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Rapid River

ARTS & CULTURE MAGAZINE



*"The Bride of
Lammermoor"
at the Asheville
Lyric Opera*

January 2008
Vol. 11 No. 5
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at French Broad Brewery.

**Local Craft Beers and the
Best Places to Enjoy Them**

- SEE PAGE 29

NEXT MONTH: The French
Broad Brewery and its exciting
neighbor, The Garage at Biltmore
— the beer, the music, and the folks
who love both.

PREVIEW

Lotus Announces their "Copy Paste Repeat" Tour

Look For "Escaping Sargasso Sea" and "Copy Paste Repeat: Lotus Remixed" In Stores Now

For those waiting for a concert experience with the dynamics of a rock band (read: no laptops), the dance inducing rhythms of club music, and the sophistication of modern electronica, an unlikely musical alternative has arrived in the form of the band Lotus.

Formed at a Mennonite college that had banned on-campus dancing as late as the 1980's, Lotus brings their club-worthy beats and rocking instrumental anthems to theaters throughout the country this fall. No glow-stick bracelets, pretentious Can trivia, or expensive distressed fashion required.

In January 2008, Lotus embarks on their "Copy Paste Repeat" tour, which celebrates the release of Copy Paste Repeat: Lotus Remixed, an album the band released this past November. The recording offers 12 remixes by renowned producers including DFA Records artist Juan Maclean, DJ Harry, and Lotus's own Jesse Miller. Lotus's post/electro/dancerock is deconstructed and reassembled into club ready dance, dub, glitch-hop, and IDM tracks.

The band's website is currently offering up the source files for the track 'Bu-



bonic Tonic' for fans to create their own remix and submit for review. The site will feature the band's favorite submissions. Visit www.lotusvibes.com for details.

Copy Paste Repeat: Lotus Remixed comes on the heels of the band's most recent live album, Escaping Sargasso Sea, released May 2007, is a double-disc live album that draws from two previous studio albums, Nomad and The Strength of Weak Ties, along with never before released material. From the post/math-rock of "When H Binds to O" to the slippery dance beats of "Wax," this collection shows Lotus's ability to deconstruct, stretch, and rebuild their compositions

BY CLAIRE TONELSON

spontaneously on stage. Restraining from flaunting their individual chops, Lotus builds compositions on catchy melodies and heavy grooves.

The five-piece band has creatively fused electronic dance music with instrumental post-rock for eight years. The result is an explosive live show that has made crowds get down across the US, Canada, and Japan. Armed with a massive light rig and one of the most energetic shows on the circuit, Lotus proves why they have become a go-to act for late night festival slots.

If you go

*Lotus and Asheville, North Carolina
favorites Telepath*

*Thursday, January 24th at 9:00pm,
Doors open at 8:00*

*Tickets \$10 Advance, \$12 day of show /
Ages 18+ Welcome.*

*Orange Peel, 101 Baltimore Avenue,
in Asheville. For more information please
visit www.theorangepeel.net*

Folk Veteran Bill Staines Live at Mountain Spirit Coffeehouse!

The much appreciated and highly successful Mountain Spirit Coffeehouse series continues with a show by Folk veteran and Red House Records artist Bill Staines. The New Hampshire based songwriter will be celebrating the release of Old Dogs, his first CD of new material in over three years.

It's a collection of folk/country songs that were inspired by years of touring America's highways; creating a simple, spacious sound that is reminiscent of the artist's earlier recordings. A performer and recording veteran whose career has now spanned four decades, Staines' music has long reflected the central themes of the American landscape.

His ability to write tunes that seem like traditional folksongs has long made him a favorite source of new material. Staines' original tunes, including "The Roseville Fair," "River," "Wild, Wild Heart," "Yellowstone Winds" and "A Place in the Choir (All God's Critters)," have been covered by such artists as Nanci Griffith, Jerry Jeff Walker, Grandpa Jones, Fairport Convention, and Mason Williams.

Staines gained notoriety as a songwriter in 1966 when Randy Burns and the Skydog band recorded his first original song, "That's the Way It's Going to Go in Time". He released his debut album, Bag of Rainbows, the same year.

Staines initially attracted national attention with his yodeling. In 1975, he won the prestigious National Yodeling Championship at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Kerrville, Texas. His 1976 album Miles included the ballad, "Sweet Wyoming Home" which has since become a signature song of sort. A self-taught, finger style, acoustic guitarist, Staines was heavily influenced by the playing of Jackie Washington and Tom Paxton. Staines uses a right handed Martin D-18 guitar that he turns over and plays left handed.

Staines' song, "A Place in the Choir (All God's Critters)" has become a children's music classic. In 1993, he released an album of children's songs, The Happy Wanderer, that included "The Hound Dog Song" and "I Can Feel the Sweet Winds Blowing (Bless My Soul)" as well as interpretations of "Home on the Range," "The Gypsy Rover" and

BY JAMES CASSARA

"Kookaburra." Over the past two decades Staines' songs have been featured in four songbooks: If I Were a Word Then I'd Be a Song (Folk-Legacy, 1980), All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir (Puffin, 1989), River (Viking, 1993) and Music to Me (Hal Leonard, 1994). He is truly an original and revered voice in the world of traditional folk.

Old Dogs features all-new originals and covers by such notable songwriters as Guy Clark, Norman Blake, John Stewart and Elizabeth Cotten. As always Staines lends his voice and guitar to stories that echo across the mountains, rivers and open prairies.

If you go

*Sunday, January 6th – 7:00 pm Unitarian
Universalist Church of Asheville, 1 Edwin
Place, Asheville.*

*For tickets and show information: (828)
254-6001*

ECHO→

Early Music Festival



January 26 - February 1, 2008

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Henry Lebedinsky, organ, with the Biltmore Brass
Monteverdi's Orfeo
Medieval Vegetarian Feast, at the Laughing Seed Cafe
Ensemble Vermillian: Hidden Treasures

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a Madwoman***

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COVER STORY

So Much to Give Thanks For

With a new year coming, there is so much to give thanks for and not enough space to do it in. So I'll be brief. A big thank you to all of our loyal readers the past eleven years — without you there wouldn't be a Rapid River Magazine. A special thanks to one of the best entertainment editors in the US (and she works for us — eat your heart out. Larry King), Marcianne Miller, who has given Rapid River the best film and book sections of any publication in western North Carolina. An equally special thanks to Simone Bouyer, our graphic designer who joined us in July, and who's made the look and feel of this publication better than anyone could have thought possible.

Thanks and welcome to our new columnists: poetry editor Marijo Moore, nature essayist Peter Loewer, local beer guide Joe Zinich, and book reviewers H. Byron Ballard and John M. Rose. Thanks and "glad you're back" to our regular columnists: health expert Dwayne Butcher, M.D., music reporter James Cassara, artful home specialist Roxane Clement, foodie Mackensy Lunsford, wine guru Michael Parker, and artful living guide Bill Walz, as well as our two cartoonists, Amy Downs and Philip Hawkins. Thanks to our new and continuing writers for film and performing arts: Sierra Bicking, Hilary Boram, Louis Boram, Lonnie Darr, RoseLynn Katz, Chip Kaufmann, Zachary Maynard and Michelle Keenan.

My most heartfelt thanks, of course, go to our managing editor and longest supporter, Beth Gossett.

I wish everyone a wonderful and exciting new year.

DENNIS RAY, PUBLISHER RAPID RIVER MAGAZINE

Asheville Lyric Opera and the Opera Company of North Carolina present

Lucia di Lammermoor

The heroine of Donizetti's tragic masterpiece — a young woman who is driven to madness when forced to marry a man she does not love — has inspired memorable performances by some of opera's most luminous stars in Asheville Lyric Opera's faithful rendition of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

This opera will be produced by two of the NC states most lavish opera companies The Asheville Lyric Opera and The Opera Company of North Carolina in Raleigh.

"It would be almost impossible for one company to produce a play of this magnitude and star quality," says David Starkey, general director of the Asheville Lyric Opera (ALO). "Splitting the cost with another company, showing it in two parts of the state, allows us to put on a show that rivals the biggest brightest cities."

The general director of The Opera Company of North Carolina, Frank Grebowski, had done some consulting with ALO and contacted Starkey to see if he would be interested in doing an opera together.

"This was a great opportunity," Starkey says, "for a smaller market like Asheville to work creatively with a larger more established art market like Raleigh. Hopefully, this endeavor will allow both cities to gain greater respect for each others artist successes."

Basic Plot Summary of Lucia di Lammermoor

Act I

Enrico decides that his sister, Lucia, should marry Arturo Bucklaw for money and status. She, however, is in-love with Edgardo Ravenswood, who is her brother's bitter rival and their family's mortal enemy. Edgardo wants to ask Lucia's brother for her hand in marriage, but Lucia is scared of what her brother's reaction will be. Edgardo then hears that he must leave for France for



Talise Trevigne as Lucia — a singer noted for the sheer beauty of her voice and exquisite stage presence.

By DENNIS RAY

political reasons. She insists that they keep their love a secret; the two exchange rings and say goodbye.

Act II

Enrico uses a forged letter from Edgardo to another woman to persuade Lucia to marry another man, Arturo. Lucia is crushed by what she sees in the letter and agrees to

'Lucia di Lammermoor' cont'd on pg. 30

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FINE ART

The Fine Arts League of the Carolinas: Moving On Up

By TIM BRANDON

The Fine Arts League of the Carolinas has moved from downtown Asheville to a 362 Depot St. in the River Arts District that is home to affordable housing.

The property is part of a larger development project that Mountain Housing Opportunities plans for the adjoining properties, the old Glen Rock Hotel and several properties along Ralph and Choctaw Streets.

The partnership replicates a model seen in other cities, whereby arts organizations partner with community development groups to revitalize neighborhoods.

The property the Fine Arts League occupies is a 6,400-square-foot building that was originally a company store for railroad men. It was also used for several decades as Asheville Packing Company, a locally owned and operated food processing facility that made, among other items, chili for the hot dogs sold at Asheville Tourist baseball games.

Mountain Housing Opportunities plans to build an 80,000-square-foot mixed-use building on vacant land on Depot Street that will offer market-rate and affordable homes (both rental and for sale), as well as commercial, retail, and studio space.

The old Glen Rock Hotel will be historically restored and will be used as office space on the upper two floors, with commercial and retail space on the first two floors. Also included in the development will be community space for meetings, classes, and children's programming intended to link river district artists with children in the neighborhood.

The Fine Arts League of the Carolinas, founded by fresco artist Benjamin F. Long IV, is a non-profit school committed to teaching the realist traditions and techniques of the old masters.

Benjamin Long, the League Headmaster, has lived, studied, and painted for 30 years in Europe. He has exhibited in Florence, London, and Paris, had works in the Royal Academy and Royal Portrait Society, and has created seven major frescoes in Italy.

The School for the Serious Artist

Asheville is fortunate to have the Fine Arts League of the Carolina a school dedicated to teaching the realist traditions and techniques of the old masters.

Instruction is based on the Master-apprenticeship studio system—teaching the fundamentals of the artist's studio, working from live models in natural north light, and stressing a thorough

understanding of the tools, materials, methods and preparations of the artist's craft. Besides hands-on training, the students will be able to witness the artist-instructor's own creative process, as he or she works along with the students. One great incentive to coax professional artists to pass on their knowledge is to allow them to do their own work, just as they might do in their own studio. For a student to observe a master at work is a powerful learning experience.

The first year heavily emphasizes drawing — first-year students concentrate on the study of anatomy, figure drawing, and cast drawing.

The second year's study will move into more advanced drawing and beginning painting of portrait, still life and landscape.

The third year is advanced study encouraging individual projects and expression of ideas towards fully realized works and producing toward exhibition. Students who advance through the final year can expect to exhibit their work in the League's gallery.

Anatomy is stressed all three years, as is craftsmanship, color theory, perspective, composition, and other necessary elements of the professional artist. They wish to offer a full education devoted to the development of a classical fine artist, so that the serious student will leave after three years with a solid foundation in drawing, anatomy, and craftsmanship, and with the confidence of a professional artist to pursue his or her talent.

Selected Teachers

JOHN MAC KAH

Landscape and Still Life Painting

John Mac Kah is a graduate of the Ringling School of Art. He has taught oil painting and watercolor privately and publicly at the college level for many years. He is the Program Director of The Swannanoa Valley Arts League and maintains a fine and applied arts studio.

JOHN DEMPSEY

Cast Drawing and Portraiture

John Dempsey studied academic drawing in Florence, Italy at the studio of Daniel Graves. He has studied painting with John Mac Kah and Benjamin Long. His pursuits range from figurative anatomy to landscape painting with a concentration on portraiture.

Types Of Classes

Cast Drawing

Through the discipline of copying

classical sculpture, the student endeavors to learn how to see proportions correctly and to model the effects of light and shadow, which reproduce the three-dimensional form in space. This process prepares one for portraiture and is a preliminary for painting. Retaining what has been learned from the cast, the student concentrates on elements of portraiture using various media: pen and ink, chalk, graphite, charcoal, etc.

Drawing:

Students complete numerous thumbnail sketches using pencil, charcoal, and pen and ink wash, with attention to line variation, rhythm of form and visual dynamics of composition. Students will maintain a sketchbook and be encouraged to complete a series of drawings.

Painting:

Students execute several thumbnail sketches for each study, and choose one to develop into a painting. Working with an easel and palette, students draw with brushes, developing a wash underpainting to establish values. Students learn about

color theory and mixing colors from direct observation of nature, supplemented by lectures and demonstrations on overpainting in color.

Students begin to explore the movement and mixing of paint, using a systematic approach, developing underpainting, and working in glazes with a grisaille palette.

Sessions for 2008

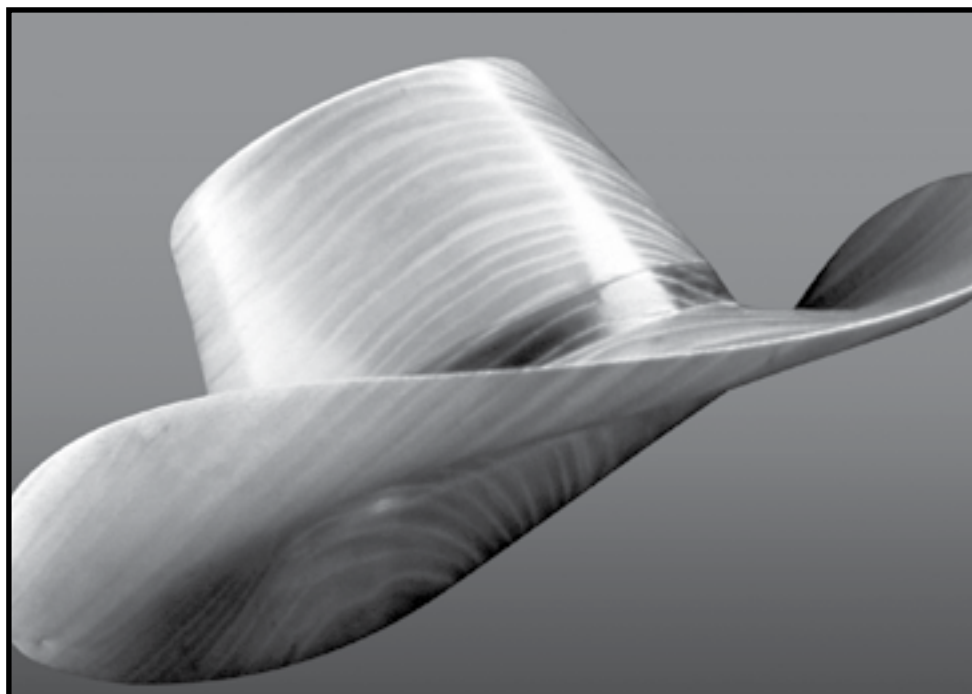
- January 14 - April 4
- April 21 - July 11
- September 15 - December 12

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FINE ART

January at the Folk Art Center

BY APRIL NANCE

The Folk Art Center galleries continue to inspire and delight in January. There is still time to see Western North Carolina Pottery: *The Rodney Henderson Leftwich Collection*. WNC is a premier destination for fine art and craft collectors, and this exhibition illustrates the deep historical roots tied to this designation.

Photographs of days gone by are paired with objects from the Leftwich collection. The show includes work from Oscar Bachelder, Walter B. Stephen, J.S. Penland and Brown's Pottery. The show closes January 13.

Beginning January 19th the main gallery will host: *Pressing Matters in Printmaking*, an international invitational exhibition representing the work of 50 artists. Notably the exhibition will feature vitreographs of Harvey Littleton and Dale Chihuly in cooperation with Littleton Studios of Spruce Pine, NC.

Vitreographs are prints made from a



"Over the Moon", Jan Heath
Photo courtesy of the Southern
Highland Craft Guild



Cameo Mugs, Pisgah Forest Pottery,
Walter B. Stephen c. 1940s
photo by Tim Barnwell

glass matrix. The show will also explore printmaking techniques such as aquatint, silkscreen, woodcut and linocut. Also participating are members of the California Printmaking Society and members of the Southern Highland Craft Guild. The exhibition dates are January 19-May 18.

The Focus Gallery will feature furniture made by John McDermott and metal by James Peavey. This forum offers members of the Southern Highland Craft Guild the opportunity to display new work in a gallery setting at the Folk Art Center. The show will run from January 5-February 26.

While at the Folk Art Center, take time to visit Allanstand Craft Shop, the nation's oldest craft gallery displaying the work of members of Southern Highland

Craft Guild. The Guild is a juried organization representing artists living in the mountain counties of nine states from Maryland to Alabama.

For more information, call (828) 298-7928 or visit www.craftguild.org.

The Southern Highland Craft Guild is a non-profit, educational organization established in 1930 to bring together the crafts and craftspeople of the Southern Highlands for the benefit of shared resources, education, marketing and conservation.

The Southern Highland Craft Guild is authorized to provide services at the Blue Ridge Parkway's Folk Art Center under the authority of a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The Folk Art Center is located at Milepost 382 on the Blue Ridge Parkway in east Asheville.

FINE ART

Blue Spiral Annual Exhibit Celebrates Sixteen New Artists

Blue Spiral 1, Asheville's notable downtown gallery, rings in the New Year with its most ambitious new artist exhibit yet. *New x Three* (New Artists, New Works, New Year!) is a festive introduction to both emerging talents and recognized artists who are "new" to the gallery.

A preview of the work reveals a tantalizing hint of the excitement to come. If there's one event that is an unequivocally must-see for Asheville art lovers, it's this exhilarating exhibit. New York

BY MARCIANNE MILLER

abstracts reveal subtle, haunting rhythms that promise more revelations at each viewing. She's another artist whose star is rising. Keep her in your view.

As in many Blue Spiral 1 exhibitions, *New x Three* has a strong focus on craft and the selection of media is thrilling. Marlene Rose's cast glass sculptures draw from a broad range of influences including Asian and African artifacts as well as Paul Klee's hieroglyphic-like paintings.



She Drives Me Home (2002), by Taiyo La Paix, oil on canvas, 33" x 78"

galleries, eat your hearts out — the place for contemporary art with an astonishing array of media and styles is right here in the mountains of North Carolina.

Sixteen artists comprise this year's exhibition. My favorite work is that of Asheville artist Taiyo La Paix. To be fair to the other artists, I must reveal I'm a friend of La Paix, so of course I'm ferociously prejudiced.

What's amazing about La Paix's work is that the man in person is quiet, almost self-effacing. I knew him for a few years before he even revealed, shyly, in a whisper almost, that he was a painter.

I was stunned. A painter? I never met a painter who was so polite and didn't call attention to himself. Did he do tiny Japanese-style minimalist paintings that were gentle ruminations on nature and the uncelebrated joys of life? No, he said, almost apologetically, his work was big, very big. He opened his arms wide indicating "huge." I was flabbergasted — it was the most expansive gesture I'd ever seen him make. La Paix's work is wildly colorful, earthy, boisterous, and hilarious — in other words this seeming ordinary man is an extraordinary artist.

The other painter to admire at the exhibit is Celia Gray, whose encaustic

Ceramicist Pat Scull hand-builds boxes and lamps from stoneware and found objects that give new meaning to the concept of "rugged spirit." Vivian Beer designs furniture that is so sleek you'll want to stand next to them to convince yourself how good you'll feel if you lose a few pounds. David Munson inspires with his modern geometric sculptures.

Blue Spiral 1 is a stunning 15,000 square foot gallery specializing in Southeastern fine art and craft. It's located right next to our favorite movie theatre, the Fine Arts Theatre at 38 Biltmore Avenue. So with one parking stop, you can see the best films (*The Kite Runner* should be showing this month) and go next door to enjoy the New X Three exhibit as well as the other gallery exhibits.

Art lover Marcianne Miller is also Rapid River's editor for books and films.

If you go

New X Three exhibit at Blue Spiral 1, 38 Biltmore Ave., downtown Asheville
January 3 through February 23, 2008
Hours: 10-6, Monday-Saturday
(828) 251-0202, www.bluespiral1.com

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- CHRISTOPHER MORLEY (1890-1957)

BOOK REVIEWS BEGIN ON PAGE 16



THE ARTFUL HOME

Transform a Problem Into a Plus - An Easy Limestone Technique

BY ROXANE CLEMENT

When I was teaching, my students would frequently remark "I'll bet your house has beautiful faux finishing in every room!"

Well, that is certainly not the case, partly because I never seem to have the time and partly because every wall in my 100+ year-old house is covered with heavy cornmeal-type texture, and most faux techniques require a smooth surface. This has been such a bane to my existence that I refuse to teach texturing techniques at all. When you change your mind you are stuck with the monumental task of sanding it down, or covering it with heavy duty wall-liner paper. Thinking of liner paper, I hit on something.

1) Take heavy-duty liner paper (found at any home improvement or paint store) and cut into "blocks." Most liner paper comes in 20 1/2" widths, so I cut it in half to a 10 1/4" width and then into 15" lengths.

2) Using a level, mark out your wall in horizontal lines 10 1/2" apart. This will allow for the height of the stone block plus 1/4" for "mortar."



The liner paper takes on some of the texture from the wall underneath, starting the stony texture.

3) Liner paper generally comes pre-pasted, but I use a good quality pre-mixed wallpaper paste to fix the pieces onto the wall. Simply spread it generously onto the back (the sticky side) with a 4" chip brush. Position the piece up against the line you've drawn on the wall, then wipe it down well with a damp sponge to clean off excess paste and press out air bubbles.

You can always add more interest by painting cracks, vines, or little critters on the wall.

I just eyeball the horizontal distance between the blocks to match the vertical distance; this isn't as critical as getting the rows level.



The finished effect.

4) I just eyeball the horizontal distance between the blocks to match the vertical distance; this isn't as critical as getting the rows level.

5) Allow the wall to dry at least 24 hours, then prime with an acrylic primer. Once that is dry, base-coat it with a satin or egg-shell latex paint in a light beige color.

6) Using a 1:1:1 ratio, mix several darker colors of latex paint with glaze and water. Paint patches of these in a random pattern on each stone and manipulate with a damp rag until you achieve a nice stony texture.

7) Take your darkest color of glaze and, using a chisel brush, paint a line of



Professional Decorative Painter
Roxane Clement of Asheville.

Decorative painter Roxane Clement spent ten years in Raleigh, NC as a theatre set painter and lighting designer. She graduated with distinction from the prestigious Decorative Restoration Program of the City and Guilds of London Institute at A-B Tech and taught Decorative Painting there for two years.

She has worked on numerous restoration projects in Asheville including the Smith-McDowell House, the Biltmore Estate, and the A-B Tech library. Her decorative painting business specializes in stone effects and wood graining. Contact her at Rmclement2001@aol.com

"shadow" under each stone and along the edge away from the light source.

The rough texture of the plaster underneath gives the "blocks" enough variation to simulate stone, and the spaces in between suggest a rough mortar. Once you've finished, you can always add more interest by painting cracks, vines, or little critters on the wall, depending on how rustic you want to go.

Next Issue: Try Some "Smooching" for Valentine's Day

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FINE ART

The Shape of Our Existence

By Heidi Foss

The human figure holds an irresistible attraction for most people. It has been the subject of the most powerful and memorable works of art — from the Venus de Milo to Michelangelo's Pietà, to Bouguereau's. Yet the taste for figurative art has gone in and out of fashion from classical times to the present.

This winter Merrimon Galleries reignites the mystery by bringing to Asheville a collection of figurative work by local and regional artists. "The Shape of Our Existence, Figures and Faces" will include a large range of styles and mediums all inspired by our human form: from black and white images of the Masai, photographed on safari by local writer Kevin Cropp, to Impressionistic oils by Keith Spencer, and carved stone figures by Bernie Segal which exhibit a deep human emotion.

Opening night will be an enjoyable evening for all. There will be live music; and the event will be catered by local Matt Parris (known for his gourmet salads featured at EarthFare.)

The opening is appropriately planned for Valentine's Day weekend. Bring your loved one; it's a romantic opportunity to share in the mystery, beauty and admiration of the human form by some of the regions top artists.



"Woman Holding Her Hair" by Keith Spencer.

If you go

The exhibition will be on display from February 15th to the end of March, at Merrimon Galleries, 365 Merrimon Avenue (right next to Picnics), in Asheville.

Opening night celebration is Friday, the 15th at 6 p.m.

For more information on this event please contact Heidi Foss, curator of Merrimon Galleries, (828) 252-6036.



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POETRY

Poetry as Ceremony

BY MARIJO MOORE



MariJo Moore

There is much to be said for the art of poetry. It has been the medium of mystics, prophets, and healers for thousands of years.

For me, poetry is proof of the mystery living inside me; it is reality scratching at the surface of my soul; it is my true connection to the whole. Poetry is ceremony woven from the voices of the old ones, intuition, dreams and visions. The poems that find me are gifts from Spirit through me to others.

In the belief system of American Indians, this quintessential Spirit is known by many, many names and has many, many voices. These voices often penetrate our spoiled, scarred psyches and

they still allow it to come through them. I understand this perfectly.

There was a time in my life when alcohol could no longer numb the pain, when the memories of a crushed childhood and adult misery caused by addictions would no longer stay in the deep dark recesses of forgetfulness. When the entire world seemed dark and foreboding. When not even time spent underneath a willow tree could connect me back to the present wonders of life.

Write, an elder told me, write it all out; get it out of you. And so I wrote, a stream of consciousness writing that pushed the hardened tears from inside my guts up into my throat and choked me. Choked me until I gave them an outlet through my fingers. Liquid poems, I call these. Manifestations woven from strong repressed anger and an even stronger desire to survive. And yes, these creations were poetic by design.

Later, after I had written all I could, these poems were burned in ceremony. Releasing the hurt through smoke circling my head like the dark bodies of crows. I felt better. Not healed, of course, not totally devoid of painful memories, but lighter somehow. I had taken physical action. I had accepted the truth.

I suggest this ceremony to anyone who might be struggling with inner pain, hurtful memories, or the fear of day-to-day existence. No, I am not offering poetry as a panacea for the multitude of issues facing human beings today. But poetry is definitely a way to reunite with the voices of the old ones, to carry out their desires and prayers concerning this earth and ourselves, and perhaps to awaken us from our dreamless sleepwalking.

MariJo Moore (Cherokee/Irish/Dutch) is the author of a dozen books including three books of poetry; "Spirit Voices of Bones" and "Confessions of a Madwoman" (now available on CD) and the forthcoming "Poets Inhale The Darkness Artists Breathe". She resides in the mountains of western NC. www.marijomooore.com

poetry

A sacred fury...
an uncommon madness...



a scattering of birds...

Ceremonies by the Sea

Lying
next to the waters a
beautiful woman
listening to the waves
feeling the fullness of
the lighted moon

dreaming
she awakens inside a small star
only to imagine
what a wonderful place
this planet with
moving waters could be.

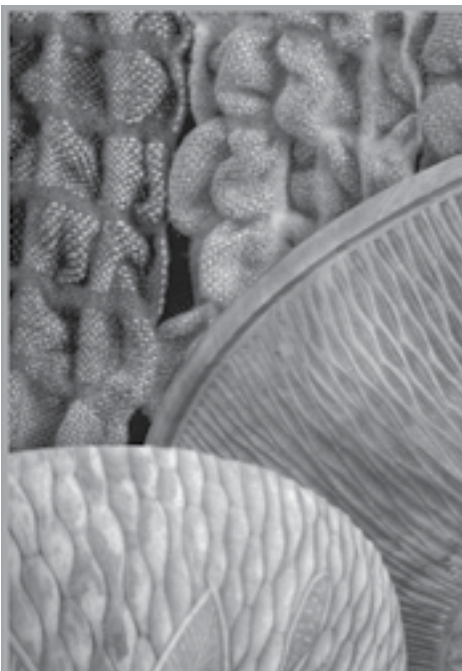
Climbing
down climbing climbing
to the point
of almost touching this revolving
planet with the moving waters
she sees

lying
next to the waters a
beautiful woman
listening to the waves
feeling the fullness of
the lighted moon.

Deciding
this too sacred a moment
to disturb
she returns to the small star
never to fear viewing the
ceremonious again.

from the book
Spirit Voices of Bones

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THE ART OF NATURE

Thoreau's Garden

Books have been written about Henri David Thoreau's effect on America's psyche but it's interesting to note that even today, his name is often used in vain, to market nature to a starved populace.

Recently an Arizona resort advertised its extensive heath spa, pool, and restaurant by telling potential visitors that Thoreau would never have settled for a log cabin if he had known about their twenty acres of Spanish style architecture and world class facilities!

Walden is what Thoreau is remembered for but his Journals are, to me, the most precious thing he left. I'd like to believe that future starship captains and politicians will consult his writing before they land on new planets and face both aggressive and benign life forms, not to mention their environments. If the vast

majority of decision makers in this country would read a bit of Thoreau before entering public life, the direction of our own country would certainly change for the better.

A few years ago an advertisement appeared in The New Yorker featuring an expensive watch called the IWC Da Vinci. It was not really a watch but an automatic chronograph with a perpetual calendar and moon phase indicator. The copy continued: "It will be a reminiscence of Leonardo Da Vinci's ingenuity for entire generations of watch connoisseurs to come — at least until the year 2499." According to the ad copy, the watch will stop as the century turns to 2500. But included with the watch (total cost: \$19,995) is a "century slide," a special metal chip that the owner must insert within the works sometime in the year 2200.

Forget the word reminiscence in connection with Leonardo's ingenuity — after all, when's the last time you or yours sat down at the dinner table and talked about the good old days with Da Vinci? Zero in instead on the century slide. Forget what the world is like when the watch finally stops, but imagine your heirs in the year 2200, wishing to keep the darn thing going but they just can't find that chip!

It's totally ridiculous. If alive today, Thoreau would have launched a fusillade of talk against that advertisement calling it a salute to the strained imaginations of much of today's advertising business. And, he would point out, that it shows our present preoccupation with all the wrong aspects of time, including our own mortality, and our almost obscene preoccupation with the amassing of wealth.

Time is also directly involved with my column entitled Thoreau's Garden. It's larger than any artificial garden ever grown and includes mile after mile of



Peter Loewer examines some Lenten roses.

embowered walks, such as no nobleman's ground can boast, with animals running free and wild therein as from the first days of the earth.

Remember, there's not enough time in the world to create this collection of plants that ranges from mature balm-of-Gilead trees, to odd and assorted funguses ready to bloom along with goldenrods, to partridge berries that haven't changed since Thoreau wrote about them, to jimson weeds. But using the written word and our imaginations we can learn about them all.

Most of us lack the opportunities to wander the land that Thoreau wandered and because this garden lives only in the imagination, I've taken plants that he wrote about in his Journal, plants that I also have affection for, and in addition to his comments, added my own about their history, their uses, and their charms. I've included some wildlife, too. Perhaps in a world where oceans are rising, summers are hotter, winters colder, and a beneficent sun has become a bit crueler, the best garden is a garden of the mind.

So join me as we look at the plants (and some philosophy) that Thoreau marveled at, plants that continue to excite even today, in a world of artificial flowers and artificial trees.

Time is also directly involved with Thoreau's Garden. It's larger than any artificial garden ever grown and includes mile after mile of embowered walks, such as no nobleman's ground can boast, with animals running free and wild therein as from the first days of the earth.

BY PETER LOEWER

**In 1845 Thoreau wrote:
"To live to a good old age
such as the ancients reached,
serene and contented,
dignifying the life of man,
leading a simple, epic
country life in those days
of confusion and turmoil...
retaining the tastes and the
innocence of his youth,
There is nothing so cheering
and world-famous as this."**

Peter Loewer is a well-known writer and botanical artist who has written and illustrated over twenty-five books on natural history over the past thirty years.

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MUSIC

SPINNING DISCS:

January CD Reviews by James Cassara

This month we wrap up the year by giving long overdue mention to a couple of local and regionally produced discs as well as a few albums leftover from previous columns. Remember that these and many other wonderful listens are available at your locally owned independent music store. Without them where would we be? I'd love to hear your thoughts, email me at JJCassara@aol.com and share with me your favorite discs of 2007.

Jesse Dayton and Brennen Leigh

Holdin' Our Own Stag Records

It's a sad indictment of the current state of country music that an album as fine as this cannot find its own niche; *Holdin' Our Own* is the sort of honest and mournful record upon which Nashville was built but, for some inexplicable reason, it is marketed as alternative or Americana; it appears that the mainstream country establishment doesn't want anything to do with songs that have the least bit of grit or reality in them.

Such decisions might affect the sales and distribution of an album (whether for better or worse is still to be determined) but what it doesn't alter one bit is that, a decade into playing solo gigs and adding his talents to the bands of Waylon Jennings and Ray Price, Dayton has written an album of traditional male/female country duets, full of the subtle humor and fine picking that used to be the hallmark of country music.

Co-conspirator Brennen Leigh—more well known as a bluegrass singer—is a solid Loretta to Dayton's Conway and brings plenty of oomph to the proceedings. From the exuberant "Let's Run Away," a Tex-Mex flavored bit of rockabilly extolling the escape to exotic locales from everyday life, straight through to the country duet purity of "Take Me" this album combines romantic tales of lost love with tear stained ballads of regret. As in the best country classic tradition they even toss in a trio of covers:

Their rendition of the Webb Pierce tearjerker "Back Street Affair" is pure country soul, the Carter/Cash hit "Long Legged Guitar Pickin' Man" gets an energetic reading highlighted by Dayton's stellar fretwork, and the Everly Brothers chestnut "Brand New Heartache" gets reinvented as a honky tonk rocker showcasing Dayton's wicked guitar work. The



combined result is a disc that unabashedly takes from the past but lives in the present. That's a winning formula if ever there was one. ★★★1/2

Michael Hurley

Ancestral Swamp Gnomonsong Recordings

During his nearly four decade career Hurley's approach to making records hasn't changed much. Certainly it's adapted to the times and circumstance but his rustic and eccentric style of folk is as timeless now as it was back in the day.

This is relaxed, earthy eclectic folk with a sitting-on-the-porch feel, the recording so sparse that you often feel as though you're smack in the front row. Although it's grounded in traditional Americana type acoustic folk, it's not reverently traditionalist, adding such nuances as gnutbucket tremolo electric guitar (on "Dying Crapshooter's Blues") and electric piano ("Lonesome Graveyard") along with carefully layered and oh so lovely backing vocals.

Hurley's wizened voice and an off-the-cuff narrative should strike a chord with the free folk Devandra Banhart sect but it's much more cogently structured melodic than it is stream-of-consciousness rambling. In that regard *Ancestral Swamp* is most aptly named: it's a summary of American folk—a bit of Delta blues commingled with Appalachian music with a dash of Midwest dust bowl—with none of the forms overpowering the others. The end result is an album that's equal parts comfortable and homey and accomplished and thoughtful★★★

Goin' Home: A Tribute To Fats Domino Vanguard Records

His decision to stay in his home in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward during Hurricane Katrina nearly cost Fats



Domino his life. The home was flooded and sustained major damage and the rock and roll pioneer had to be airlifted by

helicopter from his roof. Age 77 when the storm hit, Domino was no longer performing as often as he once did, but he emerged proud and resolute and even recorded a new album, whose proceeds he donated to an organization aiding musicians hurt by the disaster.

Just how loved Fats Domino is by the music community is borne out by the A-list names who've contributed to one of the more remarkable tribute albums to surface in recent years. Spanning the worlds of rock (Neil Young, Elton John, Los Lobos, Tom Petty), blues (B.B. King), country (Willie Nelson), jazz (Herbie Hancock), and even reggae (Toots & the Maytals, who just nail "Let the Four Winds Blow"), 30 artists are represented on the two discs, along with a healthy sampling of New Orleans artists of various grooves, among them Irma Thomas, Dr. John, and Art Neville.

It's a celebratory affair, for sure, and it would have to be, as Domino's music has always tilted toward the upbeat. You can bet he wouldn't want it any other way. The project gets moving with one pulled up from the past, no less than the late John Lennon, who cut Fats' "Ain't That a Shame" for his 1975 Rock 'n' Roll album. Lennon's former band mate Paul McCartney teams up with Crescent City mainstay Allen Toussaint for a duet on the jaunty "I Want to Walk You Home," one of a number of inspired pairings of seemingly mismatched artists who find common ground in the Fat Man.

Both Joss Stone and Buddy Guy hook up with the Dirty Dozen Brass Band for an electric "Every Night About This Time," Ben Harper meets the Skatalites for a zippy ska version of "Be My Guest," and, in one of the album's most surprising and satisfying moments, Robert Plant and the Soweto Gospel

'CD's' continued on next pg.

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LOCAL MUSICIANS

Ruby Slippers *An Asheville Band on a Musical Yellow Brick Road*

BY JOE ZINICH

Musically captivating and visually arresting, Ruby Slippers is a local band destined to have an enormous impact on the Asheville music scene. The group can't claim our mountains as their first inspiration, though — that credit goes to a hurricane.

Molly Kummerle, lead vocalist and leader of Ruby Slippers, was born in St Croix, US Virgin Islands. The island, so dependent on tourists, was devastated by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Recovery would take years, too many, so Molly's parents gathered their possessions and two daughters and moved to the Asheville area, a place previously visited and enjoyed. The daughters learned to love it here too, and still do.

The most curious question for Molly is: how does a soccer playing trombonist (in middle and high school bands) become an outstanding vocalist, performer, and songwriter?

"Three easy steps," Molly explains. She let her love of music ("my sister complains I sang loud but off key in all our car trips"), performing ("always playing dressup in Mom's clothes"), and her education (B.A. in English Lit) meld with her "courage to try." Add the opportunity to sing backup with R&B band Mavis, which led to writing with local

musicians, then singing those songs at Tressa's open mic nights with the house band. "It all comes together with the energy that is shared by the audience and the band."

The name Ruby Slippers literally popped into existence late one night. "We were all talking about music being a journey with companions who come and sometimes have to go," Molly remembers. "We face and overcome adversity, like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz* — that was it — *ruby slippers*!" The name crystallized their feelings and lead to the birth of the band. Molly joined with drummer Robin Tolleson and multi-instrumentalist Andy John to form the band Ruby Slippers and cut the demo disc, which led to their CD, *Living Room*.

The music in *Living Room* is a collaborative effort bringing out the best of each musician's experience. The vocals are sultry, the lyrics from the soul, the music jazz-influenced alternative rock — the result is mesmerizing.

But "you can't stand still," Molly



Molly Kummerle, lead vocalist of Ruby Slippers.

says. Unlike Dorothy who desperately wanted to go home, Molly Kummerle passionately wants to stay on the journey. "So I have to keep experimenting."

She deliberately set out to challenge herself in a variety of performance and music formats. She performed in local stage plays, such as *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Porgy and Bess* and the *Scarlet Letter*. Crazy about cabarets, she studied cabaret-style shows like the Dresden Dolls, with its outrageous costumes and "characters without rules". In addition, she began performing with an "all star" band, including different instruments, such as the cello, keyboards, and a DJ (electronic sounds). This wide experience is expanding her unique performing style and evolving sound. She describes her music as "Indie Electronic Alternative with a Jazz influence."

These days Ruby Slippers' music is becoming more of a reflection of Molly's ideas — less jazz influence, more electronics (DJ). The new music has more of

an edge, but I can assure fans that it still contains the vocals and range of lyrics displayed in *Living Room*. Molly's lyrics are poignant slices of life, shared with a close friend, or introspective musings on the storms and insights of life.

As exciting as Ruby Slippers is on CD, it's nothing compared to seeing them perform live. Whether it's the telling detail of a quiet tiny moment or the painful memory of a raging life storm, with Molly's dreamlike movements Ruby Slippers will sweep you away.

Ruby Slippers is one of the 34 pop/indie/alternative bands performing at this year's POP Asheville (formerly ID Fest).

For more info on Ruby Slippers visit www.rubyslippersmusic.com.

Joe Zinich is an avid fan of local Asheville musicians.

If you go

Asheville Pop 2-Day Music Fest

When: Saturday & Sunday, January 19 & 20, 7:30 to 2:00 a.m.

Where: The Grey Eagle, the "new" Rocket Club, and Stella Blue. A shuttle provides transportation between the three venues. www.popasheville.com.

'CD's' continued

Choir collaborate on a stunning and haunting a cappella "Valley of Tears."

Of the individual performers, Randy Newman presents "Blue Monday" faithfully, Norah Jones applies her signature quasi-jazzy style to "My Blue Heaven," and Corinne Bailey Rae's live "One Night of Sin" (penned as were many of his greatest hits by Domino's writing partner Dave Bartholomew) returns to the song the sense of tension removed from the more antiseptic but well known version by Elvis Presley.

There really are no clunkers here; these artists have done Fats Domino proud, making the gift of both his music and survival all the more righteous. ****

Barton Carroll

The Lost One
Sky Bucket Records

As one might guess from the title the "lost one" of Barton Carroll's world is a man without a woman, a wander-



ing spirit persistently looking for his better half. A soul mate, as it were or, as he so eloquently states in the heart rendering "Burning Red and Blue," someone who will "make me a man."

Such is the fabric of Carroll's new disc, one that might just propel him from critical favorite to a more mainstream success. The opening cut, the intriguingly titled "Pretty Girl's Going to Ruin My Life (Again)," is comic in its intelligence: the narrator seems to know what's going to happen, but damned if he's able to avoid his own mistakes.

Carroll's vocal style reminds one vaguely of Jimmie Dale Gilmore, though he sings at a lower register; and like Gilmore, his voice works exceptionally well with a lyrical song such as this.

The aforementioned "Burning Red and Blue" has an evocative story line-focusing on an illicit sexual relationship, but Carroll extends the ballad paced song for five-and-half overly long minutes. He's a dependable but

somewhat predictable songwriter who lacks a talent for ear catching hooks. Still, the full band arrangements of songs like "Certain Circles," along with Carroll's vocals and odd, lonely lyrics, make The Lost One an enjoyable though somewhat unfulfilling record. **1/2

Jennifer Brantley Break Down Mountainside Records

The Nashville based country music business has always been a fairly small operation. Only a tiny percentage of performers maintain contracts on the limited rosters of the major labels which in turn reach the masses by feeding the restricted play lists of country radio.

In the old days, an artist's failure to get signed by a major label meant that one might as well pack up a U-Haul and head back home. Fortunately there are now other avenues for determined performers; avenues which have allowed Jennifer Brantley to release her own low



key albums. Her 2003 debut On The Other Side was a breath of country fresh air which received widespread internet exposure.

Break Down, is produced by Bill VornDick, who helped shape the career of Nashville maverick Alison Kraus. Unfortunately, as is often the case when independent artists make the leap to larger label, Brantley and her producer do little to distinguish her music from that of her contemporaries. The songs are very much in the mold of present-day country, overly orchestrated snippets with somewhat forced rock touches

tossed in for no good reason. Brantley has a strong voice and VornDick has wisely surrounded it with solid, but thoroughly conventional country arrangements. For the most part she competes successfully with similar singers on major labels but one cannot help but wish she'd trust her instincts and do a bit more to distance herself from the pack. **1/2



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JANUARY 2008

Saturday, January 5, 7:00 PM
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Friday, January 11, 7:00 PM
Meet Sam Davidson and Stephen Moseley, authors of "New Day Revolution!"

Saturday, January 12, 7:00 PM
Marijo Moore presents her Audio CD "Confessions of a Madwoman."

Sunday, January 13, 3:00 PM
Albert LaChance presents a complete reframing of Christianity.

Friday, January 18, 4:00 PM
Julie Cannon will be here to sign copies of "The Romance Reader's Bookclub."

Friday, January 18, 7:00 PM
Jill Conner Browne, one of Malaprop's favorite fun ladies, is back with her newest "Sweet Potato Queens."

Saturday, January 19, 7:00 PM
Suzie Millions will be here for an adult craft night, with her book "Complete Book of Retro Crafts."

Sunday, January 20, 1:00 PM
Karen Chavez will be here to sign copies of "Best Hikes with Dogs".

Friday, January 25, 7:00 PM
Don Salmon will be here with Jan Maslow to discuss Yoga Psychology and the Transformation of Consciousness.

Saturday, January 26, 7:00 PM
Meet author Andy Rae and hear him talk about woodworking, as he shows off "Building Drawers and Doors."

Sunday, January 27, 3:00 PM
Thomas Rain Crowe

Tuesday, January 29, 7:00 PM
Rita Mae Brown, details to come.

Wednesday, January 30, 7:00 PM
Tim Pegram, all about the Blue Ridge Parkway.

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Gotta Go

REVIEWS BY H. BYRON BALLARD

Round Ireland with a Fridge

by Tony Hawks

This may be the funniest travel book ever written. You know you've had too much excellent ale, when you wake to find a note like this by the bed: "I hereby bet Tony Hawks the sum of One Hundred Pounds that he cannot hitchhike around the circumference of Ireland with a fridge within one calendar month."

As the result of this drunken pub-bet, the author undertakes a mystical adventure in the land of poets and martyrs. His story is picked up by RTÉ, Ireland's national radio and TV broadcaster, and people throughout the country keep an eye out for the silly traveler.

The Irish are as eccentric and warm-hearted and hospitable as one could wish and it's a darn good story. Get this one for the first snowy day.

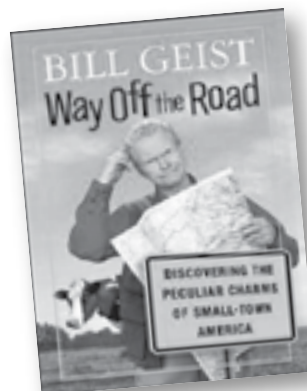


Way Off the Road: Discovering the Peculiar Charms of Small Town America

by Bill Geist

This one's funny, too. Geist is the guy from CBS News *Sunday Morning* and this book contains some of the highlights of 20 years on the road. The history of Hanlon-town, Iowa's, Sundown Days (celebrating the day the sun sets in the middle of the railroad tracks) makes some bizarre sense and the other chapters

contain the equally odd but somehow compelling stories of people and events that gave me hope for the nation.



BOOKS

The December holidays are always a mixed bag, but one sure thing is that by January 3, I'm ready to get out of Dodge. Or I'm at least ready to read about the possibility of escaping the confines of my home and life, and setting out on an adventure in the world. I'm looking longingly at these books for the armchair or literal traveler. And my passport is up to date, as always.

Make the Most of Your Time on Earth: A Rough Guide to the World

1000 Ultimate Travel Experiences

There are a bunch of travel books out now about where to go before you die, where to go when you retire, where to go if you're a kid, etc. This book is for you armchair adventurers, as well as those of you with a taste for adventure. It's a well-researched and well-written guide from my favorite travel guide company.

The *Rough Guides* go beyond the "major monuments and festivals" of most travel guides and dig into the culture of the roads less traveled. They are for serious wanderers who yearn to get off the beaten path.

How To Travel Practically Anywhere

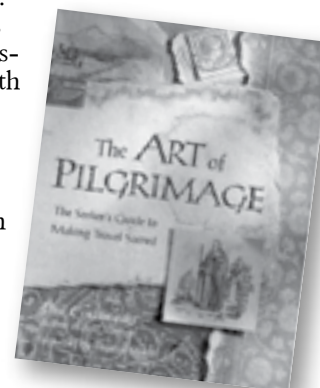
by Susan Stellin

Excellent choice for any one who dreads packing a suitcase for any trip. Stellin gives us all sorts of tips and advice for making a journey away from home and hearth. She tells you the best way to buy tickets, to plan the trip, tips on last minute travel, what and how to pack, and offers lots of resources (web and otherwise). I do a fair amount of traveling and I learned a couple cool tricks from this one.

Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred

by Phil Cousineau

I recommend this book to anyone who is turning a vacation trip into a spiritual journey. Cousineau's book is a classic, filled with inspiration and stories, as well as advice for turning even the simplest trip into a pilgrimage. I used this book for



Go to your local indie bookstore and dream in front of the Travel shelves.

a pilgrimage to Ireland several years ago and it changed my view on travel forever. It's also nicely written and a delight to read (an area in which some travel books fall short).

Roadfood

by Jane and Michael Stern

I'm a foodie and I detest eating the same old nutritionally-challenged and junky fast food wherever I go. This is a super guidebook for finding good food as you cross the country. It's out in a new edition and, sadly, the one entry for Asheville (Battery Park Café and its fabled pies) is gone, but not forgotten.

The food in this book is mostly affordable and always taste-tested (now, that would be a fun job). The Sterns have traveled the country and distilled their culinary experiences into a very readable volume.

100 Places Every Woman Should Go

by Stephanie Elizondo Griest

This is one of those books for a specific demographic and it's full of good advice and tempting adventures for your women's circle or *grrl* group. Divided into 100 tiny chapters, Griest's book takes the reader on a globe-trotting exploration of places of specific interest to women. From surfing in Costa Rica to diving for pearls in Bahrain, there's something here for any woman traveler, from the most timid to the thrill-seeker.

When the wind is whistling past your ears, your colleagues at work are making you consider acts of violence or you just want a refreshing look at how the other people in the world spend their days, go to your local indie bookstore and dream in front of the Travel shelves. There's sure to be a book of traveler's tales or a guide to the Great Lakes or a hilarious memoir of a life lived on the road that will raise your spirits. And maybe even inspire you to get out of town.

Byron Ballard is a local bookseller, writer, gardener and mom who thinks books make the very best get-aways.

BOOKS

Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case

Written by Stuart Taylor Jr. and K.C. Johnson
Thomas Dunne Books, 432 pages

In March, 2006 a black woman from Durham, NC, hired as a stripper for a party organized by Duke University men's lacrosse team, accused three of the team's players, all white, of gang rape.

Michael Nifong, then Durham District Attorney, also white, sensationalized the case to advance his election prospects in a predominantly black district.

The resulting media firestorm focused on polarizing issues of race, class, and privilege. Activists and commentators piled on. Some of the faculty, facilitated by Duke president Richard Brodhead, rushed to judgment of the players in what amounted to a character lynching.

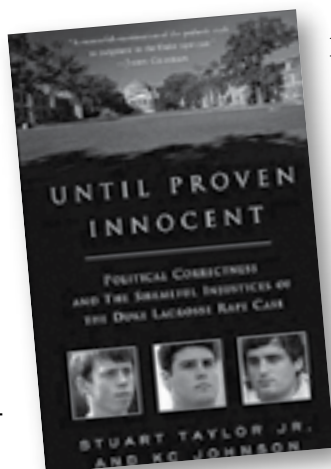
In following months, a legal defense team discovered the DA's case was based on false allegations and showed how one of the three accused was not even present. Nonetheless, Nifong obtained indictments against two of the students, who then surrendered to police. They were released on bail a few hours later.

Pre-trial, the defense showed how the prosecutor invented his case and illegally withheld exculpatory evidence. In December, 2006, Nifong announced that he was dropping all charges. The NC Attorney General condemned the DA's actions. The state Bar Association disbarred Nifong and he stepped down in disgrace.

The authors of *Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case* attempt two points: they claim this case was a terrible injustice and, further, this happened because of "political correctness" on America's campuses. Ironically their book shows how both points simply are not true.

As for injustice, the authors themselves demonstrate how within nine months — very speedy for felony cases — the prosecutor publicly backed down without ever going to trial. Nifong was subjected to ultimate legal censure. The defendants spent an astonishingly small amount of time in custody. Justice was swiftly and surely served.

Political correctness did *not* cause the case. An ideologically motivated back-



The authors jump from narrative to historical background to pure conjecture.

lash by faculty, known as the "Group of 88," accused the entire lacrosse team of hiding a racially motivated crime. This was *after* the DA publicized his charges, not before.

The Group of 88 may well be a manifestation of what authors Taylor and Johnson decry as "liberal political correctness on campus," but it didn't cause Nifong to act. He had all the election season motivation he needed without campus cheerleaders.

The authors paint the Duke faculty Group of 88 as leftist extremists and decadent radicals, an aberrant faction hostile to the mores of the greater Duke community of

students, parents, alumni and trustees. If this were indeed true, why does Duke continue to tolerate it?

Taylor and Johnson raise and then evade the question without convincing answers. They condescendingly dismiss alumni and others as confused or cowed by academic activists — an extremely unlikely possibility given the informed, engaged nature of many Duke supporters. Condescension permeates the text. The authors seem to hold a low opinion of North Carolinians and have little patience with Southerners generally.

This is a dense, painstakingly researched book, but it's a difficult read because the authors lack an essential quality: focus. Taylor and Johnson throw in journalistic reporting, exposé, academic policy critique, history of prosecutorial abuse and thoughts on race relations in North Carolina. They're critical of others for such offenses as unsupported characterizations and then do the same. They jump from narrative to historical background to pure conjecture, yet wander away from their own theses. Considering that this book was produced by a major publishing house, Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, it's a wonder there's so little editorial guidance.

If you're convinced the Duke case is "smoking gun" evidence of a liberal assault on America's values, this book's for you. If you want thoughtful insight and analysis of a painful episode in North Carolina's history, look elsewhere.

Water for Elephants: A Novel

by Sara Gruen
Algonquin Books, 250 pages

This novel by recent transplant to Asheville, Sara Gruen, is a fun book to read. It's the story of Jacob Jankowski's years on the road with a traveling circus — told from his perspective through a series of cinematic flashbacks when he is confined to a nursing home in his 93rd year.

Jacob is a young man in veterinary school in the 1930s. Forced out of his comfortable life by a family calamity, he drops out of school before finishing his final exams — and stows away aboard The Benzini Brothers Circus train. August, the menagerie manager, discovers Jacob's talent for healing animals and allows him to stay with the show.

This circus is a seedy, second rate show, surviving precariously on the edge of one town after another, struggling to survive the hard times of the Depression. Jacob is drawn deeply into the insular community of the show people where he learns the lingo, the unique routines and the customs of their life on the rails. He

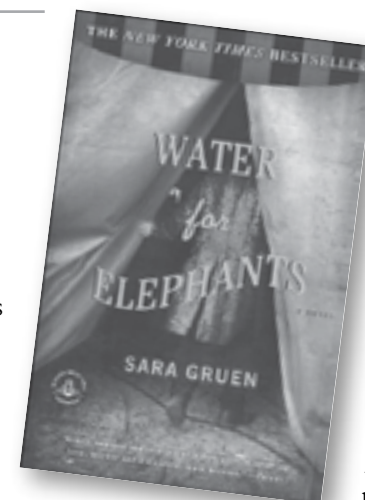
Gruen charms us with the romance of the canvas tops, the smell of the popcorn and the menagerie and the lives of the strange characters drawn to that calling.

falls in love with Marlena, the beautiful young wife of fiercely jealous August.

Marlena has a place near the top of the circus hierarchy. She is a featured performer with a team of 'liberty' horses and also with the elephant, Rosie, who is acquired along the way. Jacob and Marlena try mightily to conceal their illicit affair from August and his violent rages, but that's impossible in the close-knit circus society. A final confrontation becomes unavoidable.

Author Gruen has carefully researched the life and times of the circuses which crisscrossed the country by train, a once common and colorful part of Americana that now seems so distant. Gruen charms us with the romance of the canvas tops, the smell of the popcorn and the menagerie and the lives of the strange

Reviews by John M. Rose



characters drawn to that calling. The center of the story is the romance between Jacob and Marlena and through this, she has woven real-life anecdotes and tales culled from her firsthand interviews with

actual circus performers.

Much of the strength of the novel is the inevitable pairing of comedy and pathos, the hokum of entertainers driven by that curious combination of both affection and contempt for their audiences. The language of stage performers is cruel. "We slayed 'em last night." "This show will be a knockout." "They bombed." The show people travel on the fringe of settled life and they tread a fine line between being welcomed and driven out of town by the police. Loving fantasy and violence are ever present on stage and they are, likewise, at the heart of this excellent story.

For more info on this Asheville author visit www.saragruen.com

John M. Rose is a freelance writer who reviews books and movies for Rapid River.

During the Storm

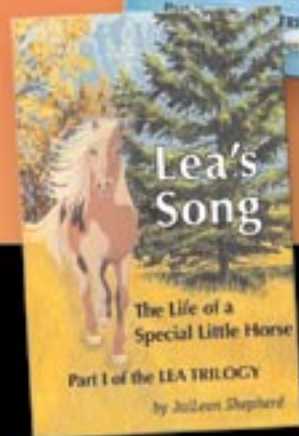
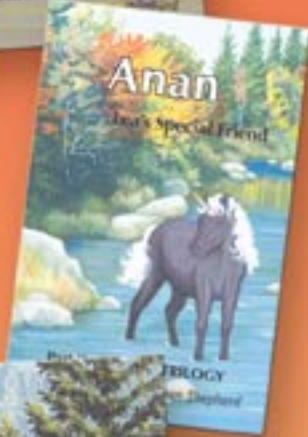
I climb the lightning
I inhale the rain
I grasp the thunder
and wait for
intuitive reminiscences

I descend the flashes
I breathe out the flood
I unleash the turbulence
and then I create...

MARIJO MOORE
CONFESSIONS OF A
MADWOMAN

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REVIEWS BY BOOK EDITOR MARCIANNE MILLER

For Map Lovers

Cartographia: Mapping Civilizations

by Vincent Virga
Little, Brown & Co., 272 pages

If you're one of those travelers who actually likes to go places, see Byron Ballard's great list of get-away books on page 16. But if you're that other kind of traveler, the one like me, one who would rather peruse maps for hours on end than even roll down the car window to take a peak at the passing scenery, you're going



**200 of the most
incredible maps
you've ever seen.**

to be in map lovers' paradise with a gorgeous new book entitled *Cartographia: Mapping Civilizations*.

It's a breathtakingly beautiful volume, put together by Vincent Varga, known as "America's foremost picture editor." It includes 200 of the most incredible maps you've ever seen, all from the Fort Knox of maps, the U.S. Library of Congress. Maps where the earth is round, or square, or covered with monsters, maps drawn on paper, on wood, or stone. Maps showing empires, and warfare, and journeys dreamed and real.

There's the Waldseemüller Map of the World from 1507 which was the first to include the designation "America"; a 17th century map of the soul; and one of my favorites: William Faulkner's hand-drawn 1936 map of the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi.

Tip: Get one of those handheld magnifiers because the print on captions is so small, they're hard to read. Otherwise the book is so exciting, you won't even want to read it for a long time — just turning the pages and enjoying the sheer beauty of the maps and the images of the worlds they create will keep you busy for months.

BOOKS

For Mystery Fans with a Funny Bone

The Spellman Files: A Novel

by Lisa Lutz, Simon & Schuster, 268

Sometimes you just can't face another "serious" novel (apologies, Philip Roth). You love to escape with mysteries, but you're sick of gag-by-gag descriptions of bloody violence (farewell forever, Patricia Cornwell).

The ideal novel for such a time is *The Spellman Files*, a hilarious debut mystery novel by talented newcomer Lisa Lutz. It's totally fun but so well-written you don't feel like you're slumming.

There's enough mystery to keep you wondering, dialogue to make you laugh out loud, and most especially, a dysfunctional family of quirky oddballs that makes you realize, "Hey, my goofy tribe's not so bad after all."

Isabel "Izzy" Spellman, 28, lives in a Victorian mansion in San Francisco which serves as home and offices for Spellman Investigations, the private investigation firm run by her parents, for which she has worked since she was 14.

Poor Izzy has little experience knocking on doors because she's more used to picking the lock or climbing through the window. It's hard for her to have a normal conversation because she's much more used to snooping, wiretapping, steam-opening envelopes, and figuring out how to perform

blackmail — in other words invading other people's privacy is as automatic as breathing. Kinda hard to get a normal hunky guy to fall in love with you with that kind of baggage.

Izzy decides she wants a real job with normal people. Her parents agree to let her go on condition she do one last job — solve an old case that remains open on their books. Reluctantly, never one to

trust parents whose careers are spent manipulating people, Izzy agrees and then of course gets more and more involved with weird people who don't give up their secrets easily.

Her best friend starts sneaking out on dates with her horrible perfect brother, a yuppie attorney. She has the hots for a dentist who plays golf. Her uncle disappears on a bender. Then her little sister gets kidnapped. You get the idea.

Lisa Lutz is a writer to watch and *The Spellman Files* is a novel to curl up with and then share it with your friends.



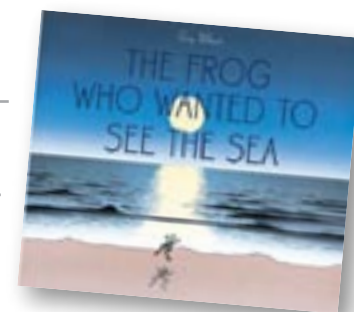
**Izzy gets more and more
involved with weird people
who don't give up their
secrets easily.**

For Children

The Frog Who Wanted to See the Sea

Written and illustrated by Guy Billout
The Creative Company, 32 pages, ages 4-8

Alice is a small frog who lives in a pond but dreams of bigger waters. Off she goes on her lily pad. In a moment of both "joy and fright," she finds herself on an endless ocean of blue. In her grand adventure Alice learns that neither she nor the world is always one thing or another. In a flawless combination of minimalist writing and artwork reminiscent of Japanese prints, award-winning children's book author/illustrator Guy Billout creates a beguiling modern day fairy tale that adults will love reading out loud to children — and themselves.



BOOKS

Plain Secrets: An Outsider Among the Amish

by Joe Mackall, Beacon Press, 208 pages

On Sundays when I was growing up in suburban Cleveland, my father would take the family for drives into “Amish country.” I remember fondly the thrill of seeing real-live horse drawn black buggies and children in old-timey clothes.

I’d stare in awe at the well behaved Amish youngsters, wondering what it would be like have brothers who weren’t always threatening to “pound your head off.” My mother inadvertently stoked my Amish fantasies when she revealed she thought that there had to be an Amish person somewhere in our family tree since, she claimed, Miller was a common Amish name.

There is indeed an Amish town in Ohio called Millersburg. After I got my driver’s license, I would travel to Millersburg by myself and shyly cruise the village streets, hoping God would send a long-lost Amish cousin my way. Alas, no luck. I remained an all-too ordinary mostly-Irish melting pot Catholic. My Miller ancestor, it turns out, came from England, not Switzerland from where the Amish emigrated.

I’m not the only non-Amish American, or “English” as the Amish call us, who idealized them. Ever since the popularity of the 1985 movie *Witness*, especially its iconic barn-raising sequence, the Amish have increasingly been objects of curiosity — and tourist appeal — in the states where they live. Their tight-knit families and protective communities inspire nostalgic longing for a time when people were closer to the land, and, we imagine, to one another.

But few non-Amish really know the Amish because most of them, true to their traditional ways, have only surface contact with the outside world. They hold sacred one of their main Biblical directives: “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” (II Corinthians 6:17)

Plain Secrets, by Ohio writer Joe Mackall, is a fascinating and extremely rare look at the most conservative of the Old Order Amish sects, the Swartzentrubers. These devoutly religious people live without electricity, indoor plumbing, telephones, cars, birth control or military service. They bathe only once a

week, wear strictly regimented clothing and receive no education beyond the 8th grade.

The men sometimes take jobs away from the farms, such as in construction and local manufacturing plants, but often charge lower fees than non-Amish workers to avoid competition for material wealth.

The women marry young, obey their husbands, and work from sunup to sundown. Like other Amish sects, the Swartzentrubers don’t proselytize, and have no church buildings, but gather every other Sunday in their homes. They reject insurance of any kind and claim no social security benefits, taking care of their injured and elderly by themselves. Despite



REVIEWS BY BOOK EDITOR MARCIANNE MILLER

Mackall sees himself with new eyes, and adjusts his priorities.

their rigid and isolated lifestyle, almost 90% of Swartzentruber children choose to remain in the religion of their birth.

For ten years in Ashland County Ohio, Mackall and his family lived next door to a Swartzentruber family. They were the Shetlers: young patriarch Sam, mother Mary, and their nine children. Though the two families never socialized in public, they did become friendly, and Mackall came to know them, especially Sam, as few outsiders ever have.

He was struck often by how his neighbors’ experience of the world differed from his. They knew no advertising jingles, no movie references, had no knowledge of global terrorism and never felt the lack of these things. For the Shetlers life is not easy, but simple — everything from the smallest details of life — the width of a boy’s hat brim, to the largest, including the tragic death of a child, are the result of God’s will.

With respect and affection, Mackall tells stories that demonstrate what he admires about the Swartzentrubers, a long list of beautiful and peaceful attributes that are testaments to the community’s skill and self-sufficiency. From his neighbors, Mackall sees himself with new eyes, and adjusts his priorities, becoming more in tune with the rhythms of natural life.

On the other hand, Mackall is never blind to the problems such insular groups have, such as the rejection of labor-saving technology, the squelching of individuality, and the specter of genetic diseases that are endemic to closed societies, including some Mormon sects. For girls especially, Mackall points out the lack of opportunity they endure — the rigid patriarchy of the Swartzentruber traditions preclude any semblance of fulfillment outside the roles of wife and mother.

Mackall’s observations provide a balanced perspective of the advantages and disadvantages of close-knit groups. For all those who voice dreams of creating community, especially in Asheville where the word “community” is often called on as an ubiquitous mission statement in just about any course of action, *Plain Secrets* offers valuable insights on how such an ideal might work in reality.

Marcianne Miller is an Asheville-based author and critic with a background in archaeology and TV and film production. Contact her at marci@aquamystique.com

Poems from Snow Hill

by Brent Martin, New Native Press, www.newnativepress.com

There’s a newly published poet in western North Carolina and a mighty voice he has.

Brent Martin hails from the Cowee community near Franklin in Macon County. A forest conservation specialist by trade, by avocation, it seems he’s a professional observer. Of nature, particularly birds and the plants he sees while passing them, of history and the men who walked these woods before, and of people, fascinating strangers and intimates who live nearby. I’ve never been to Cowee, but when I do go there, it will be familiar territory because Martin’s words have brought it to life. His poems are like photographs from a treasured album, some old-timey sepia, others blazing in intense color, a few wide shots, but mostly finely focused close-ups.

At first glance, *Poems from Snow Hill* seemed slight. There are only 20 poems, each on its own page. I soon realized, however, that this was a blessing. Being so lightweight, I could take the volume everywhere, so last month Mr.



Martin was my companion in long lines in the post office and in doctor’s waiting rooms. At night, instead of reading one or two poems at a time, I could easily re-read all of them. By the time I started writing this column, I’d read the entire collection a half dozen times and never tired of a one because each reading revealed something new and thrilling I hadn’t caught before.

Martin’s perspective is that of a mature man, thus his poems are full of insights that young poets just don’t have yet. But don’t let the word “maturity” mislead you. There’s a ruggedness in these poems that is intoxicating (in fact, I wouldn’t put it past Mr. Martin to have tipped a few local brews now and then) and I’m sure a good manly brawl isn’t something he finds too distasteful. Like all eco-activists, he must have had heated words with those on the opposite side of environmental issues, but few of them, I’m sure, would retell those disagreements with his fantasies of heavenly justice and sly humor.

The Fist Fight in Heaven

In my steamy dream
this is the last shower
and soon I will be seated
somewhere down the line
to the right of the right hand
of my old Michelangelo God,
who sternly watches
my every move.

Still not free, I will at last
see you in a different light —
our fights about zoning codes
and floodplain ordinances
receding into dim memory.

I imagine you approach me
with a golden halo —
I am, frankly, a little surprised.

God gives a half-smiling nod,
waves a fat finger at
our diminishing past,
and looks away
toward an eternal sunset’s
red-rimmed clouds.

Feeling as confident as David,
I say goodbye to it all
and calmly punch you out.

- BRENT MARTIN
POEMS FROM SNOW HILL

BOOKS

Two of Asheville's Favorite Writers at Malaprop's in January

As if being named *Rapid River's* new poetry editor (see page 12) weren't enough excitement for Marijo Moore this month, she also cut a CD.



In *Confessions of a Madwoman: An Oral Journey*, Moore reads her poems ("sultry" and "inspiring" are the words friends use to describe her reading voice). The

poems are accompanied by wonderfully original music by Doll Imago — piano infused with electronic soundscapes and organic rhythms. Now both women plan a live performance at Malaprop's. Quite a lineup for Saturday night at a bookstore! (www.marijomoores.com)

Where: Malaprop's Bookstore and Café.
When: Saturday, January 12, 7:00 pm.

Thomas Rain Crowe reads from his acclaimed novel of love stories, *The House of Girls*. (See last month's *Rapid River* book section for our positive take on this fascinating first novel from one of our mountain's most compelling writers.)

Crowe's readings are always exciting affairs because his friends — our fair city's most shining luminaries in literature, art, music, theatre and storytelling — show up, because there's nothing quite like a great storyteller doing his magic on a Sunday afternoon.

Where: Malaprop's Bookstore & Café
When: Sunday, January 27, 3:00 pm.

Tip: Both of these writers are very popular with Asheville readers, so get to the store early to get a snack and a good seat.



Now Hear This

The Darkest Evening of the Year

by Dean Koontz, Read by Kirsten Kairos
Random House Audio, unabridged, 12 hours

Unspeakable evil. Or selfless and courageous good. In his characters Dean Koontz never fails to differentiate between the two. His bad guys are really bad and his good guys are really good. You never have to wonder about who to hiss at and who to root for--and you never get let down in the end.

Darkest Evening is Koontz' latest yarn and it's a winner, especially on audio where the voice of narrator Kirsten Kairos makes the story even more compelling than it would be on the page. Moonglow is a nasty malevolent woman who believes the most horrific thing on the planet is boredom.

When she's bored, she chooses a person or place at random to set on fire. When she's finished with her deadly arson, she goes home to have a sandwich and torture her 10-year-old daughter. Her dark partner, Harrow, is amused by Moonglow's eccentricities. He thinks their sex is terrific and he has a dark foul secret of his own.

Amy Redwing and her fiancé Brian McCarthy are the best of the good people: Amy loves Brian. Brian loves Amy. Amy is a legend among animal activists for rescuing golden retrievers. Nickie, her latest rescue, is an Alpha to

every dog she meets.

More uncanny than the average brilliant golden retriever, Nickie "knows" things. Amy and Brian both have pasts they'd rather not think about--would you believe they both have old connections with monster Moonglow and her vile lover?

Simplistic? It isn't. But it's damn good and interwoven, as with all Koontz books, with threads of humor and horror, and a touch of the miraculous.

I've read every Koontz book on unabridged audio and never cease to be amazed at how enjoyable they are. Like spinach, Dean Koontz is not for everybody, but if you haven't read him before on audio, *The Darkest Evening of the Year* may be the perfect book to start with. If you're a fan, then you already know it's time to order the book from the library or buy a copy for yourself.

REVIEW BY LONNIE DARR

Writer/photographer Lonnie Darr is an avid audiobook reader.

www.scapegoattheatre.org

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Thursday - Saturday 7:30 PM
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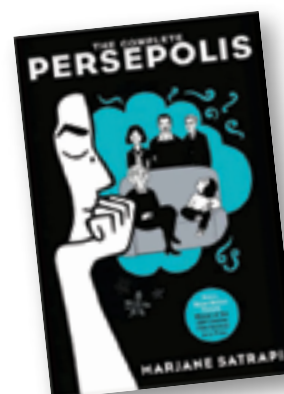
*References to Salvador Dali
Make Me Hot*
by Jose Rivera

Tickets : 350.9090 or www.ncstage.org
Sponsored in part by Blue Goldsmith

Books into Movies

The Complete Persepolis

Pantheon paperback, 352 pages



Persepolis, first published in 2004, was a well-received graphic

novel that helped kick off the graphic novel movement that is so robust today. Reading a novel in this format is an exciting new experience that can, literally, transform the meaning of the word "literary" for you. *Persepolis* is the unforgettable story of a privileged girl's childhood in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution and its subsequent turmoil, told in a series of striking B&W comic strips.

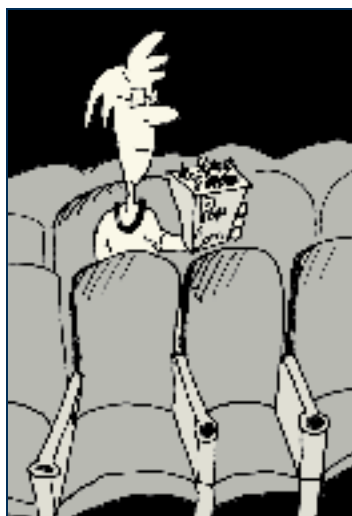
Writer/illustrator Marjane Satra-

pi's acclaimed memoir is both sweet and terrible, deeply personal and troublingly political, a rare perspective of a particular time and place that speaks to people everywhere. The full-length animated version of the story, made in France, will show here in Asheville in a few months.

The latest version of the book combines the two volumes of the series (*Persepolis* and *Persepolis 2*) into one. Read it now and enjoy anticipating the film.

REVIEW BY MARCIANNE MILLER,
RAPID RIVER BOOK EDITOR

Marcianne Miller is an Asheville-based writer and critic. Contact her at marci@aquamystique.com



Good movies make you care,
make you believe in possibilities again.
— Pauline Kael

January Movies with MARCIANNE MILLER

For the latest reviews, theater info
and movie show times, visit
www.rapidrivermagazine.com

- ★★★★★-Fantastic
- ★★★★-Pretty darn good
- ★★★-Has some good points
- ★★-The previews lied
- ★-Only if you must
- ☹-Forget entirely

January's Guest Critics:

Roxane Clement is an ardent movie fan who was raised by an equally ardent Pauline Kael fan.

Chip Kaufmann is a film historian who also shares of his love of classical music as a program host on WCQS-FM radio.

Michelle Keenan, Director of Listener Support at WCQS-FM, loves all movies, especially 1930s screwball comedies.

Sierra Bicking, Teen Reviewer, prefers movies that show teenagers as brilliant and brave.

Atonement ★★★★★

Short Take: An old-fashioned British WWII drama that is astonishingly beautiful and easy to understand. You'll cry, but feel good.

Fans of Ian McEwan's emotional three-part 1998 novel *Atonement* will be happy with this film version, and those who don't know the book can still enjoy the movie thoroughly. It's a heartbreaking romance, a war story, and a journey of atonement, all wrapped up in the haunting power of the written word.

It's that gorgeously elegant time between world wars at a sprawling estate in England — the interiors are palatial and the grounds are so extensive that a

Note: There is the use of a word in Atonement that some people might find offensive. The word is essential to the story so the filmmakers couldn't leave it out. It's in the scene when Robbie writes his raunchy letter and Cecelia reads it. It's seen, not heard, and once the scenes are over that's the end of it.

cinematographer such as Seamus McGarvey (*World Trade Center*, *Sahara*) can go into ecstasy with the breathtaking natural beauty. The women have flawless skin and are draped in slinky silk dresses, the men wear exquisitely tailored slacks and shiny shoes. Everybody smokes, showing off their high cheekbones. The rich are very rich and everyone else is not, the latter certainly being servants or treated as if they were.



James McAvoy and Keira Knightley are war-tossed lovers.

The movie begins with typewriter keys pounding enthusiastically and echoing throughout the mansion as 13-year-old Briony Tallis races to present her mother with her latest creative opus — a play that she insists the weekend guests perform that afternoon in honor of her older brother's visit. Briony (in a mesmerizing performance by Saoirse Ronan) is in the throes of hormonal yearnings and her fanciful imagination often skews the truth.

Briony's older sister is Cecelia (Keira Knightley, *Pride and Prejudice*), a languorous beauty who has finally realized she's madly in love with her childhood playmate, the housekeeper's educated son, Robbie Turner (James McAvoy,

Becoming Jane). Robbie, meanwhile, home from Cambridge, is in his servants' cottage fantasizing about Cecelia. On his typewriter, he amuses himself by churning out a raunchy love note to her. He puts that note aside for a more genteel handwritten version. But he accidentally puts the naughty note in the envelope. For this fleeting lapse of attention, Robbie will pay dearly. Typewriter keys pulse ominously throughout the movie's sound track, reverberating like longing dreams or nails driving into a coffin.

During a sweltering summer weekend, the crowded household becomes a hothouse. Desires are fevered and resistance melted — and a nosy little girl sees things she doesn't understand. Briony lies, accusing Robbie of sexually assaulting her cousin. Though only a child, Briony is upper class, and Robbie is still a servant's son. He's dragged off by the police and sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit.

The war comes and life as everyone on the estate once knew it ends forever. Four years later, war-weary Army private Robbie is in the devastated French countryside trying to get back to his unit. In

London, Cecilia is an experienced nurse, and now grown-up Briony (Romola Garai (*Amazing Grace*) is in nurse's training. The two sisters haven't spoken since that terrible summer night. Briony, ever the fantasist, longs to atone for her sins. She rehearses how Cecelia and Robbie will accept her apologies.

The lovers meanwhile keep their ro-

Sisters Keira Knightley and Saoirse Ronan enjoy the good life before WWII.



Keira Knightley longs for love in the beautiful 5-star drama *Atonement*.

mance alive by letter. "Come back, come back to me," Cecelia begs Robbie. "I will return," Robbie promises. "Find you, love you, marry you and live without shame." They dream of being together in a cabin by the sea. But fate has other ideas. The sea becomes the location of the enormous evacuation at Dunkirk. Using what may be the longest, most incredible single moving shot in film history, director Joe Wright (*Pride and Prejudice*) creates an unforgettable tableau of the madness of war.

Decades later, Briony, now a famous novelist (Vanessa Redgrave, *Evening*) reveals what happened to Cecelia and Robbie. Your tears may flow at this point. Or you'll be like me, so caught up by the sheer artistry of the film's magic that you'll remain enchanted.

Atonement is beautiful, poignant, harsh and gentle — a real old-fashioned big movie. See it.

Rated R for disturbing war images, language and some sexuality.

Review by Marciann Miller

The Bucket List ★★

Short Take: Two dying men live their last days to the fullest before they "kick the bucket."

This movie made me want to throw tomatoes at the screen. It's about two old coots who throw caution — and their families — to the winds so they can have the time of their lives before cancer does them in. Good thing megalomaniac Edward Cole (Jack Nicholson, *The Departed*) has money to burn so he can pick up the tab for his new unlikely pal, poor, hard-working auto mechanic Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman, *Gone Baby Gone*). Instead of creating memories for their families, these two goofballs pursue thrilling globe-trotting experiences for themselves. No volunteering at the soup

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kitchen, no donations to the starving people in Darfur for this self-absorbed duo. Oh, no, wads of cash are spent helping these guys pretend they're making up for lost time. Being a paint-by-numbers Hollywood push-the-emotional-triggers flick (director Rob Reiner hasn't done anything really great since 1989's *When*



Among many other things, Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman go sky diving in *The Bucket List*.

Harry Met Sally, so you can't blame him too much), Carter's abandoned wife, Virginia (Beverly Todd, *Ascension Day*) smiles wanly when her ever-so-righteous still faithful husband finally drags his sorry ass home in his fancy new suit, and Edward's estranged daughter and the granddaughter he never saw hug him gleefully. Oh, pulleeeeee.

Rated PG-13 for language, including a sexual reference.

Review by Marcianne Miller

Charlie Wilson's War

★★★★1/2

Short Take: A Texas congressman finds it's quite a trip from a hot tub to the hotbed of the Cold War.

"Good time Charlie" Wilson, a boozing, womanizing Texas congressman finally uses his considerable skills to accomplish something significant. Directed by Mike Nichols (*Closer*), this movie's real-life events are more filmic, and certainly funnier, than most fiction. We first encounter Wilson (Tom Hanks, *The Da Vinci Code*) soaking in a hot tub in Las Vegas, surrounded by strippers, being coaxed into backing a television project that's "like *Dallas*, but it's Washington." This becomes prophetic as the film unfolds, depicting the nation's capitol peopled with efficient, voluptuous women and neurotic, bombastic men. The cast of *Dallas* had nothing on this group.

Wilson's political savvy is nicely revealed early on when he adroitly defuses a potential brouhaha in his district over the public display of a Nativity scene. His

meeting with the local big whig features a great shot of their cowboy boots, and there's never a doubt whose boots are going to win. His knowledge of the geography of the Persian Gulf, and his ability to navigate the corridors of power in DC also show us that, more than anything else, Charlie Wilson knows the lay of the land.

When he is approached by the wealthy, ultra-conservative Joanne Herring (Julia Roberts, *Ocean's Twelve*) to take on the cause of delivering Afghanistan from Soviet occupation, Wilson considers it an advantage that he is currently under investigation for cocaine use. Knowing the penchant the American public has for any scandal involving sex or drugs, he figures it will create a useful diversion. He finds in Joanne his own diversion, and their deal is well lubricated with whiskey and love-making. Through her considerable connections, Joanne sets up a meeting between Wilson and Pakistani President Zia ul-Hak. Things don't look promising, however, when Wilson leaves the meeting muttering to his assistant, "I was just told I have 'character flaws' by someone who hanged his predecessor in a military coup."

Wilson does agree to go on a tour of the refugee camps on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and the horrors he encounters there compel him into action. Over the course of the next nine years, Wilson, who is a member of the House's Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, increases spending on covert operations in Afghanistan from \$5 million to \$1 billion, the largest covert operation in history. This escalation of support eventually brings down the Red Army.

Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts display their usual skills in bringing their characters to life, but even more compelling is Philip Seymour Hoffman's (*Capote*) breathtaking performance as Gust Avrakotos, a Greek-American CIA operative who pieces together the diverse elements of the operation.

Charlie Wilson's War is written by Aaron Sorkin (*The West Wing*) and George Crile from his book of the same name. Under Nichols' direction, the political scene of 1980s Washington is cleverly and satirically distilled. President Reagan is a shadowy figure at best, glimpsed only in a small, standard issue



Julie Roberts is a rich conservative and Tom Hanks is a not-so-rich congressman in *Charlie Wilson's War*, a comedy with serious overtones.

photo, while Joanne Herring, who wields real power, is first seen in a regal, full-length portrait. The outrageous corruption is light-hearted, but more than a little disturbing.

The film ends on a prophetic note as Avrakotos recounts to Wilson the Zen parable of the boy and the horse in which each turn of

fortune is answered with an eerie refrain of "We'll see..." In 1989, the Afghan freedom fighters, largely due to the efforts of Charlie Wilson, were able to defeat the Soviets. Ironically, this Texas congressman, a man of true patriotic zeal, unwittingly supported the rise of one famous freedom fighter, Osama Bin Laden.

Rated R: Strong language, nudity and sexual language, and some drug use.

Review by Roxane Clement

The Golden Compass

Short Take: Thrilling, spectacular, sparkling — it just needs another half-hour in length.

I absolutely loved this movie. What of it there was.

Forced by marketing demands to have a happy ending instead of the sad one of the Philip Pullman novel on which the movie is based, writer/director Chris Weitz (*About a Boy*) ended up cutting short his film and the audience. *Compass* sparkles in every way — performances, sets, special effects, costumes, props — except pace.

The story is so rushed you don't have a moment to relax and marvel. Let's hope the DVD comes out soon — and with a long director's cut that includes all the scenes he had to leave out.

The Golden Compass takes place in a parallel universe, meaning some things are like they are in real-life on planet Earth and other things are fanciful. Thus you have snooty professors and gentle witches,



Lyra Belacqua and the great armored bear ride north to the rescue.

Nazi-like evil scientists and talking bears, sailing ships and armored dirigibles. Annoying men hold most of the power here, yet the story's lead is a feisty young girl and the most evil of all the characters is a gorgeous, intelligent woman.

My favorite aspects of this world are the daemons (pronounced *dee-mons*). These creatures have nothing to do with devils. They are animals who are the outward manifestation of the souls of human beings. Children's daemons change shape all the time, thus a child can have a squirrel one minute, a cat another, and a firefly the next. When people reach adulthood, their daemons settle on their final forms. Since it is the representation of a person's soul, a daemon is as much a part of a human being as their heart is. It's too horrifying to even contemplate what would happen to a person if they were separated from their daemon.

Lyra Belacqua (played wondrously by English newcomer Dakota Blue Richards) lives in Jordan College (think Oxford) and runs around the ancient buildings like a feral child. She's supposed to be getting a formal education, but mostly she's the beneficiary of benign neglect, preferring to get her lessons from street urchins. Her daemon, Pantalaimon (voiced by Freddie Highmore, *August Rush*) known as Pan, is exhausted from changing form all the time to get Lyra out of scrapes she gets them into.

Lyra's hero is her uncle, the dashing Lord Asriel (Daniel Craig (*The Invasion*),

who makes an all-too-fleeting cameo appearance. Lord Asriel informs the scholars of his scientific investigation into "dust" and dust's proof of the existence of other universes. His theories are shocking, repulsive — they're heresy. As if religious free-thinking weren't enough to worry about, something equally terrifying is happening in the streets of London — children are disappearing.

First the missing children come mostly from the ranks of the Gypsies, the gypsy-like tribes who inhabit the rivers, but soon children are being stolen

closer to the bastions of power — one day Lyra's closest friend, the cook's son Roger (played by Ben Walker, who was

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so terrific as the boy Tobias in *Sweeney Todd*), disappears.

At a banquet at the college, a rare female scholar, Mrs. Coulter (Nicole Kidman, *The Invasion*) makes a jaw-dropping entrance, strutting ever so seductively



Newcomer Dakota Blue Richards studies her truth-telling device in the sparkling fantasy of a parallel universe, *The Golden Compass*.

down the aisle in a glittery form-fitting gown, with her golden-haired monkey daemon trailing behind her. Lyra is in awe. So when she's sent to live with Mrs. Coulter to learn how to be more lady-like, Lyra at first thinks she's landed in girl heaven. At first.

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Hendersonville Film Society: January 2008

The Hendersonville Film Society starts off the new year with a sampler program of the types of movies we feature throughout the year. They fall into four basic categories; Forgotten Films, Foreign Films, Classic Films, and Cult Films.

January 6 A Cottage on Dartmoor

This late silent offering from England is a significant rediscovery filled with astounding camerawork, lighting, and some of the fastest editing for the time. The story of a man's escape from prison and how he got there is tense and shocking and evokes early Alfred Hitchcock.

Dir: Anthony Asquith
1929. Silent w/music score.
Black & White - 89 minutes.

January 13 Black Book

This acclaimed Dutch film is set during the end of World War II and tells the story of a Jewish girl who narrowly survives the war in Holland. She joins the Resistance and goes undercover to find out who betrayed her family after all of them are killed while attempting to flee.

Dir: Paul Verhoeven
2006. In Dutch & German w/subtitles. Color - 145 minutes.

January 20 Don Giovanni

This movie adaptation of Mozart's greatest opera was filmed on location in Vicenza, Italy. It features top-notch performances from singers Ruggiero Raimondi (*Don Giovanni*), Kiri Te Kanawa (*Elvira*), and Jose Van Dam (*Leporello*). The music is performed by the Paris Opera Orchestra and Chorus led by Lorin Maazel.



Sebastian Koch is a Gestapo officer whom Carice van Houten is sent to seduce, but falls in love with in Paul Verhoeven's *Black Book*. The film has been included in many critics' top ten films for 2007.

BY CHIP KAUFMANN

Dir: Joseph Losey
1979. In Italian w/subtitles.
Color - 176 minutes.

January 27 Jonathan Livingston Seagull

Based on Richard Bach's best selling novel, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* is a cinematic achievement of stunning beauty. This timeless tale will open your heart to wonder and dare you to dream. Imagine *Siddhartha* and *Winged Migration* combined. It features a Grammy Award-winning score by Neil Diamond.

Dir: Hall Bartlett
1973. Color - 99 minutes.

If you go

Hendersonville Film Society Screenings, Sundays at 2pm. Smoky Mountain Theatre in the Lake Pointe Landing Retirement Community. 333 Thompson Street, right behind the Epic Cinemas. Call Elaine Ciampi at (828) 697-7310. Open to all. Donations accepted.

TEEN REVIEWER:

Juno

Short Take: In a fresh, down-to-earth movie, a pregnant teen has to deal with a situation "way beyond her maturity level."

This one struck close to home. Why? Because I've seen it happen. I've seen girls disappear from school for months because they've gotten pregnant, and this movie reflects the reality of what they go through. Here in the US, thousands of girls become pregnant every year (an estimated 750,000 in 2006) and will have to decide whether to have the baby or get an abortion. These are extremely tough decisions for girls who are barely able to deal with the emotional jungle of teenhood. No matter what hard choice they make, their lives will never be the same again.

Juno (*Ellen Page, X-Men: The*



Film critic Sierra Bicking lives in Asheville.

Juno reviewed by Sierra Bicking

Last Stand is a tell-it-like-it-is girl who gets pregnant by her sweet but oblivious boyfriend Bleeker (*Michael Cera, Superbad*). Now she must face the giant decisions of whether to give up the baby for adoption (and if so, to whom?) or to have an abortion. Luckily, Juno oddly has laid-back par-

ents who take her pregnancy in stride and support all of her decisions. Juno is also unusual in that she doesn't seem to mind being ostracized at school, never having fit in in the first place. Quirky and independent, she cavalierly makes the decision to have the baby, then goes about choosing its future parents. Of course nothing is ever that easy, and as Juno's belly grows, so does the anxiety it causes to everyone involved, and Juno

must find the maturity to make a final giant decision.

At last a fresh, down-to-earth movie about teenagers! Somehow director Jason Reitman (*Thank You for Smoking*) made a film (from a script by young female writer Diablo Cody) that addresses teenage pregnancy without preaching. The choice Juno faces, pro-choice vs. pro-life, is very understated. She could have gone either way.

Much more attention was given to Juno's relationships with her parents, her boyfriend, and her baby's adoptive parents. This makes for a richer and more interesting movie that has the



Juno MacGuff and her boyfriend Paulie Bleeker try to deal with her pregnancy in the touching comedy, *Juno*.

freedom to address the issues that are really important to teenagers, like "Who am I?" "Will my boyfriend stay with me?" and "Where do I go from here?"

The movie also provides true entertainment, with oddly

likeable characters and wacky situations. All in all, *Juno* is a movie everyone can enjoy and teenage girls can relate to.

Rated PG-13 for mature thematic material, sexual content and language.

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Lyra runs away from Mrs. Coulter — and soon she's off to the frozen north to rescue Roger from the kidnapping "gobblers," release Lord Asriel from the marauding Tartars, and find out the truth about "dust." Guiding her is a strange and wonderful golden compass, an alethiometer, which helps her determine the truth of things.

Lyra is befriended by a cowboy aeronaut (Sam Elliot, *Ghost Rider*), an ethereal witch, (Eva Green, *Casino Royale*), a kindly old Gypcian (Tom Courtenay, *Nicholas Nickleby*) and the grandest creature in the parallel universe, the magnificent warrior bear Iorek Byrnison (voiced by Ian McKellen, *Lord of the Rings*' Gandalf). What a cast!

The subsequent escapades match both the energy of the characters and the creative genius of the filmmakers, so you're in for a spectacular, if speedy ride. This is a children's movie, so unlike the book, there's no blood in the battles — unrealistic but also refreshing. The magic of *The Golden Compass* mightily outweighs its flaws. See it for what works. And let what's wrong whizz on by.

Note: There is information on *The Golden Compass* all over the internet. Also the official website of the movie is superb: www.goldencompassmovie.com.

Rated PG-13 for sequences of fantasy violence.

Review by Marcianne Miller

I Am Legend

Short Take: Surprisingly good and very scary update with terrific B-movie roots.

I Am Legend is the third film version of the durable Richard Matheson novel of 1954. It's also the first one to use the original title. The story is set in Los Angeles where Robert Neville appears to be the only survivor of a mysterious plague that turned the rest of the world's population into creatures with vampire-like tendencies (aversion to light, garlic and crosses). He spends his daylight hours killing the "vampires" and his nights protecting his home against their attacks. He also dwells on his fate as the last person alive until one day he sees a woman out during the day just like him. I'll stop right there, for to say anymore would spoil the rest of the story for those who don't know it.

The first film version was a black and white low budget affair that was shot in Italy in 1964 with Vincent Price and an Italian cast. Matheson himself wrote the screenplay but was dissatisfied with certain script changes and was credited under the pseudonym Logan Swanson.

It comes as no surprise that despite his reservations, this is the most faithful version to the original and is very effective thanks to a low-key performance by Price and scenes that look forward to *Night of the Living Dead* (1968).

Up next was 1971's *The Omega Man* starring Charlton Heston. It bears little resemblance to the original story. The setting is still Los Angeles but this time the "plague" is the result of a chemical warfare accident. The victims all become albinos, wear hooded robes like penitents, and are led by a former news anchorman turned messiah who looks disturbingly like John Lennon. Although Heston is surprisingly good, the rest of the film has the look and feel of a made-for-TV movie.

Here it is 2007 and the new Will Smith (*I, Robot*) version follows in the footsteps of its predecessors as a dramatically altered version of the original novel. This time around the setting is New York and the plague is caused by a doctor (Emma Thompson, *Stranger Than Fiction*, in an uncredited appearance) whose "miracle cure" for cancer goes horribly awry, creating not "vampires" but subhuman rabid creatures that are violently aggressive.

The trailers advertised yet another big budgeted CGI fest featuring one of the hottest actors on the planet and my first reaction was (yawn), "I can hardly wait." Well, I was wrong.

Despite the big budget (\$150 million), *I Am Legend* is a throwback to a type of old-fashioned moviemaking where script and performance are the key elements. The effects are just window dressing to enhance the story, not an end unto themselves.

There have been a number of complaints regarding the CGI mutants who do resemble something out of a videogame, but for me that was part of the film's B-movie roots and I didn't have a problem with it. Neither did the audience I saw it with. In fact, they were spellbound throughout by what *didn't* happen. Most of the first half of the film has no music. There's just Will Smith and sound effects, which forces the audience to focus more intently, allowing them to be scared by what they anticipate. This



Will Smith is the last man alive on earth in the scary sci-fi thriller, *I Am Legend*.

harks back to the classic Val Lewton films of the 1940s, such as *Cat People*.

Will Smith gives a restrained and moving performance as Robert Neville, making us feel the character's loneliness and despair even as he remains determined to find a cure. Director Francis Lawrence (*Constantine*) uses flashbacks to great effect throughout the film and the script by co-writers by Mark Protosevich (*The Cell*) and Akiva Goldsman (*The Da Vinci Code*) update Matheson's original novel while remaining true to the central points in it.

All in all I found *I Am Legend* to be

much better than I expected and it is easily the best of all the novel's film adaptations because it has the advantage of a bigger budget, a more focused script, and the central performance of its star. It's also very effective. As I left the theatre I overheard some jaded high school boys muttering, "That's the scariest movie I ever saw." Maybe there's still hope left for mankind after all.

Rated PG-13 for intense sequences of sci-fi action and violence.

Review by Chip Kaufmann

I'm Not There

Short Take: Ambitious. Audacious. Ambiguous. Not your father's biopic.

Director Todd Haynes' new film on the life and career of Bob Dylan is definitely not a standard straightforward look at a celebrated musical figure, ala *Ray* or *Walk the Line*. Rather it's a multi-faceted look at what it means to be Bob Dylan and the effect of his music on the mindset of a generation of people and other musicians.

To begin with, there are no less than six "Bob Dylans" in the film, ranging from a black teenage boy (Marcus Carl Franklin in his feature debut) to a woman (Cate Blanchett,

Elizabeth: The Golden Age) to a grizzled resident of a Western town (Richard Gere, *Hoax*). Furthermore, none of these characters is called Bob Dylan but are given names like Jack Rollins (Christian Bale, *Rescue Dawn*), Robbie Clark (Heath Ledger, *Casanova*), and even real-life poet Arthur Rimbaud (Ben Whishaw, *Perfume*). Each one represents a different aspect of Dylan's personality as he evolved over the years. It's hard to think of another popular artist who's been around as long or has undergone as many changes in his life and career.

Director Todd Haynes is an unconventional filmmaker who has made only five feature films over a period of 16 years, with only one (2002's *Far From Heaven*) having reached a mainstream audience. In keeping with his background and his approach to his material, Haynes incorporates a variety of visual styles to tell his story, much like Julie Taymor did in *Across the Universe* but in a very different way. *I'm Not There* switches from grainy black and white photography to 60s Mod colors to the warm nostalgic glow of classic Hollywood Westerns. All of these different styles are wonderfully captured by cinematographer Edward Lachmann (*A Prairie Home Companion*).

I'm Not There does not follow a linear time frame as do most biopics. Haynes and co-writer Oren Moverman (*Married Life*) jump back and forth from place to place and Dylan incarnation to Dylan incarnation, which can be confusing at first and requires you to concentrate in order to keep up with what's going on. Editor Jay Rabinowitz (*Requiem for a Dream*) deserves special mention for his accomplishment in the daunting task of putting the variety of visual styles used in this film together.

All the performances are uniformly fine, with outstanding work from young Marcus Carl Franklin (who does his own playing and singing as the black guitar-playing "Woody Guthrie") and Cate Blanchett (whose incarnation as the mid 60s jaded "Jude Quinn" is nothing short of jaw-dropping). If Blanchett doesn't gain at least an Oscar nomination from this film (not to mention the Oscar itself) then there's something seriously wrong with the Academy and its voters (no comment).



Cate Blanchett is Bob Dylan's drugged-out 60s persona in *I'm Not There*.

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While Todd Haynes is to be commended for taking risks, *I'm Not There* is not without its problems. The film's jumping back and forth can be hard to follow, the mixture of photographic styles is occasionally jarring, and at 135 minutes, the film is simply too long. Also the film's principal motif, the six different Dylans, may not be to everyone's taste.



Marcus Carl Franklin plays the Woody Guthrie personality of Bob Dylan in *I'm Not There*.

There, the fascinating multi-personalities character study of Bob Dylan.

However, if you're an admirer of Bob Dylan and his music (which runs throughout the film in performances from him and others) and enjoy being challenged at the movies by non-traditional fare, then don't miss it. It's worth saying again, it's ambitious, audacious, and ambiguous — very few films can make that claim.

Rated R for language, some sexuality, and nudity.

Review by Chip Kaufmann

The Kite Runner

Short Take: A faithful adaptation of the book, which is both its strength and its flaw.

The main flaw of both the novel and the film version of *The Kite Runner* for me is that the hero of the story isn't particularly heroic. Amir (played by Scotland-born Khalid Abdalla, *United 93*) did some despicable things as a child in Afghanistan, so awful that the memory of them lingers throughout the rest of the story.

As a grownup he indeed tries to atone for his sins, but he continues to waver between courage and cowardice even to the end, when he is saved, not by his own efforts, but by the child of the man he once wronged. Because of this inherent weakness in the story, *The Kite Runner* fails to soar to the highest level, but it tries so earnestly that its beauty overtakes its heavy ballast most of the time.

When we first meet him, Amir is an Afghan émigré in central California who's been married for a few years without having a child. He receives a call from Kabul from his beloved uncle, telling

him he must come to rescue the son of his childhood friend. The boy's parents were killed by the Taliban and he is held in a poverty-stricken orphanage. "There is a way to be good again," the uncle says. The old man's words haunt Amir, as if he knows Amir's shameful secrets.

What follows is the story of Amir the child (Zekeria Ebrahimi) and his faithful friend, Hassan (Ahmad Khan Mahmudzada), the servant's son. They live in a palatial compound in Kabul, full of flowers and fountains, under the benign protection of Amir's powerful and wise father, Baba (Homayoun Ershadi). One of the favorite pastimes of Afghani youth was the annual kite-flying contest, when dozens of two-boy teams would compete to keep their kites aloft and knock the other kites out of the skies.

Amir is the champion kite flyer because his friend Hassan is the best kite runner, the one who can tell where the kite will land and retrieve it quickly before it's damaged. The neighborhood bully has it out for the two friends and on the day of the kite flying contest, he leads an attack with his cronies on Hassan. They rape the boy and leave him bloodied.

Amir sees the attack but is too afraid for himself to intervene. Instead of apologizing to Hassan, over the next weeks Amir treats him cruelly. He tells a terrible lie that causes the Hassan's father to leave the compound, thus taking both of them



As shown beautifully in *The Kite Runner*, before the Taliban took over their country, Afghanistan boys loved to fly kites.

away from Baba's protection. As the saying goes, you hate those you've hurt.

The Russians invade Afghanistan and Amir and his father flee to America with barely the clothes on their backs. They settle near San Jose. Baba, once a prince of men, toils in a gas station and sells used junk in a flea market on the weekends. Always skilled with words, Amir learns English so well that he graduates from college and dreams of becoming a writer.

Then the phone call comes from

Afghanistan. The Russians have been evicted (see Roxane Clement's review above of *Charlie Wilson's War*), but now the Taliban has taken over. There is no singing in Afghanistan anymore, no dancing, no flirting, no merriment of any kind, and certainly no kite flying. All men must wear beards. Veiled women are stoned to death as half-time diversions during public soccer games. And into this hostile anti-American environment Amir must travel to try to "do good again."

Technically the movie is masterfully done. The cinematography by Robert Shaefer, who shot director Marc Forster's *Neverland* and *Stranger than Fiction*, is incredible (Morocco is a fine stand-in for Afghanistan) and the computer-enhanced kite-flying scenes are lyrically haunting. Fine performances by all, most of whom are unknown, and especially the children who are uncannily impressive. A flawed, but lovely and important film.

Note: Some of the movie is in English but most of it is spoken in Dari, a Farsi dialect, and subtitled in English.

Rated PG-13 for strong thematic material including the rape of a child, violence and brief strong language.

Review by Marcianne Miller

Lust, Caution (Se, jie)

Short Take: The trailer is beautifully intense and moving and meant to lure you into seeing it — don't be fooled.

Lust, Caution is indeed beautiful and is masterfully directed by Ang Lee (Brokeback Mountain), but for this reviewer, it stopped there. Would that I could end the review right here . . .

The script is adapted from a story by beloved Chinese author Eileen Chang. In Chinese with English subtitles, it takes place in Japanese-occupied China, from 1939 to 1942—a period in history of which most westerners know little.

With WWII underway, Wong Chia Chi (Wei Tang) is a naïve and lonely college student whose father has abandoned her for life in England. While at university, she falls in with a theatrical troupe run by an impassioned, young zealot, Kuang Yu Min (Lee-Hom Wang). Kuang formed the drama society to drum up patriotism among the Chinese. After her first performance in which the audience leapt to its feet in appreciation, Kuang realizes his new leading lady has an innate ability to move and inspire others.

Spurred by Kuang's fierce resistance towards the Japanese occupation, the core members of the troupe decide to use their theatrical skills to infiltrate the life of one Mr. Yee (Tony Leung), a Chinese collaborator with the Japanese, who is responsible for the downfall and



Wei Tang and Tony Leung are lovers during the Japanese occupation of China in *Lust, Caution*.

deaths of many Chinese. Young Wong will pose as Mrs. Mak, the wealthy wife of an importer/exporter. Her role is to befriend Mrs. Yee (Joan Chen), and then lure Mr. Yee into an affair, ergo earning his trust. At some vague point thereafter, the others will swoop in and assassinate him. Prompted more by her unspoken love for Kuang than her own patriotism, Wong goes along with the plan and Mrs. Mak is born.

So far we have a story with war, passion, lust, friendship, betrayal, loneliness and heartache. In theory, we should be enraptured. No such luck.

As our heroine weaves her web of seduction, we see her loneliness, conflicting emotions and bravery. Meanwhile Mr. Yee spins his own sticky web. Initially he seems the perfect Chinese gentleman. But by the time the two of them reach the bedroom, he is a brutal beast.

What ensues is a series of sex scenes of brutal attraction and repulsion that make anything you've ever seen previously (in the non-porn form) look like milk toast. (Seriously, Sharon Stone suddenly seems a schoolmarm in comparison.) The numerous graphic scenes are far more vicious than they are erotic. However, it is through these torridly cruel and wrenching moments that "Mrs. Mak" gains Yee's trust and finds the way to his heart — er, sort of . . .

There is nothing technically wrong with this film. It's visually luscious and the actors are perfect. Without including spoilers, suffice to say that at the conclusion of *Lust, Caution*, I sat bolt upright and said, "That's it? So what?!" Granted, the emotion of the story is shown more in what's not said than said, and in what's not demonstrated, but I was unmoved. Ultimately this tragic story simply fell flat.

Rated NC-17 for graphic sexuality, adult content.

Reviewed by Michelle Keenan

'Movies' continued on pg. 26

FILM REVIEWS

'Movies' continued from pg. 25

Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Short Take: Too much Grand Guignol and not enough Stephen Sondheim.

When I first heard that Tim Burton was going to make the film version of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, I was positively elated. Burton is one of my favorite contemporary film directors, creating movies that have their distinct personal vision (*Beetlejuice*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*) and should have been the ideal choice, but somewhere along the way something went wrong.

Sweeney Todd has been a staple of British popular fiction since the early 19th century. The story of a barber who murders his customers and his accomplice Mrs. Lovett who makes meat pies out of them was first made into a film in England in 1936 but it was hampered by the restrictions of the film censors of the time. However, the stage version was pure Grand Guignol and that is what Burton is attempting to recreate here, using his favorite leading man, Johnny Depp

Depp (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*) gives a quietly intense performance as Sweeney, with a singing voice that resembles David Bowie from the mid-1970s, but his interpretation lacks depth. He is already crazy when we first meet him and the character has nowhere to go. In the original musical we watch him become more demonic over the course of time so that by the end he's almost a tragic figure wronged by everyone--but that doesn't get the chance to happen in the movie.

Helena Bonham Carter (*Big Fish*) has the pivotal role of Mrs. Lovett. She has to portray a much greater variety of emotions, from unrequited love to pity to callous indifference--and she does it all with a gleam in her eye that gives the film a welcome touch of humor, which is needed to relieve the grim proceedings. She doesn't have a strong singing voice but it suits her character perfectly.

As for the supporting cast, Sacha Baron Cohen (*Borat*) makes the most of his brief appearance, although his part has been cut down from the original stage show. Alan Rickman (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*) and Timothy Spall (*Enchanted*) do well as the villains of the piece with Rickman's Judge Turpin having been rewritten to make him even more reprehensible.

Three other principal characters Anthony (Jamie Campbell Bower), Johanna (Jayne Wisener), and the Beggar Woman (Laura Michelle Kelley) have had their parts reduced to little more than plot ad-



Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter are perfectly macabre business partners in Timothy Burton's musical blood feast, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

vancement, but they make the most with what they're given. At least Tobias (Ed Sanders) the workhouse boy, whose character is instrumental to the story's resolution, is left pretty much intact. All four performers are making their film debuts.

With solid performances, outstanding set design and cinematography that recall Edward Gorey as well as Stephen Sondheim's music--what could possibly go wrong? Two things. First, there's the music itself or lack of it. Four of the show's 13 major songs are missing, including the all-important *The Ballad of Sweeney Todd*. Not having it is like removing *Angel of Music* from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera*.

The film carries a well-deserved R rating for graphic, bloody violence and that's the second problem. Burton wants to showcase the Grand Guignol aspects of the musical but in the film's more realistic setting, the killings are unnecessarily nasty with excessive amounts of throat cutting and body dumping that make it resemble an Italian *giallo* or slasher film.

It will be interesting to see how *Sweeney Todd* will fare at the box office. Those who come to hear Sondheim's music will likely be put off by Burton's dark vision and the graphic violence, while those who respond to the trailer and think they're getting another *Sleepy Hollow* will be surprised to learn that most of the film is sung. If this were a straightforward reworking of the original Sweeney Todd story then I would give it a solid 4 stars--but it isn't. It's supposed to be a film version of the Stephen Sondheim musical and in that regard it rates only 3 stars.

Rated R for graphic bloody violence.

Review by Chip Kaufmann

There Will Be Blood

Short Take: 75% of a great movie + 25% of a detoured ending still equals 100% of a powerful performance from Daniel Day-Lewis.

I enjoyed *Blood* tremendously for the

first 3/4ths of it. In fact, I could say that the first 75% was one of the best movies made in recent history. The cinematography (by Robert Elswit, *Michael Clayton*, *Syriana*), the production design, the set, the costumes, the props--all were dazzling. I was literally giddy with the exciting historical recreation of California's oil history.

Being based on the Upton Sinclair novel *Oil!*, which purportedly did to the oil industry what his muckraking *The Jungle* did to meat packing--the movie also points out how the drilling for oil was mucked up with great evils--greed, thievery, murder and madness, to name a few.

For all its sweeping scope and production marvels, *There Will Be Blood* is essentially a character study, the rise and fall of a quintessential American businessman, loosely based on millionaire Edward Doheny who headed Pan American Petroleum and Transport Company. Think *Citizen Kane* in oil.

Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis, *Gangs of New York*) refers to himself,

in fake humility., as a simple "oil man." With his adopted son H. W. (Dillon Freasier making his debut), Plainview



Daniel Day-Lewis is brilliant in the oil industry drama, *There Will Be Blood*.

nary a woman in sight in this whole movie other than Mother Earth and a few church ladies.

As Plainview continues his ruthless march to success--which for him means eliminating the price-gouging railroads for a pipeline that will carry his inland oil to the sea--he reveals the man he really is. "I have a competition in me," he says, "I want no one else to succeed. I hate most people... I want to earn enough money I

can get away from everyone."

Early in the film, Plainview meets a man who matches his venality and for one moment forces him to his knees. This is Eli Sunday (Paul Dano, *Little Miss Sunshine*), a dirt-poor local evangelist with national radio fame ambitions. In different ways both men sell their souls for oil and their eventual face-off in the end determines which one will lose the most.

The last scenes of the movie, that 25% I couldn't stand, take place in the 1930s. Plainview is no longer in the fields but ensconced in his mansion (no doubt off modern day Doheny Drive in Beverly Hills) where he's become an insane monster. I disliked these last scenes,

not because they weren't done well, but because there was such a significant change in tone from the earlier scenes that they seemed tacked on rather than inherent to the story.

Nevertheless, Daniel Day-Lewis' performance from beginning to end is brilliant. His presence, with not-so-

faint hints of John Huston in *Chinatown*, dominates every scene and his malevolent energy seems literally to pulse out from the screen. It's an absolutely stunning performance and will stay with you for days.

Considering his age (he's only 33) and his minimal previous experience (*Punch Drunk Love*, *Magnolia*), director Paul Thomas Anderson has accomplished something miraculous--a big, powerful, mature film. But for the detour at the end, I also could have added "perfect."

Rated R for some violence.

Review by Marcianne Miller

Coming Next Month

- *The Great Debaters*
- *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*
- *Margot at the Wedding*
- *The Orphanage*
- *P.S. I Love You*
- *The Savages*
- *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*
- *The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep*

Rapid River Movie Editor and critic Marcianne Miller is a member of the Southeast Film Critics Assn. Contact her at marci@aquamystique.com

ARTFUL LIVING

Everything Is As It Can Be

The phrase, "Everything is as it can be" is from the philosopher/theologian, Alan Watts, who wrote and spoke about Eastern philosophy so eloquently through the 50's and 60's, introducing Americans to Asian wisdom.

At the beginning of a new year, as we think about "resolutions" for improving ourselves, it is wise to also consider that everyone is also as they can be. Including you. This is an important realization. It allows us to see ourselves realistically and compassionately so that we might not seek to change so much as to grow, that is, evolve our self.

Change, as in going from one state to another, does not realistically happen in a person. Growth and evolution do. In fact, evolution can be so powerful that it can appear as dramatic change. Evolution begins with a compassionate understanding that you are exactly as you *can be* by the factors of your conditioning and that we can grow beyond our conditioning. When you understand this, you then have a handle on how to expand your life in a manner that creates real change, something "resolutions" cannot do.

A great Zen koan instructs us, "As you are aware of your thoughts and emotions, you must ask yourself, 'Who is it that is aware?'" The awareness is you, your true self, as Zen says, your original



Bill Walz

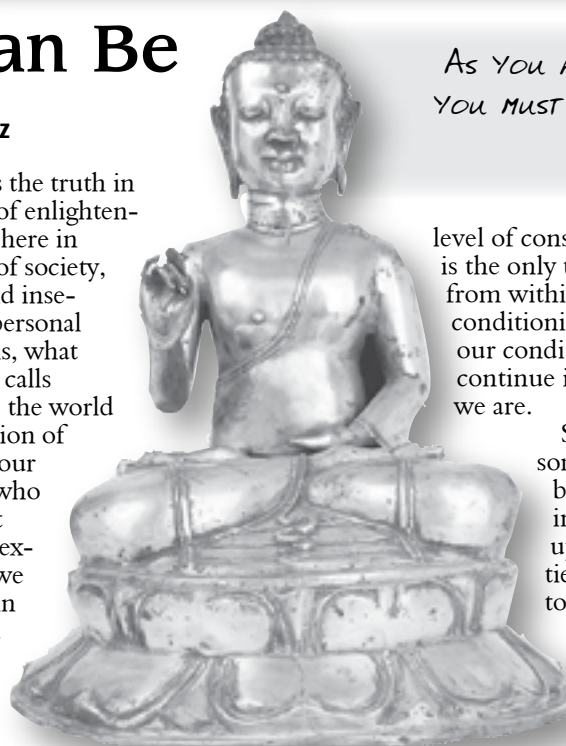
BY BILL WALZ

self. That's the truth in the world of enlightenment. But here in the world of society, families and insecure interpersonal interactions, what Buddhism calls "Samsara", the world of the illusion of confusing our

conditioning for who we are, we act out our conditioning exactly and only as we can be from within that conditioning.

But, who you are is consciousness. You are not your thoughts or emotions or behaviors. That's just the stuff conditioned into you that you believe is you, and that society reinforces by all of us judging and identifying each other by our programmed thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

We can even get pretty defensive about our thoughts, emotions and behaviors, but guess what? They aren't even ours. They are from our mother, our father, our society, media, personal experience, etc. They are what we have learned, and they represent a certain



AS YOU ARE AWARE OF YOUR THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS, YOU MUST ASK YOURSELF "WHO IS IT THAT IS AWARE?"

- ZEN KOAN

level of consciousness that is the only thing we can be from within the prison of our conditioning, but we are not our conditioning unless we continue in the belief that we are.

So, you've got some addictive behaviors? Some interpersonal hang-ups and insecurities? Tendencies to be impulsive, compulsive, anxious, angry or depressed? If you would like to "change" some undesirable

traits in the coming year, it's important to realize, these traits are exactly and only what can be from within the prison of your conditioning, but break out of the conditioning prison, and true growth, evolution can begin to occur.

The pioneering psychologist Fritz Perls used to say, "The contours of your neurosis are exactly the same as the contours of your awareness." You are exactly the same dimensions of thought, emotion and behavior as you are aware of the possibilities for thought, emotion

and behavior that you are conditioned to. Expand your awareness for what is possible, and the limited neurotic addictions, hang-ups, insecurities, impulsive, compulsive, anxious, angry, depressed features of your false conditioned personality will begin to resolve themselves. You will begin to evolve.

Wake up! If you are what you can be and the circumstances of your life are what they can be, *expand what can be*. Evolve. Change is nearly impossible from within the limits of believing your conditioning to be who you are, but if you have the courage to let go of your defensive identity and live as curious, compassionate, resourceful, expanding, evolving awareness, the possibilities are nearly miraculous. All you've got to lose is your neurotic self. Then you will begin to see what *can be*.

Bill Walz is a UNCA adjunct faculty member and a private-practice teacher of mindfulness, personal growth and consciousness. He holds a weekly meditation class, Mondays, 7pm at the Friends Meeting House, 227 Edgewood.

Info on classes and personal growth and healing instruction or phone consultations at (828) 258-3241, or e-mail at healing@billwalz.com. Visit www.billwalz.com

Can One Man Save the Vanishing Hemlock?

In a race against time, one man strives to save what remains of one of the last remaining ancient forests in the southeastern United States.

In the southeastern United States stands one of the most spectacular sites in the world, the ancient hemlock forests. These magnificent old growth trees, towering at times over 170 feet and living as long as 600 years, provide some of the most diverse eco-system habitats in the southeast.

Yet, deep in the heart of their pristine tranquility a terror is mounting that, left unchecked, will destroy what small clasp of ancient ecological history remains in this country.

The soaring and majestic native eastern and Carolina hemlocks have been infested by a human-introduced insect pest, the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). Few of the remaining ancient hemlock forests are free of this devastating infestation, and without financial and human

resources allocated to save them, this precious slice of ecological history will be destroyed forever.

Filmmaker David Huff is raising the alarm through an inspiring and challenging feature documentary: The Vanishing Hemlock: A Race Against Time. In the film, Huff will follow arborist and champion tree finder Will Blozan, (Blozan is featured in a recent article in *The New Yorker* on the plight of the hemlock) deep into the hemlock forests of the southern Appalachian Mountains. There he will document the devastating impact the loss of these ancient trees is having on the rich diversity of southern wild forests.

Shot on location in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, this film will reveal the devastating loss, which has already occurred, and challenge audi-

ences to take up the cause to protect what remains.

The Vanishing Hemlock: A Race Against Time has been heartily endorsed by the Southern Documentary Fund and has been awarded a tax-deductible status so that much needed funds may be raised, hopefully, in time to bring awareness to this rapidly progressing biological crisis. "This is part of our legacy", said Huff, "we must do all that we can to save these forests, for the rich diversity of life within them, for ourselves and for our children."

The Vanishing Hemlock is a production of Back 40 Films in association with Musk Entertainment. Back 40 Films is an independent film production company based in Charlotte, NC. Rooted in the American South, the company draws on its cultural and geographical



Will Blozan, subject of the documentary, hangs alongside the 172 foot tall "Usis" hemlock. This tree, estimated at 400 years old, was killed by HWA.

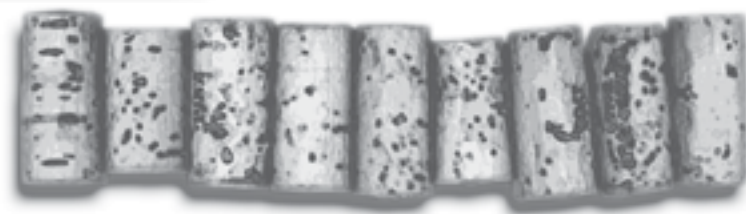
surroundings for inspiration.

For more information visit the Southern Documentary Fund's project page at <http://southerndocumentaryfund.org/works-in-progress/the-vanishing-hemlock>. Or contact producer/writer David Huff, Back 40 Films, at david@back40films.com.

RESTAURANTS & WINE

Drink That Wine – It's Not as Nice as You Think it is

BY MICHAEL PARKER



So, someone gave you wine for Christmas, and you are still entertaining notions of saving it for a special occasion. Wine gets better with age, right? Here we go again.

Some wines improve with age, many more do not. There are numerous variations and all kinds of conditions that effect the ageing potential of a wine, so many that if you really care enough to consider most or all of the factors, you risk becoming neurotic and losing your ability to just enjoy a wine for what it is. And let's face it, no one has given you wine that is as nice as they want you to think it is.

The ageing problem recently happened to Angela, who described her Kunde Sauvignon Blanc as the color her pee-pee gets after having digested a load of vitamins, and she supposed that the taste was probably that, too. Of course it was a bad experience, it had been atop the fridge for seven years.

So, someone gave her a wine rack for Christmas, in the year 2002 (and with it presumably what was at the time a good bottle of Kunde Sauvignon Blanc) and she, like many of you, had been led to believe the top o' the fridge is the perfect place. Wine gets better with constant warmth, right? How is it that we all agree that a cellar is the perfect place to store wine and at the same time many of us are way too happy to store wine above the hot coils of a large appliance?

If you lack a basement or cellar, or the energy to go down there for good wine, there is another ideal place for your wine storage. The floor of your closet.

Think about it. The temperature in there is fairly constant year-round. There are no devices creating heat. The floor in there is the perfect place for your wine storage, especially in the cardboard box. Do you ever think about how much wine you could buy for the price of a nice rack?

About ageing: here are a couple of really simple, very general rules to consider about a good age for your wine. Almost all whites should be drunk young, especially before they are four years old. Most reds are best drunk right at four years old. Again, this is a very general piece of advice.

I consider the four-year mark a fairly consistent expiration date for white wines. Chardonnay, especially the standard (boring) California chardonnay recipe of oak and butter and butter and oak (the ten-dollar style often available for twice that price), can last a little longer. However, white wine is almost always ready to drink when released. More complex varieties are often at their best at the two-year mark.

Cabernet — again, in general — ages longer than merlot or other lighter-styled reds like Chianti or Beaujolais. One of my favorites, old-vine zinfandel, is perfect for me right at four years. Pinot Noir is very complicated and very hard to understand, so forget about any general advice for it.

About Champagne and sparkling wine: no date, no wait. However, vintage Champagne also calls for professional advice.

Vintage Port doesn't even begin to reveal its specialness until its tenth year, but late bottle vintage is ready on release.

And again: no date, no wait.

There are awesome exceptions. There are quirky, minerally whites from Italy such as Fiano and Greco di Tufo that can be delicious at ages well past ten years. I once drank a white Rioja that was 24 years old. There are also occasions when you prefer a red to be a bit young, open before the critics say it is ready. Well-aged Bordeaux-style reds, and even Gran Reserva Riojas are not my cup of tea. I like the taste a little more youthful red on my buds.

This weird need for constant qualifiers highlights the real need for reliable staff in locally-owned wine shops. The big stores don't have the staff you need for all these particulars. If you think you have been given a special wine, then ask your retailer.

Rumor: Changes in the S&W

It's no rumor, because it's on the door. What once was the Sherrill and Williams Cafeteria will soon simply be Steak and Wine. The lettering is copied from the original advertisements. Peek through the windows and see the main dining room full of fine woodwork defining the seating areas. (Whoever is doing this is not fooling around.)

There are additional rumors about who is leaving where to run this, cook that, and pour, rumors which will not be printed here, because you can't believe a damn thing you hear in the restaurant and wine business. However, it is super news that someone has finally found a way to make good use of the finest room in the city.

January Events at the Weinhaus

Reservations are required for these events unless otherwise noted. Call the Weinhaus at (828) 254-6453.

Saturday, January 12, 2008

The Grovewood Café, under the auspices of chef/owner Larry Wal-drop, will have a five course dinner of their favorite foods paired with wines from the Weinhaus. The restaurant features Nouvelle Southern Cuisine and is located next to the Grove Park Inn. Time is 7:00 PM. Cost is \$55 all inclusive.

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

Sugo Restaurant, with owners Damien and Lindsay Cavicchi, will present a five course meal paired with wines from the Weinhaus. This restaurant, with its emphasis on Italian country cuisine also specializes in fresh and locally grown foods, so come and enjoy a meal to remember. Time is 7:00 PM. Price is \$55 all inclusive.

Saturday, January 19, 2008

Free wine tasting at the Weinhaus from 2:00-4:00 PM. Featuring Winter Wines for Hearty Meals, no reservation needed.

The Weinhaus

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JOE'S BREW NOTES

Local Craft Beers and the Best Places to Enjoy Them

BY JOE ZINICH

I'm an unabashed beer lover. When traveling, the first question I ask is, "Where is the nearest brew pub?" In most places I don't get an answer so then I ask "Where is the bar with the most taps?" From my experience, the more taps a place has, the more knowledge of beer, and the higher likelihood of enjoying an excellent brew.

I'm a beer snob, too, and proud of it. I always ask for locally brewed, craft beer. Craft brewed beer comes from a small brewery using traditional methods and ingredients to produce beer with wonderful and rich flavors. But finding a locally produced craft beer is not always easy. I've discovered no matter where I am, it's easier to find satisfying food than an enjoyable locally produced, craft beer. So life can be awfully tough for a beer man like me — except in Asheville, which to me is a beer lover's heaven.

To get the full satisfaction of a great beer, it needs to be enjoyed in an equally pleasant environment — a place with friendly people, wonderful music and delicious food. Asheville is a fun-loving beer snob's paradise with five local well-known breweries, a sixth one scheduled to open this month, and a seventh opening in about a year. Each one has its own personality and each is superbly entertaining in different ways. Combine the breweries with Asheville's great music scene, its festivals and events, and the large number of tourists from all over

the globe — well, the good times roll! In this column, every month we'll explore Asheville's exciting world of beer.

The fresher the beer, the better it tastes. From my experience, beer tastes best at the brewery that makes it. Period. Next best tasting is beer poured from a tap. Third next best is from growlers (half-gallon bottles with a screw cap), and lastly from capped bottles.

Bottled beer is processed so it will ship better and last longer—and that stabilizing process can affect its taste. Thus, when you drink a mass-produced beer, such as one from the big three (Budweiser, Coors, Miller), you don't get a beer known for its flavor. Processed beers are usually a little lower in alcohol and calorie content than craft beers, but they're a lot lower in flavor — and so you tend to drink more. Just the opposite is true of a craft brewed beer. These beers are all about the flavor. You tend to drink less because you are enjoying the flavor. Think a McDonald's hamburger versus one made by a master chef.

The alcohol content of beer runs from about 4-½ to 11% (sometimes much higher). A beer with alcohol content at or below 6% is considered a session beer.



Stephanie's ID is a frequent performer in Asheville's brew pubs.

A few session beers can be enjoyed socially over the course of an evening and you won't have to be concerned about your behavior or the drive home.

High Gravity Beer

Alcohol content above about 7% is considered a high gravity beer and should be savored. High gravity beers are richly flavored and typically have a heavier body. Because of the high sugar or malt content, or both, which

are used to create more alcohol, many tend to have a slightly sweet flavor as a start or sometimes as a finish. (Gravity is the density of the beer and is used to calculate the alcohol content — in essence, the higher the density the higher the alcohol content)

Some high gravity beers are aged for six months to a year or more before they are introduced to the public. In fact, some styles are actually presented in vintages. Depending on the brewery, these beers may be aged in new oak barrels or even barrels used to produce fine whiskies. Expect a variety of flavors that can change over time. Given the alcohol content, 9 to 13%, these beers should be savored like a fine brandy after dinner with some soft music and conversation. Think wine, only better, because of a much broader palate of flavors.

To share with you what I've learned about fresh tasting local beer, and the best places to enjoy them, in the next few months I'll report on each of the local brewery/tasting rooms. (See the list below for the current breweries and their locations) I'll suggest the specific beers to try, as well as the other interesting reasons to visit each one.

The beer scene in Asheville isn't just the breweries and pubs. In this column we'll also look at the wide range of other beer-loving activities the region offers, such as the Brewgrass Festival, the Brews Cruise (personalized brewery tours) and specialty stores like Brusin' Ales which not only has a huge selection of beers, but also enjoyable and educational bi-monthly beer tastings. You'll find out about the latest beer tastings, where to find ice cream made with beer and answers to that earth-shattering question — what is the best cheese to serve with this beer? Whew!

For five years, Joe Zinich has been taking a self-guided, high-intensity tour of Asheville's beer world. Contact him at: jinich@bellsouth.net



Beer lover Joe Zinich.

Asheville Beer Notes 101

Most of the beers produced in Asheville are ales. These beers are heavier in body and richer in flavor. In this column we'll be discussing different styles of ale such as wheat beer, ESB (Extra Special Bitter), IPA (India Pale Ale), stout, porter, pale ale and seasonal brews.

The other types of local beers are lagers — think pilsners, Oktoberfest, and bock styles. These beers are lighter in body and flavor. Not as many of them are produced locally. I'll cover those that I like based on availability.

Here are Asheville's five current breweries:

1. Asheville Pizza and Brewing Company (two locations)
 - 675 Merrimon Ave, Asheville, (828) 254-5339, www.ashevil-lepizza.com
 - 77 Coxe Avenue, Asheville, (828) 255-4077, www.ashevillebrewing.com
2. French Broad Brewing Company, 101-D Fairview Road Asheville, (828) 277-0222, www.frenchbroadbrewery.com
3. Green Man Ales and Brewery/ Jack of the Wood, Pub

Green Man Ales were initially produced at Jack of the Wood pub. When the pub was expanded a brewery was built close by and brewing was stopped at the pub. Their fine ales can be sampled at both places.

 - 23 Buxton Ave., Asheville, (828) 252-5502, www.jackofthewood.com/ales.htm
 - 95 Patton Ave Asheville, (828) 252-5445, www.jackofthewood.com
4. Highland Brewing Company, 12 Old Charlotte Highway, Asheville (828) 299-3370, www.highlandbrewing.com
5. Pisgah Brewing Company, 150 Eastside Business Park, Black Mountain (828) 582-7909, www.pisgahbrewing.com

The ales made by Asheville Pizza and Brewing Company and Green Man Ales are served only at their facilities. The other local beers are available at some of the area's favorite pubs, restaurants or grocery stores on draft or in bottles or growlers.

Beers of the Month

Brews of the month are beers that I think have exceptional or interesting flavors that I think you must try. Some of the beers may be seasonal, made for short periods of time once a year, or a brewer was experimenting with a style and may or may not make it again.

The *Seasonal Brew* this month is Highland Brewing Cold Mountain Winter Ale. It pours dark red with a tan head; made with spices that change year to year, has slight malt sweetness with spices and a clean finish. A must try.

The *High Gravity Beer*, freshly produced, is French Broad Wee Heaviest. It pours dark chocolate with a creamy head and has a surprisingly light body with a very rich flavor and light finish.

The *High Gravity Beer*, aged, is Babbista from Pisgah. This beer has been aged for six months before bottling. It pours with a dark yellow color

and creamy head. It's a full bodied beer with 11.5% alcohol content. The alcohol taste is well masked. Savor the flavors. This beer can be "cellared" for about five years creating even more complex flavors.

The *Interesting Beer* is Pisgah Red Devil. Red Devil is a fruit beer made with cherries and raspberries. This is the beer for people who don't like beer, but is also for beer lovers who think that fruit beers can't be any good. This beer isn't good, it's *great*. It pours red (pink) with a pink head, just slightly sweet with a flavor of cherries-thirst-quenching. Another must try. Should pair well with chocolate.

Details matter.



Whether we're framing your grandmother's needlework, an addition to your art collection, or one of Zappa's guitars, it's the little things we do that make a difference.



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COVER STORY

'Lucia di Lammermoor'
cont'd from pg. 5

marry Arturo. As the wedding ceremony begins, Edgardo arrives back to the castle from his time in France, claiming that he still loves Lucia. Enrico and Edgardo draw swords and Edgardo is shown the signed marriage contract between Lucia and Arturo. Edgardo gives Lucia back her ring and storms out of the castle.

Act III

Enrico challenges Edgardo to a duel. Raimondo burst into the wedding party to tell everyone the news that he has found Lucia over Arturo's dead body, still holding the bloody knife. Mad, Lucia appears carrying the murder weapon. She hallucinates about how she hears Edgardo's voice and how she is about to marry him. She collapses and dies.

Edgardo, who is waiting at the tomb of the Ravenswoods for his duel with Enrico, receives word via Raimondo that Lucia has died calling out to Edgardo. Edgardo stabs himself, wanting to be reunited with beloved Lucia.

David Ossenfort who plays Edgardo, continues to garner accolades for his "superb musicality and pure vocal appeal."

Cast

Lucia di Lammermoor boasts a stellar cast with Talise Trevigne in the title role as Lucia, is a singer noted for the "sheer beauty of her voice" and "exquisite stage presence". She has collaborated with many acclaimed artists including Marilyn Home, James Morris, Warren Jones, Roger Vignoles, Will Crutchfield, Rhoda Levine and Larry Foster. As one critic recently stated, "Talise Trevigne is the buzz of the opera world."

David Ossenfort who plays Edgardo, continues to garner accolades throughout the world for his "superb musicality and pure vocal appeal." In recent seasons, he has been enthusiastically praised for his performances as concert soloist and on the opera stage in an array of leading roles including Alfredo, Edgardo, Ferrando, Nemorino, Roméo and the Baron von Eisenstein. A truly versatile artist, he has performed in the unique Heinrich Heine Doppelgänger with American Opera Projects, Stravinsky's Renard with the EOS Orchestra, and Glass' Symphony No. 5 with the Choral Arts Society of Washington, DC.

James Taylor who plays Enrico, has been described as "...impressive... a rich, focused baritone," "Richly musical," and "superb...his rich voice has great beauty as well as dramatic power."

Teresa Buchholz (Alisa), an accom-

plished artist, known for her colorful, clear voice and thoughtful interpretation, Mezzo-Soprano Teresa Buchholz is rapidly emerging as a prominent force in the world of singing. Most recently she performed in productions of *La Nozze di Figaro* with the Duke Symphony Orchestra in Durham, NC, where her debut in the role of Cherubino was greeted with enthusiastic critical acclaim.

Branch Fields (Bidebent), has been on the roster of the New York City Opera since the 2005/06 season, and will be singing the roles of Zuniga (*Carmen*), Major Domo (*Vanessa*), and Angelotti (*Tosca*) for NYCO this year. In addition to his work at Lincoln Center, this past season brought debuts with the National Symphony under Leonard Slatkin in *Salome*, Princeton Festival's *Carmen*, and Virginia Arts Festival.

Timothy Myers, (Guest Conductor), returns to Asheville Lyric Opera immediately

following three highly acclaimed performances of Grieg's Peer Gynt with the American Symphony in New York. Mo. Myers' previous engagements include nearly 50 productions with companies such as New York City Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Central City Opera, Opera Omaha, the Bard Summerscape Festival, New England Conservatory, and the Music Academy of the West.

This play will be directed by James Marvel who was born and raised in New Orleans and made his debut as a conductor with the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall in New York City. Recent engagements include new productions of *The Rakes Progress* for the San Francisco Opera Merola Program; *Tosca* for Opera Santa Barbara and Opera East Texas; *Turandot* for Utah Festival Opera; and *Idomeneo* for University of Southern California.

Composer: Gaetano Donizetti
Librettist: Salvatore Cammarano

Based on "The Bride of Lammermoor" by Sir Walter Scott. Language: Italian.
Premiered: Sept. 26, 1835; La Scala.

If you go

Raleigh information: January 17, 19, 7:30pm and January 20; 3:00pm – Fletcher Opera Theatre; Progress Energy Center
Asheville information: January 25, 26, 8:00pm; January 23, 2008 (preview dress evening) 7:00pm – Diana Wortham Theatre; Pack Place

LOCAL FLAVOR

Resolutions You Can Stick To

BY MACKENSY LUNSFORD

Once again, 'tis the season. This is the time of year when fitness centers experience a boom of born-again health nuts who have made some sort of ridiculous pact with their ever-expanding waistline.

Generally, these promises involve grabbing double fistfuls of holiday enhanced blubber and pleading, "If I eat nothing but bulghur wheat and steamed kale and hit the treadmills every morning at 5 am will you leave me once and for all?"

For a short amount of time, these poor souls frustrate regular gym-goers by sweating all over every weight machine in the place and most likely injuring themselves at every turn. Then they vanish into thin air – poof! Suddenly, the determined New Year's Resolutionist is the downtrodden February couch potato, soothing the dull pain of failure with a pint of dulce de leche ice cream and Top Chef reruns.

Resolutions rarely stick, and it's no wonder. We generally set the bar too high for ourselves. This time of the year – when we're supposed to be dusting off those old feelings of resolve -- is precisely when curling up in front of the tube with a bucket full of mac and cheese and a warm human and/or cat seems much more appropriate. Most of us are loathe to surrender our comfortable winter evenings to the gym and its cold steel machines and spandex-clad mustachioed men. Although being active is very important, perhaps looking at what kind of food we eat is the easiest place to start. Do I advocate dieting in the traditional sense of the word? Certainly not – I'm not into that sort of torture.

When making New Year's Resolutions to "go on a diet," people tend to forget that drastically cutting out favorite food items is a form sensory deprivation. Most of the flavors that we most enjoy are tied to positive emotional experiences, like family dinners and holidays. It's no wonder that amnesia, the complete loss of smell that also leads to a loss of taste, has been shown to cause severe depression. It's also no wonder that many diets tend to fail.

Making the journey toward a healthier lifestyle need not involve a regime as austere as eating nothing but

tofu cubes and seaweed or starving slowly to death. Gently tweaking certain habits in eating can be more effective than drastically cutting out the things that provide gustatory pleasure. Taking steps – rather than sprinting – toward better health tends to be more effective for most people.

For example, instead of forgoing a weekly treat of a café mocha at the local coffee shop, have the barista make it with soy milk instead. Use soy milk and honey instead of refined sugar and half and half in your coffee. Better yet, start drinking green tea or chai once in a while instead. Replace regular mayonnaise with vegan mayonnaise. Try substituting plain yogurt for sour cream in burritos. I often blend yogurt with avocados, lime juice and cilantro for just this purpose and I never miss the extra fat. Instead of going out for a milk shake, blend yogurt, fresh mango, carrot juice

and honey for a vitamin-packed mid-day snack. Yogurt is also a healthy and flavorful replacement for whole milk in mac and cheese for a twist on a classic couch potato snack that's better for you, but still comforting.

If a big, juicy steak gives you pleasure, don't swear it off forever in the name of a resolution. However, try to learn to enjoy smaller portions and leaner cuts from healthfully raised animals. Cutting down on the amount of meat you consume by putting iron-rich red kidney beans in that burrito instead of steak, for example, is a great way to get a handle on those love handles. There are plenty of other protein rich vegetable-based foods out there. Too much protein makes a body sluggish, by the way, and many Americans consume much more protein than they actually need.

Sometimes, being healthier involves adding things to a diet, rather than subtracting. For example, most people don't get enough whole grains these days, a factor that can be attributed to the (thankfully waning) cabophobia surrounding the Atkins diet. Instead of cutting carbs, eat the right kinds. Buy whole grain breads and pastas, and learn how to make dishes with grains like barley and



Healthy hedonism: wild salmon, seared baby bok choy, mushroom risotto and hazelnut brown butter.

quinoa, or look for brown rice sushi.

Many people have a hard time eating right because they just don't know how to cook amaranth or what to do with an eggplant. One good (and fun) resolution for health is to go out and buy a good vegetable cookbook and bone up on some new techniques. I like Alice Waters' *Chez Panisse Vegetables* and Bert Greene's *Greene on Greens and Grains*. Heck, any resolution that involves shopping is a plus in my book. These books always help me get through the growing season when I just can't think of one more thing to do with eightball zucchini.

However you resolve to get healthier, for God's sake, make sure to live a little! Butter and bacon rank up near the top for me as far as earthly delights go. I don't condone eating pounds of either at a time, but a bit of butter tossed in a barley risotto or spread on 7-grain bread just makes life a little bit more enjoyable. A bit of rendered bacon in a pot of beans or a slice or two next to an otherwise healthy breakfast once in a while is more than likely okay. I believe that a bit of dark chocolate – packed with antioxidants and all manner of mysteries that somehow make everything better – should be part of a balanced diet. When setting resolutions, remember that good health is a holistic affair. Indulgence, on occasion, is good for the soul and spirit. Without that, what good are tight abs?

Have an idea for future articles for Local Flavor? Local foodies we must know about? Workshops or community food events? Contact Mackensy Lunsford at catalyst@charter.net.

Mackensy Lunsford is an award-winning food writer. With her husband Judd Lohof, she owns Café Azalea in East Asheville.

Mushroom Barley Risotto

Here's a delicious way to get a serving or two of whole grains. This recipe calls for stock, but does not specify what kind. Vegetable and chicken stock are fine, but I like to make stock with the gills and stems of mushrooms. It turns the barley a nice earthy color, and gives the dish a more concentrated mushroom flavor.

Mushroom stock can be found at your nearest whole foods store as well. I prefer to season the stock with salt instead of finishing the dish off with salt, but experiment with your own method.

- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter (olive oil can be substituted)
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- sliced: 1/2 pound fresh mushrooms (I like shiitake or morel), or about 2 ounces dried and refreshed
- 2 Tbs. shallot, minced
- 1 small white onion, minced
- 1/3 cup dry white wine
- 3/4 cup pearl barley
- 4 cup stock
- pinch of fresh, minced thyme
- 3 Tbs. grated high quality Parmesan to finish (optional)
- salt and pepper to taste

In a sauce pan, keep the broth on a low simmer.

In a heavy saute pan, heat 1 tablespoon of the butter. Add the mushrooms, thyme and the shallots and saute until soft, about 5 minutes. I like to deglaze with a little water to help lift all of that good caramelized mushroom flavor off of the bottom of the pan. Set aside.

Heat remaining butter and olive oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. Add onion and saute until soft, taking care not to brown. Add barley and reduce the heat to low. Stir frequently until barley toasts a bit.

Add wine and stir until most of the liquid is absorbed.

Add a ladle full of broth, stirring with a wooden spoon until liquid is almost absorbed.

Repeat the process until all of the broth is gone and the barley is tender.

Add the mushroom mixture and stir. If the barley is not as soft as you would like it, add a bit of water, cover skillet, and steam on low until soft.

Add salt and pepper and garnish each serving with Parmesan if desired.

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 Catalyst Series

ON STAGE

References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot

BY TARYN STRAUSS

Asheville's most socially responsible and politically adventurous theatre collective is proud to announce its new play, *References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot* by Jose Rivera.

This play is part of the NC Stage Catalyst Series.

In *References*, longing and lust prevail in the hot desert as the bewitching Gabriela awaits the return of her soldier from overseas. In a world where the talking moon plays the violin, the figurative is transformed into the literal. Rivera uses surreal imagery to explore the connections among love, lust and war in this enthralling tale.

"References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot" in other media

"On a moonlit July night in Barstow, California, strange, seductive things can happen, especially if you talk to the moon, which is portrayed as an aging, violin-playing dandy in a Panama hat and white suit."

"Rivera's intriguing fantasy... is a meditation on the impossible, but told in a provocative manner by Rivera, a writer whose language manages to be poetic and earthy at the same time."

~ MICHAEL KUCHWARA,
 ASSOCIATED PRESS

"...marvelous and satisfying... In DALI, Rivera... imagines Gabriela's dream world as rigorously as he does her real world, striking a balance between the two with the affecting power of his language."



Art Moore and Ashley Marchesi..

"...a double-sided dream of intelligence and wit."

~ GORDON COX, *Newsday*

Scapegoat Theatre Collective is honored to be a part of North Carolina Stage Company's 2007-2008 Catalyst Series.

If you go

References to Salvador Dali Make Me Hot by Jose Rivera will be performed January 10-12 and 17-19, 2008,

Thursday-Saturday 7:30 PM at NC Stage Company, 15 Stage Lane, Asheville 28801.

Tickets: Call the NC Stage box office for ticket prices 4 weeks before each production at (828) 350-9090, or purchase tickets online: www.ncstage.org.

Tyler Ramsey: Set to Break Out at The Grey Eagle

BY JAMES CASSARA

As a formidable talent on guitar, piano, bass, percussion, and vocals, the name Tyler Ramsey has become synonymous with the finest of the Asheville music scene. Ramsey is best known for his guitar work a subtle styling that crafts delicate, finger-style guitar picking evocative of John Fahey and Leo Kottke. But with a sum effect that is all his own: Whether its indie folk, country blues or finger-style guitar, Ramsey is a composer of intricate, ethereal songs of melancholy and rumination.

Bill Reynolds, long time friend and bassist for Band Horses invited Tyler to open for the band on their fall tour

and come on board as their new guitar player. "This is going to be an amazing tour. To have the opportunity to play solo, as well as with such a great band, I really couldn't ask for more," says Ramsey. Neither could supporters of this local boy made good who just happens to be both an enormously talented musician and all around nice guy.

If you go

Tyler Ramsey and friends at The Grey Eagle. Friday, January 4, 9pm. \$10 admission; Advance tickets available online and at our local outlets or call the club for more information.

NOTEWORTHY

America's Favorite Art Fairs & Festivals

BY CHRISTINE KLOOSTRA

The results are in for *AmericanStyle* magazine's 2008 Top 10 Fairs & Festivals readers' poll. Now in its fourth year, the annual readers' poll has become a coveted award by the nation's top art events.

2008 Top 10 Art Fairs and Festivals:

1. Paradise City Arts Festivals (Northampton, Mass.; Marlborough, Mass.; Philadelphia, Pa.)
2. Scottsdale Arts Festival (Scottsdale, Ariz.)
3. Long's Park Art & Craft Festival (Lancaster, Pa.)
4. Ann Arbor Art Fairs (Ann Arbor, Mich.)
5. The American Craft Shows (Atlanta, Ga.; Baltimore, Md.; Charlotte, N.C.; San Francisco, Calif.; Sarasota, Fla.; St. Paul, Minn.)
6. Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands (Asheville, N.C.)

7. Fiesta Arts Fair (San Antonio, Texas)
8. La Quinta Arts Festival (La Quinta, Calif.)
9. Francisco's Farm Arts Festival at Midway College (Midway, Ky.)
10. Des Moines Arts Festival (Des Moines, Iowa)

Ballots appeared in the August and October 2007 issues and on www.AmericanStyle.com. A full write-up on each event will be available in the February 2008 issue of *AmericanStyle*.

The issue also features *AmericanStyle*'s Essential Guide to Fairs & Festivals, a month-by-month planning calendar of some of the country's most prestigious craft events.

AmericanStyle magazine is the nation's premier arts lifestyle magazine for art collectors, enthusiasts and travelers. Published bi-monthly, *AmericanStyle* can be found online at www.AmericanStyle.com and on newsstands nationwide.

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FESTIVALS

The Echo Early Music Festival Arrives Just in Time

BY ERIC SCHEIDER
EDITED BY DENNIS RAY

Anyone who has ever been to a Renaissance faire knows just how much fun there is to be had — a capturing of bravado, clanking mugs spilling foam, laughing and pure escapism. If we look at what we have inherited from pre-modern culture from another angle, however, we find astonishing artistic treasures and imposing triumphs of human achievement.

In the deep quiet of midwinter, the Echo Early Music Festival will be bringing a few of these long-hidden treasures back to life, complete with heroic tales, joyous celebration, and plenty of bravado and humor.

Beginning with Beowulf, Benjamin Bagby's remarkable one-man tour de force, and concluding a week later with Ensemble Vermillian playing music of the Baroque period, the Echo Early Music Festival sets a high marker of expectations. In-between there will be a presentation of the first operatic masterpiece, L'Orfeo, favola in musica, and a medieval feast made for a king at The Laughing Seed restaurant.

The festival runs from January 26 to February 1. This not-for-profit arts event provides an opportunity for musicians and early music enthusiasts to come together for a week of exciting programs. The events will probably sell out, so order tickets as soon as possible.

Beowulf

January 26, 7:30 p.m., Cathedral of All Souls at Biltmore Village. Tickets: \$25 general admission / \$40 for select seating

Benjamin Bagby brings the untitled Anglo-Saxon epic poem known as Beowulf to life — in the original Old English — as it could have been experienced more than 1000 years ago.

Bagby has been investigating and performing Beowulf for over 20 years, appearing around the world at such illustrious venues as the Utrecht Early Music Festival, the Lincoln Center Festival, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Library of Congress, and many others.

Harmonia Baroque

January 27, 3pm Brevard College's Porter Center. Tickets: \$20 general admission / \$5 students

Harmonia Baroque is a period instrument ensemble based in Boone, NC. Join them for an afternoon of celestial harmony at Brevard College's Porter Center. They will be performing music of Janitsch, Bach, Handel, Lully, Jacques Morel, and music from Monteverdi's



Benjamin Bagby

L'incoronazione di Poppea. This concert is a part of the "Brevard College Presents" series, and is hosted by the Brevard College Department of Music.

Lebedinsky and Brass

January 28, 7:30 p.m., Cathedral of All Souls at Biltmore Village. Tickets: \$15 general admission / \$25 for select seating

Acclaimed historical keyboardist Henry Lebedinsky will be joined by the Asheville based quintet, the Biltmore Brass, for an exciting night of French and German music. Lebedinsky and the Biltmore Brass will perform independently, and then join forces for the exciting finale.

Monteverdi's Orfeo

January 30, 7:30 p.m., Cathedral of All Souls at Biltmore Village. Tickets: \$25 general admission / \$40 for select seating

L'Orfeo, favola in musica, is celebrating its 400th year, and is perhaps the earliest operatic masterpiece. The text, by Alessandro Striggio, is based on the Greek myth of Orpheus, the legendary musician, who attempts to rescue his dead lover Eurydice from Hades, the underworld.

First performed at the ducal palace in Mantua, the Echo Camerata Opera will be bringing the story to life in a semi-concert version at the Cathedral of All Souls. Aaron Schnurbusch will sing the title role, and Dr. Michael Porter will conduct.

This is an exceedingly rare opportunity to see this powerful work live, complete with an ensemble including an interesting mix of period instruments: harpsichords, recorders, natural trumpets, a viola da gamba, a lirone, and a theorbo, to name a few.

Medieval Vegetarian Feast

January 31, 5:30/6:30 until late. The Laughing Seed Café, 40 Wall St. Asheville (828) 252-3445. Cost: \$40 per person

The Laughing Seed Café, and gourmet vegetarian chef Jason Sellers, will be hosting a medieval feast to balance the humours and benefit the festival, joined by harpist Lelia Lattimore and Soundings Choral Group, directed by Timothy Wilds. Tickets are reserved for seating at 5:30 or 6:30pm and do not include drinks or gratuity. Call soon for the evening's menu: perhaps Grendel cakes will be on the menu.

After dinner, midwinter renaissance revelry will continue into the night downstairs at the Jack of the Wood Pub. A renaissance band will be performing dances and courtly musick of the olde world. Period attire and dancing are encouraged. Admission to the pub is included with a dinner ticket, or may be purchased separately at the door.

Ensemble Vermillian

January 30, 7:30 p.m., Cathedral of All Souls at Biltmore Village. Tickets: \$15 general admission / \$25 for select seating

Ensemble Vermillian brings to audiences unusual, exciting and moving compositions from the Baroque period played in historically informed style on recorder, Baroque cello, viola da gamba and harpsichord. The group has made many innovative transcriptions (a common practice during the baroque period) as well as playing works composed for their instruments.

Using several types of recorder and interspersing solo/basso continuo with pieces with multiple obligato parts, Ensemble Vermillian provides wide-ranging and enthralling programs to audiences across the country.

Frances Blaker received her Music Pedagogical and Performance degrees from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Copenhagen where she studied with Eva Legêne. She also studied with Marion Verbruggen in the Netherlands. Ms. Blaker has performed as a soloist and with various ensembles in the United States, Denmark, England and the Netherlands, including the Farallon Recorder Quartet and the recorder duo Tibia. She teaches privately and at workshops throughout the United States, including the San Francisco Early Music Society Baroque workshop and Port Townsend; she is a co-director of the Amherst Early Music Festival, Inc.

Blaker is the author of The Recorder Player's Companion and the "Opening Measures" column in the American Recorder, and a collaborator and performer on the Disc Continuo series of recordings.

Barbara Blaker Krumdieck grew up in the East Bay, studying cello with Mildred Rosner and Jeff Stauffer. She changed her focus to Baroque cello after attending the San Francisco Early Music Society's Baroque Workshop, and went on to study with Viola ter Hoeg in the Netherlands, and Pheobe Carrai at the Conservatory of Music in Hilversum, NL. She has toured all over Europe and recorded with Concerto Köln, of Germany, and is currently a member of various early music groups including the Wild Rose Ensemble, Vita Nova and Ensemble Vermillian. She is a sought-after teacher of cello in Davidson, North Carolina, and can be heard on the Disc Continuo series of recordings as well as Ensemble Vermillian's CD 'Stolen Jewels'.



Ensemble Vermillian

Elisabeth Reed has performed with, among others, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists, Magnificat, California Bach Society, Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra, Musica Angelica, Dayton Bach Society, Portland Baroque Orchestra, Seattle Baroque Orchestra and Jubilate Baroque Orchestra. A graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, the Oberlin Conservatory, the Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University's Early Music Institute, she can be heard on the Virgin Classics and Focus recording labels. She is a Guild – certified practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method of Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration with a particular interest in the issues facing musicians and perform-

'Echo Early Music Festival'
cont'd on pg. 39

STAGE PREVIEW

Local Comedy Troupe Laughs at Life in Asheville

BY ROSELYNN KATZ

Have you ever wondered who Laura Lynn is, when reaching for the store brand of chicken soup at Ingles? Or driving around Asheville, why most of the cars are actively conversing with each other through bumper stickers?

The LYLAS Comedy Troupe has not only contemplated those cosmic questions — but discovered the answers. They're bestowing their hilarious insights this month at North Carolina Stage Co. in a series of humorous skits entitled *Would You Like Yoga With That?*

LYLAS (short for the popular greeting "Love You Like a Sis") is made up of seven Asheville women: Kari Brantley, Jenny Bunn, Sarah Carpenter, Emily Miller, Betsy Puckett, Robin Raines and Marissa Williams. The purpose of the group is simple: "We like to laugh at ourselves," explains Betsy Puckett, at age 37, "the old lady in the group."

The focus of LYLAS' laughter is life in Asheville, which, according to Puckett, "is a beautiful catastrophe. There's such a tremendous diversity of people — all the way from dyed-in-the-wool Republicans to skirt-wearing men who attend City Council meetings with puppets in hand."

A brand new target of their wit is *I Wanna*, the weekly Asheville classified paper where everything from Granny Smith Apples to zebras are listed for sale.

Those everywhere-you-look signs in store windows that say "Thanks for voting us the best of Western North Carolina" also get a side-splitting LYLAS treatment in a *Family Feud* type skit where basic meat and potatoes fans votes Hardee's the best restaurant in town, while the tofu and whole wheat crowd fights passionately for The Laughing Seed.

"I have nothing against Hardee's," Bunn points out. "What's funny to me is the diversity of choices that Ashevilleans are apt to make. But LYLAS tries never to be mean-spirited or to take a political stand. We once did a very popular skit about City Councilman Carl Mumpower, for example. He definitely wouldn't have been offended."



There's lots more in *Would You Like Yoga With That?* including romps with the Texas Hold Em Card Game, the karaoke craze, Dennis Kucinich and the DaVinci code.

Each of the seven LYLAS members has a performance background and all are working now in various careers. What's remarkable is that they've melded their different backgrounds so well they're able to pool their ideas and shape them into skits that seem as if they've been written by one voice. If one member is having trouble with a concept, then another will offer suggestions until the problem is resolved. So cohesive are the LYLAS ladies, in fact, that they have no director. They're enough in sync to function without one.

This comes across onstage. The group is full of a spirit of warmth and friendliness that make you feel plain old good and put you in the perfect mood to laugh.

Many others have laughed along with LYLAS since their formation in 2004. LYLAS's first production at 35 Below in the Asheville Community Theatre was such a hit that more shows followed at North Carolina Stage, Windows on the Park and the Orange Peel, where they wore body mikes. "We all felt like Madonna!" says Puckett. "It was awesome."

Since the group began, many members have been through major life changes. Some have gotten married and both Jenny Bunn and Betsy Puckett have crossed the line into motherhood.

"LYLAS has helped keep us sane," says Puckett, remembering the inevitable adjustments that had to be made when her child was born. Motherhood has helped her, too, by expanding her insights into comedy. She's been humbled by what her 14-month-old toddler has taught her about the importance of humor. "Zeke has always been such a happy, funny little guy. He's definitely shown me never to underestimate the power of pure silliness."

LYLAS is 100% home-grown and unique to Asheville. There's nothing pre-packaged or canned about the group. To see *Would You Like Yoga With That?* is to see the creators, the writers, and the performers in action right before your eyes. That's the real deal.

Why only women? "It's a kind of girlfriend thing," says Jenny Bunny, a LYLAS founding member. "It gives us all a way to get together without having to join a book club."

"And the fact that we are all women

makes it easier for us to bounce things off of one another," adds Puckett.

Men enjoy LYLAS as much as women. This writer can personally attest to that. When I saw a LYLAS performance last year with my husband, he laughed as much as I did. And the other guys in the audience were laughing right along with him.

If you go

Would You Like Yoga With That?

Wednesday-Saturday nights at 7:30 pm, January 30-February 9, 2008

North Carolina Stage Company downtown next to the Rankin Avenue parking garage.

Buy tickets online at www.ncstage.org or call (828) 350-9090. Advance purchase is strongly recommended.

RoseLynn Katz is an Asheville actor/playwright/storyteller.

Richard Thompson's 1000 Years of Popular Music

BY JAMES CASSARA

When asked by Playboy Magazine to name his favorite songs of the past millennium Richard Thompson, in typically dry fashion, took them at his word. Rather than submit what he knew for certain they really wanted; that is a who's who of the twentieth century with perhaps a nod or three to the past, Thompson decided to plunge headlong into a musical excursion that delves deeply into history.

Of course the magazine chose not to include his offering so Thompson, never one to be swayed or daunted by expectation, assembled both a set list and tour around the theme. That set, which found Thompson playing some of the best music of his career (inspired by his cohorts Judith Owen (keyboards/vocals) and Debra Dobkin (percussion/vocals) was documented in both a highly acclaimed CD and DVD.

Thompson has been known to include "Summer is Icumen In", the oldest known song in the English language, and continue through time from madrigals, ballads, sea shanties, British Music Hall, Broadway tunes, The Kinks, garage rock (Bowling For Soup's "1986") and even a wink to

Britney Spears. The tour demonstrated not only Thompson's vocal and guitar acumen but his sheer knowledge and love of music: from thirteenth-century rounds and miners' ballads to Squeeze and Abba.

Richard Thompson's astounding body of work includes over 40 albums of lyrical wit anchored by such a singular acoustic and electric guitar delivery that Newsweek recently announced, 'like all genuine art, it satisfies completely.' That is what Thompson does: He might eschew the press (although the lone time I had the pleasure to meet and interview the man he was offhandedly charming) and he certainly cares little for awards but Thompson has built a long and steady career by never giving less than his fullest. It is a mark of both the artist and the man.

If you go

Richard Thompson presents *1000 Years of Popular Music*, with Judith Owen & Debra Dobkin.

Sunday, January 20 at The Orange Peel, 8:00 PM (7:00 PM doors)

\$26 advance / \$28 door, Ages 18+

WHAT TO DO GUIDE™

How to place an event/classified listing with Rapid River Art Magazine

Any "free" event open to the public can be listed at no charge up to 30 words. For all other events there is a \$9.95 charge up to 30 words and 10 cents for each additional word.

160 word limit per event.

Sponsored listings (shown in boxes) can be purchased for \$12 per column inch.

Deadline is the 19th of each month. Payment must be made prior to printing.

Email Beth Gossett at: ads@rapidrivermagazine.com or mail to: 85 N. Main St, Canton, NC 28716. Or Call: (828) 646-0071 to place ad over the phone.

— DISCLAIMER —

Due to the overwhelming number of local event submissions we get for our "What to Do Guide" each month, we can no longer accept entries that do not specifically follow our publication's format. Non-paid event listings must be 30 words or less and both paid and non-paid listings must provide information in the following format: date, time, brief description of what your event is and any contact information. Any entries not following this format will not be considered for publication.

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Call For Artists Request for Qualifications

Deadline for Submissions, January 15, 2008

The Public Art Commission of Waynesville, North Carolina, is issuing a call for artists for its inaugural public art project.

The selected artist/artists will be commissioned to create a unique and durable work to be installed at the intersection of Miller and Main in downtown Waynesville. The art project commission to the chosen artist is \$20,000, and stipends of \$500 will be paid to three finalists to present proposals to the Commission.

The Call is open to all artists residing in the 25 counties that comprise the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area: Cherokee, Graham, Clay, Swain, Macon, Jackson, Haywood, Transylvania, Madison, Buncombe, Henderson, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey.

The theme for Waynesville's first Public art commission is Old Time Music and its cultural impact in the region. An artist will be commissioned to produce a work that celebrates the musical heritage of the region.

Complete application instructions are available at the Waynesville Town website at www.townofwaynesville.org. Rollover Public Art button at top of page and activate Request for Qualifications, Pac Application Process, Site Map and Photo Gallery.

Application instructions are also available by calling the Downtown Waynesville Association at (828) 456-3517.

More information about the musical traditions of the area can be found online at www.smokymountainfolkfestival.com
www.mountaingrownmusic.org
www.smokeymountains.net.

Sunday, January 6

Chamber Music Concert

On (2008) at 3 PM at St. Matthias Church, there will be a 34- piece Chamber Orchestra concert "An Afternoon in Vienna" featuring waltzes, polkas and marches by Johann Strauss and other Viennese composers. Laurel Fisher of the Asheville Lyric Opera will sing two arias, and there will be ballroom dancers. This gala concert opens the Twelfth season of the First Sundays Series of chamber music concerts at St. Matthias Church.

There is no charge for the concert, but a free will offering will be taken for the restoration of the beautiful and historic church. St. Matthias' Church is over 100 years old and is on the national historic register.

The church is located in Asheville just off South Charlotte Street at Max Street on the hill across from the Asheville Public Works Building (1 Dundee St.).

Building Bridges Session 31

Mondays, January 28 to March 24, 2008

Registration at 6:00 PM, sessions from 7:00 to 9:00 PM.

MAHEC, 501 Biltmore Ave., in Asheville. Cost: \$20. Register:

WICKWIRE fine art/folk art

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828-692-6222 ~ wickwire@bellsouth.net
www.wickwireartgallery.com

www.buildingbridges-asheville.org

These evenings provide a unique opportunity for local people to have open dialogue on race relations between Black and White people. It lasts 9 weeks.

Each evening there is a large group presentation on race relations, including Awareness of Race, Institutional Racism, Racism in the Schools, Economics of Racism, and a Call to Action. After the first hour, the second hour is facilitated small group discussion on the topic of the evening. There is also a manual provided so that participants will have educational information that gives specifics on the history of African Americans in Asheville and the U.S. Current statistical information and issues are included.

The reality is that for the most part, Blacks and Whites in Asheville still lead separate lives to some extent. It's essential as a society to have an ongoing dialogue on racism. There is a lot of work to be done in our community and Building Bridges is a good place to start. Please join us for this important conversation.

For more information, please feel free to contact Building Bridges at (828) 285-0236.

The Fine Arts League of the Carolinas

The Fine Arts League of the Carolinas, founded by fresco artist Ben Long, is a non-profit school committed to teaching the realist traditions and techniques of the old masters.



Sketch by Benjamin F. Long IV

Sessions for 2008

- January 14 - April 4
- April 21 - July 11
- September 15 - December 12

Instructional Fees

Student Tuition for one session: 12 weeks, 5 days per week, 3-6 hours per day – \$2,000

Student Tuition for One Academic Year: \$6,000

For more information, please contact Anne Rawson, Executive Director, (828) 252-5050. Or, email arawson@fineartsleague.org

www.fineartsleague.org

Saturday, March 15

Asheville Symphony Drawing

Tickets are \$125 each. The drawing will take place on March 15, 2008 during the Asheville Symphony Masterworks concert intermission. This is a fundraising project and all ticket sales benefit the Asheville Symphony. Tickets may be sold to employees, Board Members and other affiliated persons. You need not be present to win. An independent ac-

AUGUST EVENTS ~ ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ CLASSIFIEDS

WHAT TO DO GUIDE™

Frye Gaillard

Thursday, January 17
7:00 PM at Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe

Frye Gaillard, who wrote extensively about Carter at the Charlotte Observer, was among the first to take the Carter postpresidency seriously and to challenge many accepted conclusions about Carter's term in office. Carter was not an irresolute president, says Gaillard, but rather one so certain of his own rectitude that he misjudged the importance of "selling" himself to America. Ranging across the highs and lows of the Carter presidency, Gaillard covers the energy crisis, the Iran hostage situation, the Camp David Accords, the Panama Canal and other treaties, and the new diplomatic emphasis on human rights.



**Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe,
55 Haywood Street, in Asheville, NC
(828) 254-6734**

Thomas Rain Crowe

Sunday, January 27,
3:00 PM at Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe

Though he was from rural North Carolina, [Thomas Rain Crowe] revealed sophistication with respect to poetry that even some of the more urban and urbane young poets of those days lacked.

For one thing, he had an intuitive sense of the class struggle, and in what is perhaps his most memorable poem of that period, "I Wash Your Dishes, America", he reveals a strong sense of justice with respect to workers oppressed in their jobs, their wages, and at a time of the war and post-war Vietnam days. — Jack Hirschman



**Malaprop's Bookstore/Cafe,
55 Haywood Street, in Asheville, NC
(828) 254-6734**

UNC Asheville

Tuesday, January 8

UNC Asheville Women's Basketball vs. USC Upstate, 7 p.m., UNC Asheville's Justice Center, \$4.

Tuesday, January 15

UNC Asheville's Great Quotes Philosophy Lecture Series: "Science and Ethics," Charles Rowe of the Institute for Applied Philosophy, 7:30 p.m., UNC Asheville's Kellogg Center, 11 Broyles Rd., Hendersonville, \$5.

Wednesday, January 16

UNC Asheville Men's Basketball vs. High Point, 7 p.m., UNC Asheville's Justice Center, \$6.

Saturday, January 19

UNC Asheville Women's Basketball vs. High Point, 2 p.m., UNC Asheville's Justice Center, \$4.

Wednesday, January 23

Thomas Rain Crowe the Boatrockers in concert, 12:45 p.m., UNC Asheville's Lipinsky Auditorium, free.

Wednesday, January 23

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Event: Screening of "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement 1954-1985," 6 p.m., UNC Asheville's Highsmith University Union room 104, free and open to the public.

Tuesday, January 29

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Event: "What Would Martin Luther King Jr. Say about the Hip-Hop Culture of Today?" reflections by local students, 12:30 p.m., UNC Asheville's Laurel Forum, Karpen Hall, free and open to the public.

Wednesday, January 30

University Chamber Music Ensemble in concert, 12:45 p.m., UNC Asheville's Lipinsky Auditorium, free.

Call (828) 251-6432 for more information on any of these events.

Don Diefenbach presents Video Production Techniques

Thursday, January 31
7:00 PM at Malaprop's
Bookstore/Cafe

Video production is an art, a science, and a business. There are excellent books that explore the technical craft of video production, and others that explore the foundations of film theory and aesthetics. Yet other texts concentrate on television and film business models.

Until now, however, students seeking to learn the essentials of video production were without a single resource that integrated these intrinsic elements. The primary mission of Video Production Techniques is to unify theory and practice in a single resource. Almost anyone can learn to run a camera and edit, but learning to be an effective storyteller is a challenging course of study that is as much about ideas and methods as it is about technology.

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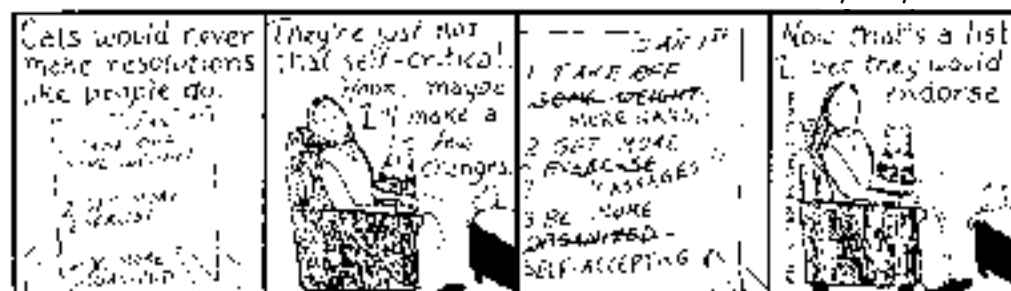
Corgi Tales by Phil Hawkins



counting firm will supervise the entries and drawing. If 550 tickets are not sold, a full refund will be provided and the raffle will not occur.

*The IRS now requires raffle winners to pay federal taxes on raffle winnings at the time of the award. The Asheville Symphony will pay to the IRS for the winner's benefit an amount equal to 38.88% of our cost of the vehicle. The tax must be paid not only on the fair market value of the winnings, but also on the tax itself, therefore a grossed up tax rate of 38.88% of the winnings. This may or may not be the actual amount you will owe on

Callie & Cats



your federal taxes. Please consult your tax advisor concerning your specific situation.

The Porsche Boxster was made available through Deal Motors, www.ashevillesymphony.org/tickets/raffle/2008-porsche-boxster-specifications

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By Amy Downs

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FINE ART

Russian Art Professionals Tour Asheville Art Museum

By JONATHAN RICH

The Asheville Art Museum recently welcomed a delegation of five art professionals from Asheville's sister city of Vladikavkaz, Russia as part of a visit to learn about arts education and the arts-based economy of Western North Carolina.

On December 4, 2007, a group from southern Russia participating in the Open World Leadership Center toured the Museum to learn about the Museum's exhibitions, programs for adults and children, as well as other collaborations and connections with area community groups.

The delegation consisting of a sculptor, choreographer/dancer, the director of a children's cultural arts center and a professional photographer was greeted by Museum Executive Director Pamela Myers and later escorted through the galleries by Adult Programs Manager Nancy Sokolove and Curator Frank Thomson.

Locally-based sculptor and painter

Vadim Bora, originally from Vladikavkaz, assisted in choosing delegation members for the trip and said the experience provided a cultural learning experience for the Russian visitors.

"It's important for young Russian people to see there are other cultures and other places that can inspire them," Bora said. "Art can introduce one nation to another and it can unite people. Asheville attracts so many artists and I am proud to be part of this process to open two cities to continued relations."

Following a tour of the exhibitions Lines of Discovery: American Drawings, Home Is Where One Starts: Paintings and Drawings by Stone Roberts and Lasting Gifts IV: Recent Acquisitions to the Permanent Collection, Museum Curator Frank Thomson showed original images from the Museum's summer 2006 exhibition Under the Skin: Tattoos and Contemporary Culture after many members of the delegation expressed interest in that fascinating exhibition.

"I see many interesting things here and wish that I had more time to explore and learn," said photographer Kazbek Tedeyev. "What impressed me most was the vision you show to educate the children, as well as the impressive library you have. There is a lot going on in a small space, but it all works well together."

Valeriy Suanov, a choreographer and dancer with the Vladikavkaz Theater, views photographs from the summer 2006 exhibition Under the Skin: Tattoos and Contemporary Culture in the Asheville Art Museum's Frances Mulhall Achilles Memorial Library.

The Open World program enables emerging political and civic leaders from participating countries to work with their U.S. counterparts and experience American-style democracy and free enterprise at the local level. The Asheville Sister Cities hosted a similar program with four arts delegates last year through the Open World Program.

"They were very interested in what we're doing here in terms of working with arts education in the community, but they also showed a strong reaction to the Stone Roberts and drawing exhibitions," said Sokolove.



Valeriy Suanov, a choreographer and dancer with the Vladikavkaz Theater, views photographs from the summer 2006 exhibition Under the Skin: Tattoos and Contemporary Culture in the Asheville Art Museum's Frances Mulhall Achilles Memorial Library.

Thomson added he was pleased the Museum could be part of the delegation's tour. "We're always excited to have art professionals from other areas visit and this is the second time a group with this program has been here," Thomson said. "Hopefully, we learn as much from the exchange as they do."

The Asheville Art Museum

Centrally located in downtown Asheville as part of Pack Square, the Asheville Art Museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. The Museum is open every Friday until 8:00 p.m. Special docent-guided tour packages are available for groups and students.

Admission to the Museum is \$6.00 for adults and \$5.00 for seniors, students with ID and for children 4-15 (children age three and younger are admitted free). Members are admitted free to the Museum.

The Asheville Art Museum collects, preserves and interprets American art of the 20th and 21st centuries with a focus on work of significance to the Southeast. The Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums and receives general operating support from businesses, foundations and individuals, as well as from the North Carolina Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of North Carolina, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. Additional support is provided by the City of Asheville and Buncombe County.

FINE ART

'Echo Early Music Festival'
cont'd from pg. 34

ers. Director and founder of Seattle, Washington's Viols for Youth program and the principal teacher for the Bay Area Youth Viols program, she now teaches viola da gamba at the University of California at Berkeley and at Mills College. She teaches cello, baroque cello, viola da gamba, and Feldenkrais privately.

Katherine Heater received her Masters of Music in Historical Performance from Oberlin Conservatory in 1993, followed by study of harpsichord and fortepiano at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam. She has performed in Taiwan, Iceland, the Netherlands and France as well as throughout the United States. Since 1996, Ms. Heater has made her home in the East Bay where she is a teacher and frequent performer with early music ensembles as well as a member of the Junior Bach Festival Board of Directors. Ms. Heater has taught at UC Santa Cruz, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and San Jose State University. She is director of the San Francisco Early Music Society's Baroque Music Workshop.

Tickets

Phone, mail, and online purchases will be delivered via US Mail or held at will-call at the performance. Please specify your preference with your order. (For *Harmonia Baroque Tickets*, please contact the Porter Center at Brevard College, (828) 884-8330.)

In Person: Tickets may be purchased at Build It Naturally, 76 Biltmore Ave. in Downtown Asheville, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Phone: (828) 505-2858. Have your credit card and mailing information ready.

Mail: Tickets purchased via mail send payment, name, address, contact info, and number/types of tickets to: Echo Early Music Festival, 35 Meadowbrook Ave., Asheville, NC 28806

Online: www.eemf.net

If you go

Echo Early Music Festival 2008 Lineup

January 26 – Benjamin Bagby, Beowulf

January 27 – Harmonia Baroque

January 28 – Lebedinsky and Brass

January 29 – Prof. Tim Carter:

Monteverdi's 'L'Orfeo'

January 30 – Echo Camerata Opera:

L'Orfeo, Favola in Musica

January 31 – Medieval Feast with harp and madrigals; Renaissance Revels with raffle

February 1 – Ensemble Vermillion:
Hidden Treasures

Folk Art Exhibition at Gallery 86

The Haywood County Arts Council's Gallery 86 will present a show featuring the work of nationally-recognized contemporary folk artist, Gabriel Shaffer.

Gabriel Shaffer is a young, up and coming, southern self-taught/visionary artist who lives and works in Asheville, NC. The son of nationally-known folk/visionary artist Cher Shaffer (most notable for her appearance in tour book "O' Appalachia"), Mr. Shaffer was raised within the self-taught medium and had contact with many folk and self-taught masters as a young boy.

His complex work is often classified in the outsider art genre, but contains many elements of graffiti writing, collage and comic book/cartoon illustration.

Gabriel Shaffer's unique art is driven by a manic obsession with the relationships between sound, symbol and image, as they are literally layer upon layer of graffiti, free association, collage and various medias, salvaged from assorted locations (abandoned hospitals, factories houses, dumpsters, etc.) which create a circuit board of color, texture and information, used to form haunting characters and communicate strange narratives from his own personal mythology.

Mr. Shaffer's characters consist of old legends, angels, protectors, tribal totems, dolls, puppets, flying houses, iconography, shape shifters, ghosts, aliens, animals and any other bizarre forms of creature or landscape his mind can conjure.

Shaffer is a solitary artist, who lives between planes, using the power of storytelling, to explore his inner worlds and simultaneously exorcise himself from the "madness of humanity." He has no other option than to "create to cope," as it is his belief mankind is living in an "apocalyptic age."

In January 2004, Shaffer sold his earliest works during the Outsider Art Fair to several collectors. He had his first exhibition in July 2004, at the Broome Street Gallery/Historic Cedar Tavern, New York City.

Since then his work has been received with remarkable acclaim. Shaffer has already exhibited in dozens of shows, and has sold work to many collectors, galleries and museums throughout major cities nationally and internationally. He made a very strong debut with the Berenberg Gallery, Boston, MA, at the Outsider Art Fair 2005. Mr. Shaffer has appeared in several magazines and newspapers including the New York Arts Magazine and Raw Vision. For

BY KAY WALDROP

more information about contemporary folk artist Gabriel Shaffer, visit his web site at www.gabrielshaffer.com.

Ted and Ann Oliver are the owners of Oliver's Southern Folk Art Museum in Hendersonville, NC. The museum specializes in art produced by self-taught artists from the Southern United States, with an emphasis on art made by African-American and Appalachian artists. For more information about Oliver's Southern Folk Art Museum visit the web site at www.oliverssouthernfolkart.com.

Born in Blue Ridge, Georgia, Ted Oliver taught art education for 31 years at the middle school, high school, and college and university levels. He earned a BSED, an MED, and an EDS from the University of Georgia in Athens.

Mr. Oliver served as a delegate to the National Art Education Association Congress, and has been named Secondary Art Educator and Art Educator of the Year in Georgia. He has written for Art Talk, a school textbook for elementary and high school students, served on the High Museum's Teacher's Advisory Committee, and conducted workshops and lectures on Folk Art in America, and in Holland, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Germany.

Ann Oliver earned a B.S. from the University of Kentucky, a Master degree in Art History from Ohio State University, and served as Curator of Education at both the Miami Art Museum and the High Museum in Atlanta, Georgia.

For additional information about programming and events offered by the Haywood County Arts Council please visit the web site at www.haywoodarts.org or call 452-0593.

The Haywood County Arts Council is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization partially funded by the North Carolina Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

If you go

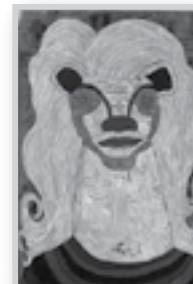
Haywood County Arts Council presents an exhibition of work by Contemporary Folk Artist, Gabriel Shaffer. Through Saturday, January 5, 2008.

Gallery 86 is located at 86 North Main Street, in Waynesville, NC.

Gallery hours are 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Exhibition is FREE & open to the public.

Gabriel Shaffer's complex imagery will be on display through Saturday, January 5, at Gallery 86.



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