, 12 pm **Open Mic**, Uptown Bill's, Free, 7 pm **Karaoke**, Penguin's Comedy Club, Free, 10 pm **Locally Owned**, Gabe's, Free, 9 pm **Mixology**, Gabe's, \$2, 10 pm **Karaoke**, Thursday Studio 13, Free, 10 pm

FRIDAYS

Kirkwood English Conversation Club, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10 am **Book Babies**, Iowa City Public Library, Free, 10:30 am, 1:30 pm **Drag & Dance**, Friday Studio 13, Cover, 10 pm **SOULSHAKE**, Gabe's, Free, 10 pm

SATURDAYS

Zenzic Press Open Studio, Public Space One, Free, 12 pm ***Community Folk Sing**, Uptown Bill's, Free, 3 pm (*Once a month) ***Ukulele Social Club**, Uptown Bill's, Free, 4 pm (*Every third Saturday) **Saturday Night Music**, Uptown Bill's, Free, 7 pm

SUNDAYS

Dance Church, Public Space One, Free, 10 am **Open Lab**, Beadology, Free, 12 pm **Community Worktime**, Public Space One, Free, 1 pm **GLBTQ Community Pot Luck and Bingo**, Studio 13, Free, 6 pm **Pub Quiz**, The Mill, \$1, 9 pm

ART-AND-EXHIBITION:

Melissa Furness & Rian Kerrane, Legion Arts CSPS Hall, Free (Through May 30) **Mel Andringa**, Legion Arts CSPS Hall, Free (Through May 31) **UI Intermedia Collective**, Legion Arts CSPS Hall, Free (Through May 31) **University of Iowa Art Faculty Biennial Exhibition**, Figge Art Museum, Free (Through May 31) **Eye on UI: Brodsky, Dorfman, Kipniss, Lanyon**, Figge Art Museum, Free (Through May 31)

THEATRE-AND-PERFORMANCE:

Matchmaker, Old Creamery Theatre, \$30 (Through May 21) **Churchill**, Old Creamery Theatre, \$30 (Through May 21) **Marry Poppins**, Theatre Cedar Rapids, \$24-\$39 (Through May 31)

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SUMMONING ADVICE FOR SUMMER

Wayne Diamante gives reason for alcoholics to rejoice and truant students to quake in fear. • BY WAYNE DIAMANTE

Welcome to your official first Pro Tips of Summer Vacation! School's out and the living is easy for the next three months! Unless of course you have a regular job, or you are Wayne Diamante—*because justice never sleeps, especially Diamante Brand back-street justice. Believe it.*

Lately, everything I write sounds like the hook for a TV show. I'm in brainstorm mode again for a pilot episode I'm working on for Lifetime Network. They've hired me to be the creative director behind their new Bruce Jenner reality show. I don't know if I'll call it *TransJenner*, or *Jenner Identity* ... or maybe *Jenneration XX*. All tough choices, really. Anyway, that's my problem.

Luckily, you have me to solve your issues and answer your questions. Hit me up at [ask-waynediamante@gmail.com](mailto:waynediamante@gmail.com), and I'll do my level best to let you know what your problem is.

**I strongly feel
it is my civic duty
to be the positive
influence these
troubled teens need.**

and passion into a social hobby. For example, my social hobby is a website called *TruancyBlog!* Allow me to elaborate.

As a writer, I spend a lot of time in front of a computer screen, and I'm fortunate in that I'm able to work from home. I also happen to live next to a high school. The thing about high school students, Marvin, is they're always arriving late and

cutting out early and generally developing the bad habits that will turn them into shit-heads later in life.

I strongly feel it is not only my, but everyone's civic duty to be the positive influence these troubled teens need. To that end, I've installed a webcam and remote activated paintball gun on top of my house, operated via the internet.

Visitors to *TruancyBlog!* are invited to motivate wayward students via real-time video feed and barrages of high velocity withering fire, all from the click of a mouse. It's low stress, low-commitment, combines my work and interests, and is infinitely entertaining.

I'll admit, Marvin, *TruancyBlog!* is kind of the unicorn of social hobbies. You may have some difficulty finding the perfect fit for your needs, but don't give up! In the meantime, head on over to *TruancyBlog!* and fire off a couple rounds in service of punctuality. Tomorrow's leaders are going to need to be on time.

—Wayne lv

Dear Wayne,
When digested, does alcohol turn into poop or pee?

—Fred

Dear Fred,
Neither. It turns into brain cells, which is why people have all of their best ideas shitfaced.

—Wayne

Dear Wayne,
I'm new to the area and looking for ways to get involved with the community and connect with new friends. I like volunteering with former convicts who are at risk of recidivism, but my new job really ties up a lot of my time and frankly, I could deal with something a little more low-stress. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

—Marvin

Dear Marvin,
It sounds like you're civic-minded but need something you can pick-up and put-down without thinking about it too much. What you need to do is meld your work

IC AREA VENUE GUIDE



THE ROOFTOP AT FILMSCENE | The theatre's rooftop screening series starts Memorial Day weekend. Photo by JoJo Baccam

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ADVERTISER INDEX

965 GUITARS (27)

BACKPOCKET BREWING (4)

BEST WESTERN CANTEBURY INN & SUITES (31)

BLUE MOOSE TAP HOUSE (25)

BLUE ZONES PROJECT (19)

CACTUS (24)

DAI GWILLIAM (27)

THE ENGLERT THEATRE (17)

FILM SCENE (29)

FIN & FEATHER (33)

GRAMMAR ACQUISITION LAB (26)

HEYN'S PREMIUM ICE CREAM (29)

HIGH GROUND CAFE (40)

KCKK JAZZ 88.3 (29)

KIM SCHILLIG (25)

IC COLAB (25)

LINCOLN WINEBAR (24)

LUCKY'S MARKET (30)

THE MILL (18)

NEW PIONEER FOOD CO-OP (35)

NORTHSIDE MARKETPLACE (13)

- CPB REMODELING

- JOHN MACATEE, D.O.

- HIGH GROUND CAFE

- HOME EC. WORKSHOP

- THE BROWN STREET INN

- DODGE ST. TIRE

- OASIS FALAFEL

- ARTIFACTS

- JOHN'S GROCERY

- MOTLEY COW CAFE

- BLUEBIRD DINER

OLD CREAMERY THEATRE (19)

PALISADES CAFE (24)

PED MALL CO-OP (39)

- YOTOPIA

- RAGSTOCK

- REVIVAL

- FORBIDDEN PLANET

- RAYGUN

RICARDO RANGEL, JR. (26)

SCRATCH CUPCAKERY (23)

SECOND ACT (34)

SHORTS / STELLA (20)

SOUTH LINN CO-OP (28)

- IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

- RECORD COLLECTOR

- ZEN SALON & SPA

- RELEASE BODY MODIFICATION

- RVAP

- THE CONVENIENCE STORE

- THE KONNEXION

SOUTH OF BOWERY CO-OP (8)

- GOODFELLOW PRINTING

- WHITEDOG AUTO

- THE COTTAGE BAKERY

- IOWA CITY TIRE

- GRAPHIC PRINTING & DESIGNS

- GUMBY'S

- MUSICIAN'S PRO SHOP

- WORLD OF BIKES

- CRITICAL HIT

- TECHNIGRAPHICS

- RUMOURS SALON

- AERO RENTAL

- CROWDED CLOSET THRIFT SHOP

- GEOFF'S BIKE & SKI

SUMMER OF THE ARTS (34)

THAT CELLULAR PLACE (2)

THOMAS L. CARDELLA & ASSOC. (27)

TMONE (24)

WASHINGTON STREET WELLNESS (25)

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NEWS QUIRKS

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN

- Police were able to link Christopher Furay, 33, to six bank robberies in Pittsburgh, Pa., by his distinctive red beard. After media coverage of the first four robberies, he wore a fake red beard over his real one for the next two. He was arrested anyway after the sixth robbery when a detective recognized his getaway vehicle as the same one used for previous heists. (Pittsburgh's WTAE-TV)
- Tyler Trammell, 27, was arrested as the "Average Joe Bandit" when he robbed a Phoenix, Ariz., bank he'd robbed only weeks earlier. This time, a detective standing "approximately 15-20 feet away" said he recognized Trammell as the suspect and saw him accepting money from the teller in a small blue bag. Trammell explained he robbed the bank a second time because he needed money "because the country is so fucked up." (Phoenix's KPHO-TV)

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

After the Rubbin' Buttz BBQ in Milliken, Colo., announced that the restaurant would celebrate White Appreciation Day on June 11 by offering white customers a 10 percent discount, co-owners Edgar Antillon and Miguel Jiminez began receiving threats, including one bomb scare. "It's been phone calls, it's been emails, it's been on social media," Antillon said. "Some are just, 'Hey, you're an idiot,' and others have been legit threats." He added, however, that the messages have been "overwhelmingly positive." Antillon said the idea for White Appreciation Day was to "highlight a double standard," where African American and Hispanic Americans have month-long celebrations of their heritage, but he emphasized that the discount would apply to all patrons. All they have to do is ask. (*The Washington Times*)

FIREBUGGERY

Federal authorities were forced to drop criminal charges against a California man accused of starting a wildfire because two key witnesses died within months of his indictment. The 2013 blaze burned 400 square miles, including parts of Yosemite National Park, destroyed 11 homes and cost \$125 million to fight. One of the witnesses died in a workplace accident, the other of a heart attack. Prosecutors said statements they made implicating Matthew Emerald, 33, can't be used in court. (Associated Press)

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

- Peter Mutty, 57, received a heavy sentence for brewing light beer because he did it Saudi Arabia. Authorities arrested him after finding two cartons of home-brewed light beer and two cases of homemade red and white wine in his car. "I knew it was wrong and I made no attempt to hide the fact I was guilty," he said after serving six months in the notorious Thuqba prison "with rapists, murderers and killers." Before being released, he received 28 lashes with a cane and was told he cannot leave the country because his case is not finalized. He also cannot work. "I am trapped in limbo and have not earned a brass razoo in six months," he said. (Britain's *The Telegraph*)
- Quebec police issued a \$148 ticket to 91-year-old Yvette Vachon for making too much noise with her recliner rocking chair. Two officers responded after her downstairs neighbor complained about being irritated by the sound of her chair and her television and insisted that police take action. Lawyer Charles Cantin took on her case pro bono. After he reported the ticket to the media, prosecutors in Saguenay canceled the fine and said the officers should have issued her just a warning. (Canada's *National Post*)

FIRST THINGS FIRST

The utility company on the Philippines island of Palawan asked residents to turn off refrigerators and other electrical appliances so there'd be enough power to broadcast the boxing match between local favorite Manny Pacquiao and American Floyd Mayweather. (Australia's News.com.au)

NOT LOVIN' IT

- Hoping to overcome its junk-food image, McDonald's began testing two breakfast bowls in Southern California. One includes kale. The chain is also introducing three salads in Canada that contain kale. The new menu items follow recent ads for the Big Mac that mocked trendy foods like kale, soy, quinoa and Greek yogurt. (Associated Press)
- A Michigan court sentenced Shaneka Torres, 30, to three to seven years in prison for opening fire at a McDonald's restaurant that failed to put bacon on her burgers. She complained when the burger she ordered at the drive-through was missing bacon. She was offered a free replacement, but this one also lacked bacon, provoking her to shoot through the restaurant. (Associated Press)

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CHEATERS WIN

The Internal Revenue Service announced that it won't even try collecting from delinquent taxpayers who owe less than \$1 million. "Nobody's ever going to knock on their door," said Richard Christian, supervisory revenue officer for the Dallas area, who explained that five years of budget cuts by Congress have reduced staffing to where collection efforts are now focused on tax cheats who owe \$1 million or more. Christian further noted that traditional collection methods don't work against the people who owe between \$100,000 and \$999,000 because they generally don't have regular jobs and wages that can be garnished. "If you just owe \$700,000," he said, "we'll hope you get a job sometime so we can levy." (*The Washington Post*)




KISSING COUSINS

Norway's Child Protection Service is seizing foreign children and fostering them to Norwegian parents to combat "the highest inbreeding in the world," according to the Lithuanian talk show "An Hour with Ruta." The program said that Lithuanian children living in Norway "are a sought-after commodity" to combat the high rate of Down syndrome and other birth defects among Norwegians. Dag Halvorsen, Norway's ambassador to Lithuania, hired a Lithuanian public relations firm to counteract the misconception that Norwegian authorities are working "to obtain fresh, foreign children, such as Lithuanian ones, to strengthen the genetic material." (Norway's *The Local*)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

More than a thousand military veterans a day contact the Veterans Administration's Veterans Suicide Hotline, according to a Scripps news report that found the calls often overload the system. The hotline was set up in 2007 with four operators receiving 60 calls a day. It now has 52 operators. Some calls are rerouted to other call centers, but many callers are placed on hold, some for as long as 36 minutes. (Tampa Bay's WFTS-TV)

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HOW SAFE IS "THE CLOUD"?

The trend in computers is to store all your files "in the cloud." That doesn't mean they're up in the sky; they're in a big hard drive somewhere. But that got me wondering: How secure is the cloud? Are we one good case of sunspots or an electromagnetic pulse away from losing it all? —Richard Aldrich, Napa, California

All of it, no. But the situation is more complex than cloud promoters would have you believe. One problem is the term "cloud." It suggests that core computing resources—not just storage but also processors and communications infrastructure—reside in some unknowable realm, like Valhalla or the quantum foam. This is crap, as you know; the stuff lives on physical machinery. However, it's not just "a big hard drive somewhere." Rather, copies of your data presumably are distributed among multiple servers in widely separated locations, so no single disaster can destroy it or render it inaccessible.

But nothing in the usual definitions of cloud computing actually requires this. Rather, one abstraction—the cloud—is expressed in terms of other abstractions, such as "pooled resources," "rapid elasticity" (meaning resources can be scaled up or down as needs change), and "measured service." The metric cited most often is availability—the percentage of time the cloud is accessible. The higher the availability, the better. But it comes at a cost.

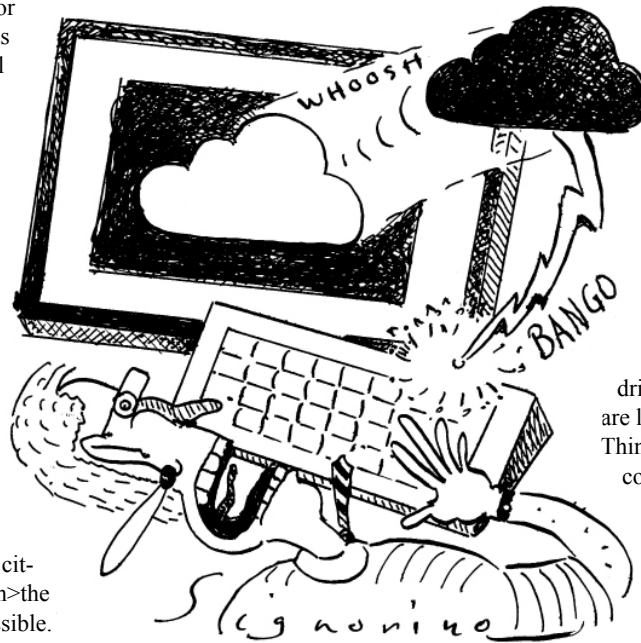
About that machinery. I once toured a data center, commonly known as a server farm. It was cool but spooky: a vast array of dimly lit server racks. No people, no activity except blinking LEDs, no sound but a faint whir.

The place was as impregnable as human ingenuity could make it—fingerprint scanners to gain entry, on-site generators to provide instant backup in the event of black-out. Still, somebody could nuke the place. The real security of the cloud is there are many server farms, and they can't all go offline, can they?

Here we get back to availability. All some business types know about cloud computing is they should demand "five nines"

availability—i.e., access to data, applications, etc. 99.999 percent of the time. This works out to downtime of about five minutes per year.

It's possible to achieve this, or anyway get close. Amazon Web Services, currently the leading provider of cloud computing, offers



a service level agreement (SLA) essentially guaranteeing your data will survive any catastrophe short of the end of the world. That means installing redundant instances of said data and related services on server farms around the globe, with 24/7 monitoring to spin up a new stack and copy everything over automatically if an old server starts to wobble.

But five nines is expensive, and for most businesses unnecessary. A cheaper option is 99.9 percent availability, in which redundant virtual servers are implemented on (say) three data centers scattered around Virginia.

This is riskier. In June 2009, lightning caused Amazon's cloud computing service

to go offline for four hours. That same year Rackspace had to issue customers around \$3 million in service credits after a power outage took down its Dallas data center. In June 2012 a storm disrupted an Amazon data center in Virginia, knocking out Netflix, Instagram, Pinterest, and other sites for hours.

In these cases data wasn't destroyed, just rendered temporarily inaccessible. But if all the data instances are in the same region, which is what many Amazon cloud customers wind up buying, they're theoretically vulnerable to large-scale natural disasters and yes, even sunspots and electromagnetic pulse.

Other perils lurk. Since cloud computing is multi-tenant, there's a nonzero chance somebody pulling down her data could

get yours accidentally. You've got non-cloud-specific hazards such as hacking and Internet slowdowns. Or, commonly, an IT jomake misconfigures something and . . . oops.

Am I warning you off the cloud?

No, just trying to demystify it. Whatever the risk, the cloud is the only practical way to store data long term. Banks have downsides too, but nobody seriously thinks stashing cash in a mattress is better.

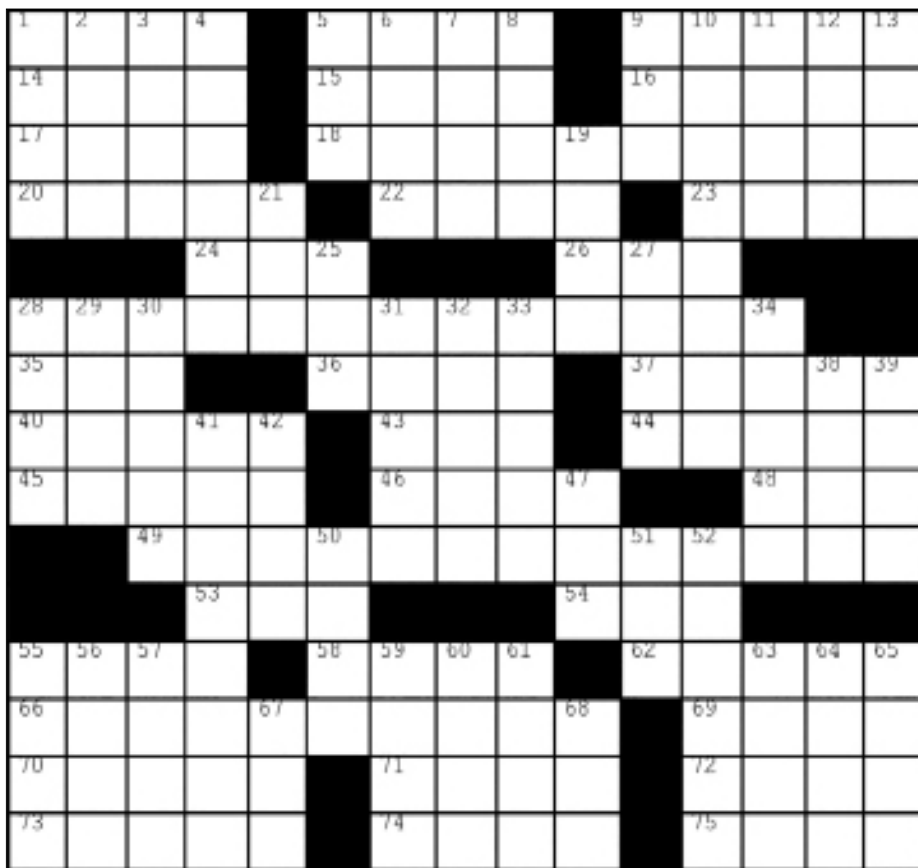
Bad things can happen to data: hard drives crash; laptops get stolen; backups are lost or become unreadable. That's not all. Think of the storage technologies that have come and gone: punch cards and punched paper tape; Volkswagen-tire-sized platters for mainframe hard drives; half-inch magnetic tape and cassette tape; 8-, 5.25-, and 3.5-inch floppy disks; Bernoulli, Zip, and Jaz cartridges.

Even CD-ROMs are starting to fade away. If you have vital data stored on one of these media but not the device to read it, you're hosed.

The point is, data is fragile and the technology used to store it is ephemeral. You don't want dealing with such things to be your problem, and the average person isn't equipped to do so anyway. Better to turn your data over to experts who supposedly can make it safe and accessible. Does this have its risky aspects? Yup; so does giving your savings to an investment firm. Churchill famously said democracy was the worst form of government except all the others. Is it premature to talk that way about the cloud? Maybe, but that's how it looks.

—CECIL ADAMS IV

FROM GRAY TO BLACK



7. Leaders of an overhyped revenge?
8. Little laugh
9. Bob Lob _____
10. Makeup essential
11. Startup angel fund
12. Tell him to "Keep playin' that song, all night."
13. Exxon's parent
19. _____ *bound and Down*
21. Tater or tiny
25. Songwriter Barrett
27. Reward advisory
28. Toni Morrison novel
29. *Conan the Barbarian* rip-off
30. The unforgettable one
31. GPS command
32. "Know thy _____ but not yourself, wallow in defeat every time"
33. "Come on, finish your meal."
34. Kelly or Jones
38. Not like the coalition of world countries?
39. "Electric Feel" band
41. Drink recommendation at bar time?
42. Open water swimmer Jones
47. Bump, _____, spike
50. Ball manufacturer
51. Gangsta or freestyle
52. The unfortunate shift that ends the night and is followed by the morning
55. Tasty when it is blue
56. Greek pop group
57. _____ James
59. Alda or Turing
60. Forbidden
61. Roger Rabbit, Jessica Rabbit, e.g.
63. Super mom?
64. Taste method, two words
65. Revolutionary Luxemburg
67. Time frame
68. Genetic coder, for short

AT YOUR SERVICE BY JULIA LIPPERT

ACROSS

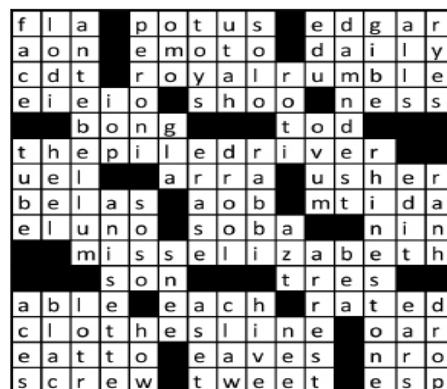
1. They put the mutilation back in shock rock
5. Arctic order
9. "I'll do it."
14. *House of Cards* Kate
15. Corrupt political sisters
16. Obama's controversial associate, Bill
17. "Yeah, right!"
18. Super busy or surrounded by thicket?
20. "He's one bad mother—SHUT YOUR MOUTH!"
22. A type of skin butter
23. Wynton Marsalis directs them (abbreviated)
24. Alamos and Altos preceder
26. _____ Lanka
28. Indulgent break or a discussion of the perils at work?
35. Worse than PMS
36. UFC President White
37. The new lotion
40. She'll never be royal
43. Furry friend
44. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' supervillain

45. Legal burn?
46. Controversial morning show host, Don
48. _____ Laude
49. Tipping amount or the approximate amount of Iowa's energy that is wind?
53. The science guy
54. Chess master Mikhail
55. Bubbly
58. _____ in *E-Minor*
62. Endangered bear
66. Serving or dancing?
69. Border town (with El)
70. Followed by gator
71. Shakespearean "Hang on."
72. Greek goddess of chaos
73. Save this for your momma?
74. Strega _____
75. Valley known for wine

DOWN

1. Nannys, currently known as
2. St. Louis U
3. Melody
4. Church fundraiser
5. Miss Piggy utterance
6. Ash holders

APRIL ANSWERS



CAR TALK

This week, a mom voices concern about her son's toy habits.
BY DAN SAVAGE

Yesterday, I found my 5-year-old son putting things up his butt in the bath. This isn't the first time—and it's not just a "Hey! There's a hole here! Let's put things in there!" kind of thing. The little dude was rocking quite the stiffy while he did it. I'm well aware of how sexual kids can be (I freaking was!), although I wasn't quite expecting to be catching him exploring anal at this young age. I want to avoid a trip to the emergency room to extract a toy car or whatever else from his rear end, and I don't want to see him damage himself. So do you have any suggestions of what I can give him as a butt toy? Yes, I am serious, and no, I'm not molesting him. I know he's going to do this on his own with or without my knowing, and I want him to be safe! Just today, he proudly showed me a toy car that he stuck up his butt. I told him that it wasn't a good idea due to the sharp bits on it, and while he may have gotten this one out, one could get stuck and then we would have to go to the hospital. Help!

Helping Ingenious Son Make Other Moves

"HISMOM has handled this really well so far, and I am impressed with her clarity and calm about this situation," said Amy Lang, a childhood sexuality expert and educator, a public speaker, and the author of *Birds + Bees + Your Kids* (birdsandbeesandkids.com). "But NO BUTT TOYS for 5-year-olds! This is insane and will cause a host of problems—can you imagine if he says to his teacher, 'Yesterday, I played with my butt plug!' Instant CPS call!"

I'm going to break in for a second: Do NOT buy a butt toy for your 5-year-old kid—if, indeed, you and your 5-year-old kid's butt actually exist. I'm way more than half convinced that your letter is a fake, HISMOM, something sent in by a Christian conservative out to prove that I'm the sort of degenerate who would tell a mom to buy a butt toy for a 5-year-old. I'm some sort of degenerate, I'll happily admit, but I'm not that sort.

"This clearly isn't a safe way for her boy to explore his body for a variety of reasons," said Lang. "His butt hole is tiny, it's an adult-like behavior, and it's germy."

And while adults who are into butt play are (or should be) proactive and conscientious about hygiene, grubby little 5-year-olds aren't particularly proactive or conscientious about hygiene—or anything else. You don't want his hands and toys smeared with more fecal matter than is typical for the hands and toys of most 5-year-olds.

"It's also on the outer edges of 'typical' sexual behavior in a young kid," said Lang. "He may very well have discovered this sort

of outlier behavior on his own, but there is a chance that someone showed him how to do this. HISMOM needs to calmly ask her son, 'I'm curious—how did you figure out that it feels good to put things in your bum?' Listen to what he has to say. Depending on his response, she may need to get him a professional evaluation to make sure that he's okay and safe. She can find someone through rainn.org in her area to help. While it doesn't sound like he's traumatized by this—he's so open and lighthearted about it—you never know."

Regardless of where he picked this trick up, HISMOM, you gotta tell him that it's not okay to put stuff up his butt because he could seriously hurt himself. I know, I know: You are a progressive, sex-positive parent—if you exist—and you don't wanna saddle your kid with a complex about butt stuff. But think of all the sexually active adults out there, gay and bi and straight, who have overcome standard-issue butt-stuff complexes and now safely and responsibly enjoy their assholes and the assholes of others. If you give your son a minor complex by, say, taking his toy cars away until he stops putting them in his ass, rest assured that he'll be able to overcome that complex later in life.

"She should tell him that she totally gets that it feels good," said Lang, "but there other ways he can have those good feelings that are safer, like rubbing and touching his penis, and he is welcome to do that any time he wants—as long as he's in private and alone. You can also tell him the safest thing to put



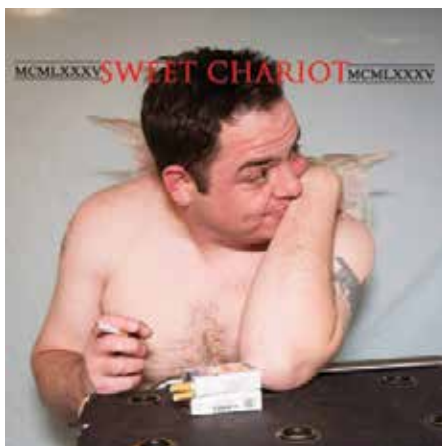
up there is his own finger. But he MUST wash his hands if he does that. Nothing else, finger only. And did I mention NO BUTT TOY? Seriously." Follow Amy Lang on Twitter @birdsandbees.

I'm a cis straight woman. I went on dates with a lot of guys from dating websites (200+) before I got married. Just writing to say that I agreed with your advice to the lesbian dating-site user. I agree that putting negative/exclusionary notes like "no trans women" or "no Asian guys" in a dating profile is a turnoff—and not just to the excluded group but to those who find those kinds of comments to be mean-spirited and narrow-minded. And are there really so many trans people out there that such a comment is even necessary? Are there really that many trans people out there causing massive confusion on dating websites? And honestly, if someone is trans and you wind up meeting them for coffee, what would be the big deal anyway? It's just coffee! I don't understand why this would be such a huge problem.

Straight Chick In DC

My point exactly. **lv**

ALBUM REVIEWS



SWEET CHARIOT

1985

sweetchariotic.bandcamp.com

Welcome to Iowa Meta-Rock City, home of Sweet Chariot, whose new album *1985*—like Nigel Tufnel’s custom amplifiers in *Spinal Tap*—goes “one more” than Van Halen’s iconic album *1984*. And in a humorous nod to *1984*’s iconic cover art, *1985* features Sweet Chariot’s Jack Isleib

as an angel sitting beside a pack of cigarettes. Sweet Chariot is an Iowa City heavy meta band (get it?), featuring Brandon Gassman (Kita, Cop Bar) and Zachary Westerdahl (Ten Grand), and the aforementioned Isleib (Breakdance).

THERE’S MORE EXUBERANCE THAN JOKINESS, MORE GUIDED BY VOICES THAN WEIRD AL YANKOVIC.

These three knuckleheads together represent 40 years of headbanging, drink spilling and Gabe’s beer garden brouhahas. The crunchy guitar riffs and aggravated assault of Isleib’s drumming recall well the broadest rock flourishes of the 1980s.

“Lobster Bib” echoes Jane’s Addiction’s “Mountain Song” and “B-Team Baracus” has a Van Halen-worthy synth intro. “We Are The Pizza” sounds like a track left off Sonic Youth’s *Daydream Nation* for being too peppy.

But isn’t music, after all, mostly about music? Scientists don’t even know why people like music. To the extent it means anything, it points to other music and comments on it, ridicules it, revivifies it. Sweet Chariot does all that, slouching on the shoulders of giants, making noisy sub-two-minute Fabergé eggs of simultaneous parody and homage. They’re having a laugh, but there’s some catchy, tune-ful pop lurking amongst the monster riffs. There’s more exuberance than jokiness, more Guided By Voices than Weird Al Yankovic.

It’s all over in under 12 minutes, with “Lobster Bib” clocking in as the longest tune at one minute and 55 seconds. You could spend all night at Gabe’s damaging your hearing listening to someone more long-winded and po-faced try to convince you they’re serious artists. Or you can just play *1985* over and over. The latter will be more fun.

—Kent Williams

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