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Living in the Right Time

last month, the land of TV network late-night erupted into all-out war that ended with Jay Leno back at the Tonight Show and Conan O’Brien in the ranks of the unemployed (albeit with a lovely severance package).

At the center of the conflict is time. The failure of NBC’s Jay Leno show may have something to do with its quality, but it certainly has a lot to do with the fact that the show doesn’t “belong” at 9 p.m. (Central Time). When NBC tried to find a Solomonic solution by putting Jay back on at 10:35 p.m. and bumping Conan O’Brien’s fledgling Tonight Show to 11:05 p.m., all hell broke loose. In his public statement refusing the move, Conan claimed that the integrity and historical character of The Tonight Show depended on its 10:35 time slot, and moving it would lead to the program’s “destruction.” While all of this is pretty trivial in the face of our world’s troubles—most significantly the Haiti earthquake that occurred simultaneously with this TV programming blow-up—the controversy has revealed the passion and importance of something happening at the “right” time.

The Jay/Conan kerfuffle has made me think about how a sense of time is a component of a sense of place. Among the jokes thrown about in this latest round of late-night wars is that at 12:05 a.m. (the Eastern Time proposed start-time for Conan’s Tonight Show), it’s no longer “tonight” but “tomorrow.” Of course, here in the central Midwest, 11:05 p.m. would still be “tonight.” I have long found the TV programming of Eastern Time alienating. Midnight does seem awfully late to be watching your favorite talk show. “The 11 o’clock news” also is a bizarre concept to my middleland sensibilities. Ten o’clock is when the news is “supposed” to come on! Central Time is “right” time!

Okay, before I go further, a few caveats. 1) I realize that much of what I am talking about is a factor of what I am personally used to having grown up in the Central Time Zone. 2) I realize that television programming is hardly of such consequence that one should schedule, let alone define, one’s life around it. 3) I realize that nearly half of Americans (47 percent) live in the Eastern Time Zone, and, when the of sunrise and sunset vary. My family and I also lived for two years 500 miles to the north, in Moorhead, Minnesota, and we spend time during the summer in the Northwoods near Ely, Minnesota, at about the same latitude as Moorhead. Both locations are closer enough to the “land of the midnight sun” to make a difference, and 10 p.m. summer sunsets are the norm—as are 4 p.m. winter sunsets!

Of course, Earth’s orbit about the sun is the most natural thing in the world. And what that means for when we see the sun is inherently and absolutely “right” for that particular place on Earth. What we do in designating arbitrary clock designations, Tonight Show starting times, and class schedules is merely human decision making. Our experience of place should be most fundamentally grounded in the rhythms, patterns and behaviors of the Earth. But, inescapably, our daily human existence must involve at least some artificial time constructs. And our experience of place is also very much grounded in the daily rhythms and patterns of everyday human existence.

Obviously, new and different experiences that shake us from our assumptions and dislodge us from what we’re used to are good, as they give us new perspectives on human life and the natural world. But fitting into the grooves of the same experiences, day after day, also adds to the profundity of life in place. Continuity of experience is just as important to deep experience and wise living. So for this guy who has spent a good chunk of his life living between 41 and 43 degrees north, and 91 and 87 degrees west, I’ll go ahead and call the middle of Central Time “right time.” And I’ll say with a Midlander’s pride and stubbornness that the late local news “should” begin at 10 p.m.—when it’s dark—and The Tonight Show, whoever is sitting at the desk, “should” begin at 10:30 p.m. IV

Thomas Dean wishes he could be both a night owl and an early bird.
I read a little bit about ice skating before strapping on my skates. The advice on a wiki was intimidating. It advised me, a beginner, to strap on elbow guards, wrist guards and other protective gear. It strongly recommended a helmet.

However, whenever I walk past the ice rink in Coral Ridge Mall, there always seems to be several kids gliding around effortlessly. I was never one of those kids. I was always the kid that scooted along the wall, holding on with a death grip.

I decided to channel those other kids out there at the mall today, go helmetless and try to do more skating than scooting. After all, ice skating is an easy way to burn calories while having some fun. Just a half hour of skating can burn more than 250 calories in a half hour (for a 160-pound person).

To help me in my quest to master (read: not fall down onto) the ice, I solicited the help of my boyfriend. I have wanted to try ice skating again, but I needed someone to help me get motivated and survive my adventure. In the spirit of Valentine’s Day, we were trying to find a date night activity that would be a little more exciting than the standard dinner and movie routine.

With his help I worked on standing on the ice, and then I slowly started moving. Those first steps made me feel like a cartoon who had a rug pulled out from beneath them, but my boyfriend kept me from falling.

We slowly started moving around the rink. Throughout the lap my boyfriend kept giving me advice. “Don’t be so tense—try to loosen up your muscles,” he said. “Keep your knees bent and lean forward.” Those were the biggest pieces of advice he had for me.

After 15 minutes on the ice I started skating around sans help. I even was able to handle the corners, albeit somewhat gingerly. Per my boyfriend’s advice, anytime I started feeling uneasy on my skates, I put my hands on my knees and regained a more solid center of gravity.

My fears of ice skating established when I was much younger were dissipating rapidly. I was having fun and it wasn’t even very difficult. Conversation with my boyfriend eventually switched from helping me skate to other topics. I began finding things out about him that I never knew, like how he was a huge fan of the Detroit Red Wings when he was younger. He skated around with stars in his eyes while he named off his favorite players back in the day.

I seriously impressed myself (and my boyfriend) with how well I was doing. That is until my first fall. I was gliding along by myself, started to get a bit wobbly, and then BAM! Going against everything I had been told, I apparently didn’t lean forward when I starting getting a bit shaky and ended up flat on my back on the cold ice. Within seconds my boyfriend sped across the rink and slid down onto the ice next to me. The fall hurt, but once I realized I wasn’t injured, everything was fine. So we laid on the ice laughing until we had the strength to try to stand up again and skate some more.

After that, I wasn’t afraid to fall any more, and part of the reason is the support I had. Instead of leaning on the wall for support, I leaned on my boyfriend. Trying new activities and adventures are more fun when you try them with someone you like, whether they are a friend, spouse or partner. Friends can make exercise fun. That person can give you support and help you develop the confidence to succeed at these activities. So grab a friend and get moving, whether it is on ice skates or not.

Kelly Ostrem recommends being smart when doing any activity. To quote comedian Bob Nelson: “Always wear protective gear… Don’t ever go on the field without these things on because you could get seriously killed.”
Brains, Brawn & Beauty

When I first moved to Iowa City I would get knocked off my skis when attractive women I didn’t know would smile and nod at me when we’d pass each other by on the sidewalk or in an aisle at the grocery store or the public library.

This was a lot different from the “make no eye contact, keep your purse clench under your arm like a football, keys in your hand ready to strike at the eyes” posture I was accustomed to seeing women adopt when I lived in Chicago.

I’ve seen women in Iowa City walking down the street with actual footballs clench under their arm but they never looked like they were about to straight-arm me. I’ve also seen them clenching stacks of books and cases of beer sometimes even bags of compost they were taking to their garden someplace—but always with good humor. From time to time they’ve even clench my heart too, and however long they’ve held it for, I’ve always been better off for it.

Okay, perhaps the women back in Chicago they weren’t quite as ready to attack but they certainly weren’t in the habit of smiling at strangers on the street. Maybe they would if they had a clipboard in their hands and were asking if you “had a few minutes for the environment” or whatever cause du jour they were shilling for that week, or if it were the kind of neighborhood that was in the news a lot for women being very friendly to strangers and were often arrested for it as a result.

The first dozen or so times this happened to me I actually turned around to look over my shoulder to see who it was they were smiling at.

When I saw no one there behind me and I realized that I was the intended recipient of their smile I’d respond with pointless, half-hearted waves to their backs that they never saw and a lot of them might have mistaken me for being shy.

I was simply not accustomed to strangers acknowledging each other on the street without some scheme being involved.

Though such friendliness is often referred to as being a “Midwestern” phenomenon, Chicago—where I’m from—is a part of the Midwest, and I certainly never experienced anything like this there.

There’s probably some dry sociological reason that explains this difference, but I just like to think that it’s because the women in Iowa City are uniquely wonderful.

They’re untainted by the cynicism and world-weariness and leeriness of strangers that women from bigger cities seem to have, which so often turns the act of getting to know someone well enough just to ask for their number into something only slightly less dangerous than a high-wire unicycle act performed above a mine field.

I moved to Iowa City to be with one amazing woman and stuck around to be with a second amazing one when the first relationship didn’t work out. The second relationship didn’t work out either, ultimately, but I have no regrets about either and I’m going to stick around for a while because there’s no place else in the world I’d rather keep trying to get it right.

A friend of mine who spent some time in the Army called our town a “target-rich environment” when he came for a visit once, and, numbers-wise, I suppose he was right.

But it’s not the fresh batch of young co-eds spit out of a hopper someplace who arrive here each fall and turn the town into that Star Trek episode where they visit the planet of blond girls who all wear too big sunglasses and too tight black tights that appeals to me.

Sure, because of The University of Iowa, there are more drop-dead gorgeous women here than anywhere else I’ve ever lived—more than enough distracting eye candy to guarantee a legion of auto-body shops a brisk business all year round.

But whatever passing thrill that the mere sight of them may provide you with will ultimately be a fleeting one.

The best part about growing old with someone is the time you get to spend together while you’re doing it. The person who first caught your eye in short-shorts on the peddlemall or shirtless while playing Ultimate Frisbee at age 20 would probably cause you to burst out laughing if you saw them wearing the same outfit 30 or 40 or 50 years later.

But that’s okay, because if you’re still together 50 years later I think you’ve probably impressed each other plenty enough already.

No, it’s not the quantity of women here or their beauty or youth that makes Iowa City such a wonderful place to live—it’s the quality.

All the women I’ve known in Iowa possess a certain kindness, practicality and intelligence I’ve never encountered anywhere else. They laugh out loud unabashedly. They’ll not only watch football with you without prod-ding, they’ll follow the game and understand what’s happening on the field and offer color commentary better than what’s on TV. Not only will they not balk at the idea of eating biscuits and gravy, they’ll make it for you. To me, these are uniquely Iowa traits.

Perhaps these qualities can be found in
women from big cities. Maybe they’ve even existed in women from big cities I’ve dated. If so, I was either dating the wrong women or I didn’t date the right ones long enough to find out about it.

A woman I dated in Chicago once called to ask me to come hang some shelves for her. A woman I dated in Iowa City once called me to ask if she could borrow my table saw so she could cut her own.

Sure, flowers and candy may be nice but new tires last a lot longer.

I think that’s pretty damn cool.

Though it’s Chicago that’s immortalized as the “City of Big Shoulders,” none of the women I ever dated there actually had them and this is a vastly underappreciated quality when seeking out a mate, I think.

Nor did they have the broad hips and strong backs and solid arms and legs that women here have. Maybe a few of them did but only if it was the result of time spent in soft lighting with some $75-per-hour personal trainer while sipping bottled water in a gym while hooked up to a Pilates machine that did all the work for them and they were barely breaking a sweat.

No, the women in Iowa City come by their impressive statures honestly, from hard work done in good humor because it was required of them and everybody has to pull their own weight out on the prairie.

None of the girlfriends I had when I lived in Chicago had ever haled hay or used a post-hole digger to dig holes for a barbed wire fence or spent two hours lugging 50-pound feed bags into the barn in the middle of a blizzard.

Some of the women I’ve had the pleasure to know here in Iowa actually have. I’ve seen it.

This sort of honest labor cultivates an entirely different outlook on life than if you come from a long line of stock brokers, lawyers and art dealers and your doorman carries the groceries you ordered online into the lobby for you when they’re delivered to your high-rise by Peapod.

Because of these experiences, they know firsthand that life can be hard and often involves hard work. As a result, small, thoughtful, practical acts that can make it a little easier from time to time will be seen as the romantic gestures they truly are—not merely chores outsourced to the boyfriend.

Sure, flowers and candy may be nice but new tires last a lot longer.

I think of these things now that Valentine’s Day is upon us and men will be inundated with instructions on what to buy to express our “true feelings” for that someone special.

If you’re with the right person, just mowing their lawn for them while they’re at work or surprising them with an 80-pound bag of rock salt in the wintertime can do the trick.

Somehow I don’t think that small, practical displays of affection like these would carry the same weight in a place where people didn’t have to do these things themselves or hired out for them if they did.

Women in Iowa City don’t tend to put on airs. They put on sunscreen in the summer and chapstick in the winter and bug spray in between and that’s about it.

They don’t ask to be impressed with ostentatious extravagances that they are. Here in Iowa would see them for the gaudy and ostentatious extravagances that they are.

A few PBRs and some burgers at George’s for you when they’re delivered to your high-rise will be well worth the wait if you’re lucky enough to find that person here. When you do, remember it was Iowa City that brought you together and be thankful and laugh together and whisper sweet things in each others’ ears. They don’t even have to be true as long your feelings for each other are.

I’ve never met a woman from Iowa City who put on airs. They put on sunscreen in the summer and chapstick in the winter and bug spray in between and that’s about it.

And if you don’t have someone special you’re spending Valentine’s Day with this year, just remember where you are and that it will be well worth the wait if you’re lucky enough to find that person here. When you do, remember it was Iowa City that brought you together and be thankful for that too.

Happy Valentine’s Day, Iowa City. IV

Yale Cohn is uncertain as to the true origins of Valentine’s Day but is glad there is something lighthearted to break up the wretched dreariness otherwise known as the month of February.
When I was in Washington, D.C., last month for a conference, I met a guy who goes by the name of DJ Earworm. In January, Earworm had the number one video in all of Youtube: “United State of Pop 2009,” an intricate and dizzying audio-visual mashup. It’s part of an ongoing annual series Earworm makes that mashes the year’s Billboard Top 25 Pop Hits into a carefully crafted five minutes of pure ADD pleasure. He was in D.C. serving as a panelist who discussed remix culture from the point of view of a producer, and he also deejayed the conference’s after party. I’m a curious person, so I started talking to him about his work, and found out that Earworm—born Jordan Roseman—is an Iowa City native!

**LITTLE VILLAGE:** When I met you, I recall you saying that you had a musical background before you started doing cut and paste music; am I remembering correctly? And can you tell me how you got into doing what you do now?

**EARWORM:** Yeah, I grew up in several musical households. My mother plays piano, and is involved with my stepfather’s record store, Real Records (203 North Linn St. in Iowa City). My father plays many instruments and a variety of traditional styles, and is in two local bands, Stones in the Field and Spontaneous Combustion. I grew up playing piano and making up songs, studied music theory and computer science in college, spent some time producing music, writing songs, and then kind of fell into making mashups. I thought they were fun, kind of like playing a musical game, and people really seemed to respond, so I just kept on making them.

**LV:** How does your musical background inform your deejay work? For instance, you told me that you file your loops into different folders according to the musical key.

**EARWORM:** I try to mix music that’s sounds good harmonically. It makes the tracks just flow together. I’ll shift the pitch if necessary,
or just use the rules of harmony to limit myself as to which songs I’ll mix together.

LV: Can you explain why it's important for you to build your remixes that way, in terms of making a nice sounding remixed composition?

EARWORM: In music there are 12 different notes, and each combination of notes has its own distinctive sound. Some combinations sound considerably more pleasant than others, a sensation we experience as harmony. Knowing which of the note combinations you're hitting, and when, and why, can really help you express music—since much of the drama and beauty of music is experienced through the fluctuations in the harmony.

LV: How would you describe what you do to someone who isn't familiar with remix culture?

EARWORM: I take a bunch of pieces of music apart and put them back together into a new song. It's kind of like a medley, except the sounds are layered on top of each other, perhaps with vocals from one song accompanying instruments from another. My goal is to make a music collage that sounds like one song.

LV: What do you say to someone who thinks that sampling and remixing is just a lazy way of making music?

EARWORM: I think we all have a realistic assessment of the risks involved. I'm aware, but I can't worry.

LV: Are your parents worried about the potential copyright liabilities caused by the music you make? Are you?

EARWORM: I use Ableton Live and Final Cut Pro. I'd recommend Ableton Live or ACID for making the music.

LV: Did you say your dad is a math professor at The University of Iowa? Did you spend time in Iowa City, and did you start messing around with electronic music until a bit later.

EARWORM: Yes he is, and also currently the chairman of the Johnson County Democratic Party. My mother was also faculty at the university at one point. I grew up in Iowa City, going to Henry Sabin and Lincoln elementary schools, but didn't start messing around with electronic music until a bit later.

LV: What software and hardware do you use to make your music and those videos? And if someone is just starting out doing this kind of work, what software would you recommend they use?

EARWORM: I use Ableton Live and Final Cut Pro. I'd recommend Ableton Live or ACID for making the music.

LV: What do you say to someone who thinks that sampling and remixing is just a lazy way of making music?

EARWORM: It can be. It's possible to do very little work, but, believe me, it's possible to spend a lot of time and energy on a re-sampled work. I think it's wonderful that people without a lot of musical know-how can experiment with music and express themselves musically.

LV: Have you ever had a copyright owner complain about your use of their work? If not, or if it doesn’t happen regularly, why do you

EARWORM: I think we all have a realistic assessment of the risks involved. I'm aware, but I can't worry.

LV: Have you ever had a copyright owner complain about your use of their work? If not, or if it doesn’t happen regularly, why do you
Valentine’s Day is nearly upon us: the season of love and kisses, of hearts and flowers, of infinite romantic possibility, right?

“Let’s face it,” says Angie Toomsen of Dreamwell Theater. “It’s a totally lame holiday that glosses over the true complexity of human relationships and makes people feel like crap if they’re single or heartbroken.”

Okay, so Hearts and Flowers she ain’t. But why let one cynical outlook spoil an otherwise idyllic holiday?

“Valentine’s Day is a sappy and thoroughly commercial holiday, utterly without merit,” adds Dreamwell’s Josh Sazon. “Love is not cutesy, love is not sweet and happy and wonderful. For the most part, it really is an absolutely wretched condition to be in, where pain and insecurity and miscommunication and petty jealousy is the order of the day.”

Okay, then.

Think of it this way: Remember back to your first junior high romance. Those mortifyingly earnest notes slipped through locker vents between classes, the paralytically stiff slow dancing in the gym during school dances. It was pretty wretched, wasn’t it? It only makes sense then, as Dreamwell enters into its 12th year of theater in Iowa City, that it kicks off the season with a show about love that squirms with the fear and loathing of everyone’s adolescent romantic experience.

That show is Down With Love: an Anti-Valentine’s Day Valentine’s Cabaret, an evening of music spanning decades and genres, and dedicated, according to their website, to showing “what a completely annoying little jerk the devilish Cupid can be.” Directed by Sazon and produced by Toomsen and Dreamwell Theater, the show will feature actors from Dreamwell and many other area companies, including Toomsen herself.

The show plays for one night only: Sunday, February 14th at the Mill Restaurant starting at 7:30 p.m.

That’s right: Valentine’s Day. And don’t expect Dreamwell’s tween rebellion to stop there. Co-founder and past Board President Matt Falduto predicts a season that will both entertain audiences and challenge their assumptions about theater.

“We call the season A Taboo Bijou, as every show tackles a taboo subject,” he explains, almost giddy with the possibility. Taboo theater in Iowa? you ask, chuckling as you ruffle the hair of this audaciousness 12-year-old upstart theater company. Isn’t that cute? How edgy can it really be?

Be warned: This is not the idle threat of a junior high hooligan. The very next show
on Dreamwell’s calendar promises to be a flaming bag of dog mess left on the doorstep of conservative and mundane theater traditions, and they’ve invited the audience to be in on the prank.

“Poona the F**kdog [by University of Iowa grad Jeff Goode] hilariously skewers everything from language to sex to terrorism to religion to sex again,” Falduto explains. “There’s a giant singing penis, for God’s sake.” Though the show is subtitled “(and other plays for children),” Falduto warns that this show is definitely not for children, not even the most precocious 12-year-old, nor for the faint of heart. But for the rest of us, hidden in the bushes as Dreamwell strikes the match and rings the doorbell, he promises it will be impossible not to laugh out loud.

In March, Dreamwell will produce Blackbird, the story of a woman who confronts the man who had been her lover when she was only a child as he leaves prison. Then, in the summer, Dreamwell will stage 9 Parts of Desire, a play about the women of Iraq and how they deal with love and pain in a time of war and change. The season mixes the satirical with the serious, the sacred with the profane, in the spirit of every young punk.

As they look to the future, the teen years looming ahead, Falduto and crew dream the dream that every teenager has nurtured since the dawn of time: They want to move out of their parent’s basement and get a place of their own.

“We have one major goal and that’s a new home,” explains Falduto. “We’ve been doing shows [on the basement stage] at Unitarian Universalist since the beginning and we’ve ventured to other locations in the past decade, but we really want a permanent home to call our own.”

The company will be saving their allowance, and any tax-deductible contributions audience members and lovers of the theater care to make, through 2010 in the hopes of setting up their own space in 2011.

But that is some time off, and for now, Dreamwell is all about getting Down With Love.

“Despite the title, we think this will actually be a fun night for singles and lovebirds alike,” explains Angie Toomsen. “You can come enjoy the Mill’s food and drinks and have some fun, quality entertainment. You don’t have to hate Valentine’s Day to have a great time.”

But it might help, right?

“The painful aspects of love sometimes seem easier to stomach that the syrupy sweet stuff,” she explains, but is quick to add, “Just to be clear, if my boyfriend forgets Valentine’s Day this year, he’s dead.”

Adam Witte is a Language Arts teacher at Washington High School in Cedar Rapids. He will be performing with SPT Theater’s “Writer’s Room” series at the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art on February 12-13 at 7:30 p.m. His greatest work, however, is done on the feline ranch he runs with his beautiful and patient wife, Candice. He is a lucky man.

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<< EARWORM FROM PAGE 9

think that is?

EARWORM: It’s never happened! Quite the opposite, I’ve been approached many times to make mashups for artists. I think most artists realize that a good mashup functions as promotion, and rather than eating into their sales and profits, it actually benefits them.

LV: Is there an underlying idea behind mashing up the Billboard Top 25?

EARWORM: People shift their buying habits according to their changing needs. Last year, a good number of songs were essentially songs of seduction, so I tried to craft a soft sexy vibe. This year, people needed a bit more comfort, so they bought songs that were reassuring—as in Jay Sean’s “Down” or Keri Hilson’s “Knock You Down,” or inspirational, as in Beyonce’s “Halo” or Miley Cyrus’s “The Climb.” I wanted to encapsulate these feelings as well as to celebrate the music that can bring that comfort and inspiration.

LV: What’s it like to have the number one video in all of YouTube? I just opened the most recent Entertainment Weekly and saw that your 2009 video was No. 1 in their The List section at the front of the mag. Crazy.

EARWORM: Crazy is right! It’s great, kind of hard to believe the intensity and quantity of feedback, but I appreciate it immensely!

Kembrew McLeod lives and teaches in Iowa City. He is spending the winter days learning all the various different “ass” dances described throughout the decades in popular song. After that, he can truly say that he is putting the ass back into his job title, associate professor.
Love in the Time of Syllabi

If the odd clan of former English majors has one supposedly obvious thing in common, it’s our love of reading. You don’t spend thousands of dollars perfecting literacy unless you mean it. I sure as hell can’t get a job scouring Shakespeare for tips on making efficiency efficient, or whatever business types do. I’ve taken to adding “so I went to school to go back to school” to the end of my field of study listing—and seeing that starting a masters in social work is on my agenda for 2010, my invented truism seems solid.

Upon undergraduating in May of 2008, however, I had a terrible realization. This love of the book—that youth-spawned fawning over perfect or beautifully messy concoctions of stories and characters and ideas and phrases—had somehow been lost. I lost my craving for hitting chapter marks and reading revelatory quotes to patient friends and bored family members. I suddenly remembered that I hadn’t had a “to-read” list in years. My consumption had been prescribed and, like any good student, I took my literary pills and came back reporting fine intellectual health.

To all my former professors that might pick up this magazine and fall faint from the words or give me the good riddance I probably deserve: This isn’t about you. You’ll be happy to know my story does not have a tragic arc. This is paradise found then lost and then regained, if that’s any sort of classically recognized structure (those were never my specialty). This is about how I learned to stop analyzing and love the book, the fulfilling third act in American English majors’ lives. I hope it’s shared.

Something happens in the midst of the semester reading schedule. The syllabus lists chapter timelines and assignments, midterm and almost-final and final papers and quizzes, a smattering of directed historical responses here, a group project there. The book is the center of it, the cherished prop, the purpose for the statements—but in the clatter of it all, the central relationship to the work isn’t nurtured. To a large extent, it can’t be. Professors can’t give me an A for my deeper appreciation for love and regret in Willa Cather’s My Mortal Enemy—they can grade a paper I’d write on such themes, sure, but that’s more a rating of my rhetorical skill than a judgment of what I’ll take with me beyond the classroom.

In a perfect world, both meet in holy union. Despite repeated attempts in high school and early college, I doubt I would have finished James Joyce’s Ulysses without a full class devoted to forcing me through. I would not have found Rushdie so soon, nor Joan Didion. Cather wouldn’t have stood a chance against William Faulkner, though I now know I prefer the former.

Often, however, exercises are just exercises. I can’t remember much about Oscar Wilde’s work, despite taking an entire class on his decadent life and times. William Blake held more of a visual interest than a poetic one—there was just so much to get through! So little time! And the sum of it all? Pockets of understanding, a few puzzle-pieced papers and a good grade. Enough for most. But for love?

Even my favorite book, Marilyn Robinson’s
Now, hallelujahs in hand, I've fallen again for the book.

something nonfiction. Unrestrained again, I can sneak passages of David Simon and Ed Burn's *The Corner* during work breaks, fill long New York City subway rides with Milan Kundera's relationship meta-meditations from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, lose my appetite forever with Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, or scare while contemplating a potentially pathetic future with Keith Gessen's *All the Sad Young Literary Men*. Perhaps this will be the year I crack Nabokov's *Lolita*, finish the rest of Updike's *Rabbit* series, or knock off a whole row of my youth's used book collection—previously marked for "future" consumption.

For now, I will weigh myself down with more Bolaño (The Savage Detectives) and Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*, with the hope that great books continue to fall into my bag. Perhaps I'm misinterpreting my three-act romance and I'm in for a five-part tragedy of ancient sorts. Come what may, I have a wonderful feeling, however, that despite whatever misadventures lay around the corner—college round two, 2012, balding—the book and I are tangled together for good.

Paul Sorenson still knows there are truckloads of books he's missing. You can email him to recommend whatever your heart desires or yell at him until your heart's content at paul@littlevillagemag.com.
It is important to note that I might be the least qualified person to write about e-books. I didn’t even own an e-typewriter or an e-phone until last year. Like some sort of technological Rip Van Winkle, I have awoken to find a world where the letter “e” before any word transforms it into some marvelous must-have device. The e-book somehow symbolizes something darker to me than abandoning my rotary phone for a flashy little texting machine.

A whiplash negative reaction to the idea of e-text devouring the printed word comes easy to the lips when lazily drinking with friends at George’s. People get a dreamy look in their eye and start softly talking about how they need the smell of a book. They need to run their fingers over the rough-hewn pages like an old lover they keep going back to. When faced with the idea of electronic books and what they symbolize, my face contorts and I imagine an extreme world where I am a mix of Robert Duvall in THX-1138 and Malcolm McDowell in A Clockwork Orange. Will I be trapped in an all-white world, eyes artificially pulled open, and forced to read Dan Brown while sitting in a white plastic penis-shaped chair?

Sadly, no. When I finally fondled the Kindle, the e-reader from Amazon.com, it was hardly the fetish object I expected.

This was the machine that would take away my Alistair-Cooke-by-the-fire scenarios of reading?

Currently there are three main players in the e-reader game. Amazon’s Kindle has made the biggest splash in the market, but maintains a closed system. With a cartel-like sensibility the Bezos gang wants you to only use their software and their database. As I came to understand the model I couldn’t help but think of Sony and the ill-fated Betamax. My friend Michelle, whose Kindle I fondled, gave me the bottom line on why her first generation e-reader works for her.

“Kindle made the first feasible technology which was fast and had cheap downloads with an iTunes-like model,” she said. She continues on with her hierarchy on reading ethics, “I don’t want books to go away, but you can’t buy everything. I buy hardcovers of authors I know, love, want to re-read, possibly one day teach and possibly could love.” For her Kindle she has her quick reads, the kind she wants when she is at the gym or on a plane. She adds, “It does one thing really well.”

The Iowa City Public Library launched its
e-reader online collection in December. If you want to use the ICPL’s new EPUB e-books from the Overdrive collection you will need a Sony reader or a Barnes and Noble’s Nook. This collection can also be read on your home computer by downloading a free Adobe reader program available through the ICPL website. By signing into the ICPL website, one can peruse what is available and check it out for your e-reader at home.

“It works like a traditional library model,” she explained. “You can choose to check out an e-book for seven to 14 days. The file expires after the lending period. The bonus is that there are no late fees.”

And just like the other books in the library, if someone has checked out the e-edition, you can put it on reserve for when it is available. When I glanced over Kara’s head to the aisles of books on the main floor I couldn’t help but be overwhelmed with the idea of where to even start the e-collection. Jason Paulios, the ICPL’s fiction e-book selector informed me that they start with the current New York Times bestseller list along with the Indiebound bestseller list. From those current popular titles, the e-collection grows, with a yearly budget of $10,000 for purchasing nonfiction and fiction e-titles.

Every day ICPL’s e-collection grows, with a yearly budget of $10,000 for purchasing nonfiction and fiction e-titles.

Oh No You Di’int
7 Ways the IC Grammar Police Will Call You Out & Embarrass Your Face

In a city where you can’t swing a cat without smashing a Ph.D. in the teeth, there’s nowhere to hide from the eagle-eyed grammar police. Here are a few common reasons your grammar might be less than “fresh.”

1. “unnecessary” quotation marks—So your fish is “fresh,” huh? You’ve got a “new” bike for sale? When you put quotation marks around something, it either means you are quoting a person, or that the word inside the quotes is the opposite of what you really mean. You know, sarcasm? In this case, the fish is rank and your bike is rusty. Use with extreme caution.

2. It’s/Its, Your/You’re—Apostrophe=contraction, no apostrophe=possession. You’re a big kid now. It’s time to get this in your brain, for permanent.

3. Irregardless—This one’s wrong. Terribly, embarrassingly wrong. Delete this from your working vocabulary and save yourself a world of finger pointing, snickering and big tears. Substitute: regardless.

4. Alright—I have been shamed by this one. An old, creaky echo from the hallowed halls of Proper Grammar University informed me once that “all right” is two words, no matter how much friendlier and more fun it looks as one.

5. Reflect back—Ah, redundancies. Redundancies like this inspire me to imagine myself mirrored into the past, bumping into my current self on the way there, and throttling said current self for using “reflect back” in a sentence.

6. Lose/Loose—This one’s always floored me. It gets screwed up all the time, and I’m not quite sure why. Lose as in “lose your keys” and loose as in “loose association” or “screw loose.” There’s that extra “o,” see?

7. Anyways—Replace with “any way,” as in “anyhow” or “in any case.” According to UrbanDictionary.com, anyways is “um… basically just a cooler and better version of the word anyway,” but it’s still wrong. If you choose to use it, consider yourself warned (and probably cooler than me anyway).

Stephanie Catlett is an Iowa City writer, just like everybody else.

E-BOOKS CONTINUED ON PAGE 21 >>
As Iowa Citians, we love to celebrate Iowa City’s writers. But oft we forget that writers love to celebrate Iowa City too, by writing our Midwest hamlet into their pages. From autobiographies to airport novels, from the whimsical to the sincere, Iowa City has been the setting for both writers and their books. The list is long and varied; these books are just a snapshot of Iowa City’s great literary landscape.

John Irving
The Water Method Man (1972)
In what would become a familiar theme for those who passed through Iowa City, legendary author Irving’s protagonist is Fred Trumper, a University of Iowa graduate student. The water method, as it turns out, is Trumper’s chosen treatment for his abnormally narrow urinary tract which involves drinking copious amounts of water before and after sex to flush bacteria from his urethra.

Robin Hemley
Do-Over! (2009)
Hemley, the director of the UI Nonfiction Writing Program, does his best Billy Madison in Do-Over!, in which he revisits failed moments from his youth including, for instance, a stint at Iowa City’s Horace Mann Elementary School where he successfully survives kindergarten without pooping his pants. The premise is a great comedic vehicle, and as could be expected, a chance to impart some valuable wisdom.

Nam Le
The Boat (2008)
The acclaimed debut of another workshop talent, Le’s The Boat racked up some prestigious hardware, including the Dylan Thomas award. The book collects seven characters with seven stories spanning the globe, the first of which is the self-referential Love and Honor and Pity and Pride and Compassion and Sacrifice, which relates the story of a Vietnamese-born character called Nam Le who is attending a writing workshop in Iowa City.

Stephen Lovely
Irreplaceable (2009)
Irreplaceable begins with Alex Voormann grading SCAT (Secondary Composition Advancement Testing) essays for U.S. Exam, a thinly-veiled reference to an all-too-familiar vocation for Iowa Citians in career limbo. Lovely weaves in plenty of other well-known Iowa City locales like Java Joe’s and the New Prairie Co-op. Equally apparent is Lovely’s time as a night clerk at the UI’s Intensive Care Unit which delicately informs this story of life, death, loss and redemption.

Bharati Mukherjee
Jasmine (1989)
Jyoti begins life in Hasnapur, India before becoming Jasmine, Jase, and finally Jane, married to a banker and living on an Iowa farm. Early on, as Jase, she is asked “How can you leave New York? You belong here, Iowa’s dull and it’s flat.” It would seem that the Iowa of the 1980s was as far removed from New York as India. Jasmine is a story of rebirths, culminating in Jane giving birth to the child of a white man at the University of Iowa Hospital.
John McNally
After the Workshop (2010)

Years after graduating from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, protagonist Jack Sheahan is still in Iowa City struggling to complete his novel and making a living as an escort for more successful writers invited to read in our city of lit. Sheahan’s world is one that Iowa grad, and former media escort, McNally knows well.

Larry McMurtry
Moving On (1970)

Iowa City isn’t so much a setting in Moving On as it is a notion. It is, for some characters, the where of moving on. Set in 1960s Texas, Iowa City represents the rest of life, the future, raising a family. Oddly enough, for many twenty- and thirty-somethings in 2010, Iowa City is that strange place smack in the middle of life’s journey between growing up and moving on.

Denis Johnson
Jesus’ Son (1992)

Fight Club author Chuck Palahniuk lists Jesus’ Son as one of his all-time favorites, which tells a lot about the books sensibilities straight away. It’s a fragmented, poetic collection of 11 short stories about drugs, drink and death. The unnamed narrator’s tales of mischief, misdeeds and misfortune wander the country including time in Iowa City to get drunk at The Vine, for instance.

Chelsea Cain
Dharma Girl (1996)

Before she became a peddler of gory thrillers, like Heartsick, Chelsea Cain was a young girl living on a hippie commune just outside Iowa City. Somewhere in between she wrote this memoir of a road trip from Los Angeles to Iowa City with her ailing mother to visit the communal farm of her younger days. On her website, Cain says “this book is flawed and pretty novice in many ways, but it will always be my favorite.”

James Patterson
Double Cross (2007)

Patterson—who has become more of a crime novel industry head than author with his bevy of assistants and assembly-line approach—sends arch-villain Kyle Craig to Iowa City while on the lam. Craig ambles down the literary walk, grabs some wine at The Sanctuary and heads to the UI Main Library to log into MySpace. High-brow it is not, but best-selling it is. Patterson holds the Guinness World Record for most New York Times best sellers with 51, including former No. 1 Double Cross.
There are no surprises when the clothes come off. It’s only when we put something on that we start revealing ourselves. We’re never so naked as when we’re wearing our favorite clothes. So, to explore the tensions within the greatest designer of the 20th century is an efficient way of exploring the psychology of her time, which is what Anne Fontaine’s new movie does. Coco Before Chanel, which plays at the Bijou February 5th through 11th, is extremely well-made: the acting, editing, script, etc., are all impeccable. But the movie has the feel of a contemporary Chanel garment—exquisite but a little staid—rather than one of the startling gowns or Cubist hats designed by Coco herself.

We Americans love to tell ourselves a certain story, most fully revealed in the Western, of a man descending into a savage place and using violence to bring justice to it. The French, on the other hand, when they bother with something so pedestrian as a plot, tend to reenact the story of their revolution. My favorite versions of this myth are Jean Renoir’s Grand Illusion and Rules of the Game. Coco is another mixed-emotion celebration of revolution—in this case, the revolutionizing of fashion through the subversion of the aristocracy’s taste.

Coco is played by Audrey Tautou, of Amélie fame, who brings a mesmerizing intensity to the role. The central problem of the movie is identity: Coco doesn’t know who she is to become, but she knows who she’s not. Though lacking the angularity of Coco herself, Tautou’s face expresses any number of variations on the tensions of ambition and disgust in her character’s relationship to the aristocrats who seem always to be fawning over her.

The story begins with our heroine, Gabrielle at this point, being dropped off at an orphanage by her father, who never returns. (Throughout the movie she improvises stories about her childhood as she seeks to fashion an identity for herself.) After a time as a dance hall chanteuse, acquiring her nickname by singing “Coco at the Trocadero,” she dodges poverty and destitution by becoming a mistress to Etienne Balsan, marvelously played by Benoît Poelvoorde. Balsan is the quintessential lovable-hateable aristocrat. When Coco stares awestruck at his huge leather-bound library, he breezily declares, “Don’t worry. I haven’t read any of them.” He oppresses Coco, drunkenly declaring her his “geisha,” but he also loves her insofar as his worldview permits. In the meantime, Coco is finding herself—stripping away the fripperies of the luxurious ladies around her, but also admiring something of their power and freedom. Finally, Coco falls
in love with Arthur “Boy” Capel, and their tumultuous love energizes her to emerge as the great designer.

Movies about artists rarely capture much of their process, which is either too boring or too unreachably mysterious for a director. But Coco does a good job of lightly suggesting the eye and hand of the maker. A flash of some sailors in blue stripes hauling in their catch in great woven nets immediately suggests to the viewer what it is suggesting to the designer herself. Even in the first scene, when she’s dropped off at the orphanage, a viewer instinctively feels the power of fashion in the pale uniforms and crazy white nun’s habits.

There’s something magical about the first years of the 20th century, when everything was either being lost or found, and everything was possible: flight, universal brotherhood, women in men’s clothes. It’s to the movie’s credit it captures some of this revolutionary feeling with a very light touch; this is no mere biopic. But it’s perhaps to Coco’s detriment it feels more like a Merchant-of-Ivory production than Jules et Jim. In the last scene, when models in Coco’s dresses are parading down mirror-lined stairs, and memories flash through the maker’s mind, I felt a little cheated, as if a score by Stravinsky (with whom it’s rumored Coco had an affair) and a more exuberant editing style would have really made this fine film blossom.

Gertrude Stein, one of Coco’s contemporaries, once remarked that a culture could be judged by its hats. Little did Coco know that the revolution she began by putting a man’s hat on a woman’s hairdo would end with a parade of slouchy, odd-turned baseball- and stocking-caps. Ah, well: One of the joys of the movies is the nostalgic journey back to when even the bums wore tilted fedoras and the beauties something with a feather. 

There’s something magical about the first years of the 20th century, when everything was either being lost or found, and everything was possible.

Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College. He is also sometimes a moderator on KCRG’s “Ethical Perspectives on the News” and sometimes a cook at Simone’s Plain and Simple, the French restaurant in the middle of nowhere.
Seeing HOTT for the first time at the Mill on New Years Eve was—for me—a revelation. They put on a show that was crackling with energy, exactly what punk rock promises but rarely delivers. It was also funny, and sense of humor is not always a punk strong point. Singer Ed Nehring, whose orange jumpsuit, hearing protection, and tennis shoes (all with a matching yellow racing stripe) seemed to be a demented airport runaway worker with delusions of being Elvis. Guitarist Kylie Buddin, bassist Eric Johnson, and drummer Jeff Keyser played together as tightly as jeans a size too small, projecting raw punk power. It was very much a show, a parody of all the broad rock gestures that date back to Jerry Lee Lewis. At the same time the passion and conviction of their performance made it much more than a cheap laugh.

As an old townie geezer, I was excited that the core of the band—Nehring and Buddin—are guys that have been around the Iowa City music scene for over 20 years. Not only that, the other bands on the bill contained Iowa City scene vets: Illinois John Fever’s drummer Bob Hall and Liberty Leg’s singer Ethan Richeson both passed through the legendary and notorious Iowa Beef Experience, in addition to being in many other local bands over the years. But the bands that played that night were not revival acts, or older dudes trying to recapture their youth. They make new music that’s very much of the current moment, even as it partakes of traditional rock forms.

Nehring and Buddin started playing together in 1983. Buddin says, “My first band was Human Error. That band evolved over time to include Ed as the singer. A couple of years later we formed Red Throb, that was a better band.” Since then Buddin has been in several other groups, most recently Stickman, which has been performing and recording for 12 years.

“You have to do something to stay sane as an adult.”

For some people it’s boats and motorcycles and cars, but those things never really interested me.”

—Kylie Buddin, Hott guitarist

Nehring had actually taught Jeff Keyser drums when he was in junior high. When the opportunity to play shows came up, they decided Hott needed either a drummer or a singer.

“I ran across [Jeff] at the Skate Park, and I just said ‘hey man, you want to sit in for drums with the band? Because I’d like to try out the vocals and see if I can still pull it off,’” Nehring said. “He was like ‘sure,’ and he came over and sat down behind the drums and—it was the thing that made everything work, it was the gel we needed to make everything happen. And we knew it instantly that it was.
Just as soon as he played it was like ‘yeah, yeah, yeah this is what we needed.’”

Their performance persona was dictated by the music itself.

“As we wrote songs, we started getting a better idea of what it was we were doing and probably the best approach was to do this as if we were different characters, to have fun with it, just to make it ridiculous. The lyrics defined my character, this giant ego-driven, comic book type.”

While the music of Hott cleaves closely to the traditions of punk and hardcore, some of the inspiration for Hott’s theatricality was, according to Nehring, “’70s British B-grade glam that influenced the ’70s punk movement in England. We really liked the kind of pre-punk vibe—that weird thing where you had these older rock ‘n’ roll guys writing teenage rock ‘n’ roll songs and dressed up in glitter and stuff seemed bizarre and interesting to me.”

While their presentation is obviously contrived, as Nehring says, “We wink at the audience, and then give them something that makes them forget the wink. When we get up on stage, it’s pretty darn obvious that this is going to be ridiculous fun, that this is going to be kind of stupid, that’s the point. But when we start playing we want it to rock so hard that they forget that it’s just plain stupid. They just have stupid fun.”

“I think when I was an angry young punk rocker,” Buddin says, “I just wanted to get it out. Back then it was about anger and aggression, and the thing we’re doing now, though it’s fast and aggressive like hardcore, I feel like the nature of the material is lighthearted, lyrically.”

The music of Hott reflects a more grown-up attention to detail, and the connection to rock ‘n’ roll’s eternal youth culture is more ironic and knowing than a younger band could muster. At the same time, both Buddin and Nehring are fans of the young Iowa City bands, like Bear Weather, Pacific Proving Grounds, The Tanks, Lipstick Homicide, and Petit Mal.

“There’s so many good local bands,” says Buddin, “it’s hard to pick a favorite.”

In 2010, Hott plans to record an album and play more shows, but I didn’t ever sense the sort of careerist ambition for world domination that drives some younger musicians. It’s taken Hott six years to get the point of playing shows on a regular basis, so they’re in no hurry to do anything besides perfecting their songs and live show. The one thing that doesn’t seem to be a deciding factor for Hott—or indeed any of the other current bands with veteran members in Iowa City—is nostalgia. The energy of youth drives the creation of a lot of rock music, and it’s the image of youth that sells tickets, they purchase those authors’ older titles. Every day their e-collection grows, with a yearly budget of $10,000 for purchasing non-fiction and fiction e-titles from Overdrive’s content reserve.

The e-reader is about to be integrated into the next form of portable media devices. Soon that bitten Apple, the originator of sinful fetish devices, will introduce the iSlate. This will be the next generation of e-readers. A unified theory of all your portable media needs will be in one fancy tablet.

That will be for the early adaptors who want to shell out the big bucks for a first generation model, but it will be a sign of things to come. For now the existing models can facilitate easy e-reading.

It is important to note as the e-reader device technology accelerates at an alarming rate, the legal status of digital rights have slowed to a snail’s pace in the courts. As far as content rights go, it is still a murky mess. It’s more complicated than Thelonious Monk’s right to shell out the big bucks for a first generation model, but it will be a sign of things to come. For now the existing models can facilitate easy e-reading. It is important to note as the e-reader device...

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

Erin E. McCaskey gets through the winter with the help of dark beer, ELO and the films of Werner Herzog.
February 2010 | Little Village

CRAIG ELEY

The Haps

February is a short month, a month for groundhogs, lovers, groundhog lovers, and, this time around, music lovers as well. I’m really excited because three of the artists coming through town this month have been responsible for some of my favorite albums of the last four years, and also because the newest venue in town has two super-marquee events.

One artist who made two great albums in the last four years is St. Vincent (born Annie Clark). 2007’s Marry Me was set to be her breakout record, as she was literally breaking out from Sufjan Stevens’ band into her own solo career. While she certainly brought along the his penchant for super-lush pop orchestration, she also shed the burden of his humorless, tiresome lyrics for more refreshing and playful fare (a line from the title track: “We’ll do what Mary and Joseph did/without the kid”).

However, while that album was damn good, it wasn’t until 2009’s Actor that she achieved indie superstar status. Actor is a darker and more precise affair, both in terms of musical arrangement and songwriting, however, it’s also more immediately accessible. This launched it at No. 90 on the Billboard charts, and, importantly, garnered her a lot of famous friends. The inevitable pairing was with fellow orchestral wordsmith Andrew Bird, whom she toured with. She also teamed up with Wisconsin heartthrob Bon Iver for “Roslyn,” on this year’s The Twilight Saga: New Moon soundtrack. She plays Feb. 16th at the Blue Moose Taphouse.

That’s right! The Blue Moose. Opening a new venue is a big deal around here, and three days before St. Vincent I’m guessing many folks will lay their eyes on the place for the first time at the Jenny Hoyston/William Elliott Whitmore show on Feb. 13th. Everyone from the door staff to the beer prices will be subject to the critical eye of indie music fans, and

Picador Peril?

The little club that everyone loves to gossip about was back on blast last month, thanks to the place being currently for sale and going on hiatus for a few weeks in January. But they’re open again now, so I’d like to briefly address what’s become a (sadly) familiar refrain around town: “The Picador used to have good shows. Now it doesn’t. Who cares if it closes?!” Well, I do. But before I get into that, keep in mind that this sidebar isn’t an excuse for some of the sad events in The Picador’s past (especially the firing of Doug Robeson), or a dig on other places. It’s just, you know, how I feel.

First of all, while the Picador’s lack of “good” shows in recent months is certainly related to larger economic factors, it’s also, frankly, an issue of taste. Other venues have indie rock shows now, but the fact that “indie” has gone “mainstream” (a point not worth laboring, Garden State, etc.) is what makes those events even possible (and profitable). While on any given night we might want our rock clubs to be barometers of mainstream(-ish) taste by booking currently “hot” bands, what distinguishes clubs like The Picador is their capacity to also take risks and bring in kinds of music not available elsewhere.

For example, if we look at perhaps the two most musically interesting and critically celebrated genres of independent music in the last five years—metal and noise—then we’re forced to recognize that The Picador has booked some of the premier bands in each (Boris and Wolf Eyes come to mind). And if you don’t think metal and noise were big stories in the last five years of music, then check out the decade-end coverage from publications ranging from Pitchfork to The New Yorker. Whether or not it’s your cup of tea (or plastic cup of Beam), the Picador is still the best venue at keeping it weird, to borrow a motto from Austin, Texas. And we all benefit from that.

For more thoughts on the issue, check out LittleVillageMag.com.
I, for one, hope that the Blue Moose will not wither under the pressure.

Anyway, the whole point of shows is the music (right?) and these two former roommates collaborated for an absolute gem of an album with 2006’s *Hallways of Always*. While Hoyston is perhaps most famous for being the vocalist of no-wave band Erase Errata, and Whitmore is best known for barking banjo songs, this collaboration makes more sense in light of Hoyston’s Paradise Island and self-titled material. (If you can manage to track down her cover of Buffy Sainte-Marie’s “The Dream Tree,” it’s so worth it.) This show will feature a set from each player individually and then the first-ever performance of *Hallways of Always*, in its entirety, with the two of them (although “Black Iowa Dirt” has been a live Whitmore staple for some time).

Lastly, on Feb. 1st at The Picador the incredibly underappreciated Mountains come through town, in support of their toweringly awesome 2009 record, *Choral*. With two songs crossing the 12-minute mark, this is classic, epic, textured, ambient dronescapes, done melodically, rhythmically and beautifully. That’s a lot of descriptors there, but this music actually has as much in common with circa 2006 Nathan Fake as it does with Eno. It’s pulsing and sleepy and just plain great.

And, hey! Dr. Dog is playing the Mill on Feb. 6th and Justin Townes Earle (Steve’s kid) is there on the 23rd. IV

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

That’s right! The Blue Moose. Opening a new venue is a big deal around here, and I’m guessing many folks will lay their eyes on the place for the first time at the Jenny Hoyston/William Elliott Whitmore show.

**UPCOMING SHOWS**

**FEB 5**
- DAVE MOORE
- DR. DOG

**FEB 13**
- HA HA TONKA

**FEB 18**
- UNDERGROUND CHICAGO DUO

**FEB 19**
- BRIGHTON MA

**FEB 23**
- JUSTIN TOWNES EARLE

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**FEB 5/6**
- SECOND CITY COMEDY

**FEB 8**
- DARK STAR ORCHESTRA

**FEB 10**
- ROSANNE CASH

**FEB 13**
- PEKING ACROBATS

**FEB 19-21**
- WONDERFUL TOWN

**FEB 21**
- MOULIN ROUGE

**FEB 25**
- RALPHIE MAY

**FEB 27**
- OLD CAPITOL CHORUS

**MAR 5/6**
- SNOW WHITE

**MAR 7**
- HOLLYWOOD LIVE! engler.org/hollywood

**MAR 19**
- GAELIC STORM

**MAR 31**
- BOOKER T with JJ Grey

**APR 3**
- GREG BROWN

**APR 11**
- CHICK COREA

**MAY 7**
- JOE BONAMASSA

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beaters about conspicuous consumption and drunken anonymous sex.

Ghostbustaz aren’t entirely infatuated with the old school. “Keep it Low, Bro,” finds Def3 getting pretty close to Ludacris’ buttery, start-stop-then-hold-it-out flow over a beat of deep pulses and eerie synth fluctuations that wouldn’t sound too out of place riding alongside a chopped and screwed masterpiece.

The debut release, Land of the Dead, from hip hop duo Ghostbustaz (Coolzey and Def3) feels like a time capsule from before we built up this millennium’s thick armor of cynicism. Said armor can only be cracked by flagrant shock-and-awe tactics, which the duo deploys without shame.

These eight tracks are steeped in rock-steady beats and rhymes more obsessed with a fresh pair of kicks instead of whips (ghostridden or not) and rims.

The title track comes drenched in fake blood from George Romero’s prop department. “Land of the Dead” starts off sounding like a classic yo’ momma track but instead of ripping on the woman who gave you life, Coolzey and Def3 trade horror movie in-jokes (“You can never exorcise like Emily Rose”) over a chilling, minimal synth strings.

“Girls Girls Girls” comes off like a grown-ass version of The Beastie Boys’ “Girls.” Instead of childish come-ons over tinkly, toy piano lines, the Ghostbustaz have a better idea of what they want: “a brown-eyed brunette with nice breasts/who keep a couple decent, dark beers in her ice chest.” The duo spits pick whips (ghostridden or not) and rims.

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The prolific and downright unrelenting Samuel Locke-Ward comes at us again with the follow up to a record that hasn’t even come out yet (due to difficulties at the pressing factory). Where the Sick Go to Die: Nonstop Rawk + Rawl Jukebox Vol. 17 is 18 tracks and 46 minutes of the lo-est-fi trash you’ve ever heard, and that’s meant as a compliment.

The album opener, “Do It Wrong” and “Lippy (I Don’t Want to Be)” are certified slacker anthems. “Do It Wrong” is sloppy and shambling, as though the guitars are about slip out of tune or break at any moment, and Sam bursts a blood vessel or two belting out the song’s title. The only thing holding the whole exuberant middle finger of a song together is his wife, Grace’s meticulous drumming. “Lippy” is less chaotic musically, but a more pointed piece of snark: “I don’t wanna be lippy / just do as I’m told / yes sir, yes sir, I know.” The tune stomps along to a simple marching beat with thin, tiny synthesizer line meekly winding itself up and down the scale.

Where the Sick Go to Die is easily one of Locke-Ward’s most consistent releases, it certainly features one of the most miraculous stretches of songs he’s ever strung together. From the dizzy, glitchy, bizarrely positive “Making Lemonade” through the nearly bucolic “Greener Gaze.” Locke-Ward packs more sarcasm and animated frenzy into five songs than most could cram into a career. This immaculate run includes the early rock waltz of “May I Lead You Astry.” Sam’s whispered delivery sounds incredibly creepy, yet the slimy slide guitar and the choral-themed prom sound of the instrumentation bring a saccharine sort of sweetness to the song.

That sort of juxtaposition is one of Locke-Ward’s greatest tools; it’s what makes him seem so eminently listenable and so infuriatingly alienating. He’s perfected it for Where the Sick Go to Die: Nonstop Rawk + Rawl Jukebox Vol. 17.

John Schlotfelt
and shirtless—a funny thing happened with Lwa. They have become really good at it.

So what is it they do? Well there are drones involved—long sustained tones. There’s distortion, though at a certain point it’s hard to distinguish between sounds that started out messed up and those that were distorted intentionally with effect pedals or abused, overloaded mixers. There are vague sounds of uncertain provenance that fade in and out. There’s the mighty Beltone Hearing Tester, capable of bowel-loosening rumbles and mosquito whines. There are times in their performances which most closely resemble what you’d hear in a factory full of broken machines collapsing into itself. Occasionally (as on the last track of Various Live) there are guest musicians on brass and reed instruments.

What Lwa does that sets them apart from many in the noise scene is that they listen deeply as they create their sound. They’ve been plonking, buzzing, shrieking, and droning long enough that they’ve developed a refined aesthetic of how it should sound. With the usual musical constraints removed, the easiest thing to do is to be arbitrary and aimless. But Lwa are never like that. Every time I’ve seen them perform, it has been different, in mood, intention and meaning. These recordings, some of them of live performances, are representative snapshots of Lwa, but they’re by no means finished products like a pop song. No one’s going to yell out at a Lwa show “play track three from the one with the flowers on the sleeve!” With Lwa you never step in the same river twice.

Having these CDs seems almost a betrayal of the primal Lwa experience, which is to stand in a dark room, watch them hunched over their rat’s nest of gear as waves of fractally roiling sound wash over you. The CDs hide a different pleasure, which is to hear them repeatedly and discover their internal logic, and accidental, contingent beauty.

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

Mountains

Choral

Thrill Jockey

myspace.com/apestaarjemountains

Mountains recorded it’s third release, Choral, in front of a live audience with minimal overdubs added later for effect or layering. And despite the trappings of their genre (ambient), the record feels live, not stately. The Brooklyn-based duo pays attention to the listener, quietly adding elements like a fog descending in the early morning.

The long, horizontal hum of the title track opens up the show. Brendon Anderegg and Koen Holtkamp introduce blips and muted swells of feedback and three minutes in the first masterstroke of Choral peeks through:

Something like a tenor singing through bad connections tries breaking through the electronic veneer. The “voice” grows, then the one note attempts to become a melodic line before getting looped back onto itself ad nauseum. Mountains even dares to taunt you with the illusion of rhythm. A deep, round bass thud occurs fairly periodically, but it doesn’t propel the song, it floats along with it. “Choral” finally tapers off with a gauzy guitar line.

“Telescope” begins with the steady cycle of acoustic strums, like a coffee house troubadour’s next lament, as small blooms of a synthesized flute and the ominous bubbling of a phase-shifted electronic whir. And as quietly as the different elements entered, the guitar has faded away and billowing heaps of hisses float over top slow pulses, and, finally we’re left with a field recording of rainfall.

On the following track, “Add Infinity,” Anderegg and Holtkamp trade acoustic and electric guitar lines over a thin, simmering film of synthesizer buzz, alternating between droning feedback and disjointed, finger-plucked lines. The track, while pleasant, approaches cliche; it sounds like a mash up of b-sides from Brian Eno and Fennesz, before finally adding the playful blooping of vibes a little shy of the eight-minute mark and ending on an up note a minute-and-a-half later.

Mountains will be sculpting sound with TAPE and Marlow Eggplant at The Picador on Monday, February 1.

John Schloffelt

SEND CDS FOR REVIEW TO: LITTLE VILLAGE, PO BOX 736, IOWA CITY, IA 52244
ART/EXHIBITS

African American Historical Museum and Cultural Center of Iowa
55 12th Ave SE, Cedar Rapids
www.blackiowa.org
Dear Mr. President, Feb. 15 • The 20th Century African American Experience, Feb. 16, 6pm • No Roads Lead to Buxton, ongoing

AKAR
257 E. Iowa Ave, Iowa City
www.akardesign.com
Shoko Teruyama, opens Feb. 19

Brucemore
2160 Linden Drive SE, Cedar Rapids
www.brucemore.org
Growing Appreciation Program: Framing Landscape, Feb. 27, 10:30am

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
410 Third Ave SE, Cedar Rapids
www.crm.org
Grant Wood Studio and Visitor Center, Guided tours of Grant Wood’s home and studio, Saturdays & Sundays, hourly 12-4pm

Creative Connections: Artists in Action with Linda Goodall, Feb. 6, 10:30am • Drawn to Drawing, ongoing • Less is More, ongoing • Norman Rockwell: Fact & Fiction, ongoing • Malvina Hoffman, ongoing • Mauricio Lasansky, ongoing • Art in Roman Life, ongoing • Grant Wood: In Focus, ongoing

The Chait Galleries Downtown
218 E Washington St., Iowa City
www.thechaitdowntown.com
Abstract Paintings, thru Feb. 27

CSPS/Legion Arts
1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids
www.legionarts.org
Translations, ongoing

Faulconer Gallery
Grinnell College, 1108 Park St., Grinnell
www.grinnell.edu/faulconergallery
Repeat, Reveal, React: Identities in Flux, open Jan. 29 • Influence: Faculty Selections from College Collections, open Jan. 29

Herbert Hoover Presidential Museum
West Branch
www.nps.gov/heho
Patterns of the Past: A Century of American Quilting, 1840-1940, Jan. 23 - Mar. 21 • Iowa A to Z, ongoing

Hudson River Gallery
538 South Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.hudsonrivergallery.com
Photography, Terry Riley, thru Feb. 27

Iowa Artisans Gallery
207 E. Washington, Iowa City
www.iowa-artisans-gallery.com
Contemporary Bookwork, a Juried Members’ Show, thru Feb. 15 • We Love Russell: Fundraising Exhibit for Russell Karkowski, opens, Jan. 27

Johnson County Historical Society
310 5th St, Coralville
www.jchsiowa.org
Victorian Valentine Workshop, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2pm • With Much Love, Feb. 11, 1pm • A Century of Adventure, 100 Years of Scouting, ongoing

Old Capitol Museum
Pentacrest, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap
WorldCanvas, India, Feb. 12, 5-7pm • The Museum Goes to the Fair, thru Feb. 21

Revival
117 E College St, Iowa City
www.revivaliowacity.com
Dawn Frary photography, opens Jan. 26

University Museum of Art
www.uiowa.edu/uiuma
Check website for locations UIUM@UIU, ongoing

White Rabbit
109 S. Linn St., Iowa City
www.whiterabbitgallery.com
New Relics from the Bottomland, thru Feb.

MUSIC

Blue Moose Tap House
211 Iowa Ave, Iowa City
www.bluemosetc.com
Jake Dilley And The Color Pharmacy w/ tba, Feb. 5, 9pm • Liberty Leg, Feb. 6, 9pm • Shame Train, Feb. 12, 9pm • William Elliot Whitmore w/ Jenny Hoyston, Feb. 13, 8pm • St. Vincent w/ Wild Birds and Peace Drums, Feb. 16, 6pm • Breathe Carolina/Hyper Crush w/ Special guests, Feb. 23, 5pm

CSPS
1103 Third St SE, Cedar Rapids
www.legionarts.org
Ben Schmidt, Feb. 6, 8pm • Vance Gilbert, Feb. 12, 8pm • Buckwheat Zydeco, Feb. 17, 8pm • Carrie Newcomer, Feb. 19, 8pm • Songwriting workshop with Carrie Newcomer, Feb. 20, time TBA • Catie Curtis, Feb. 25, 8 pm • The Red Stick Ramblers, Feb. 28, 7 pm • Fred Eaglesmith with The Ginn Sisters, Mar. 3, 8pm

Dawn’s Hide & Bead Away
220 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.dawnsbeads.com
Dawn’s Coffeshop: Greg and Jean Thompson, Feb. 5, 5pm

Englert
221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Dark Star Orchestra, Feb. 8, 7pm • Rosanne Cash, Feb. 10, 7:30pm

Hancher Auditorium
www.hancher.uiowa.edu
See website for temporary locations
Rosanne Cash, Feb. 10, 7:30pm • Winard Harper Sextet, Feb. 12, 7:30pm • YL Male Voice Choir, Feb. 21, 2pm

The Mill
120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
Study Hall, the game, Saturdays, 9pm-Midnight
Open Mic w/ J. Knight, Mondays, 8pm, call 338-6713 to sign up
Tuesday Night Social Club, Tuesdays • Adobanga w/ All Rattle & Dust, Sarah Cran & the Derelicts, Jan. 30, 9pm • TUESDAY NIGHT SOCIAL CLUB w/ Vagabonds, Dewi Sant, Vincent Peiffer, Feb. 2, 9pm • Caleb Hawley w/ Reed Waddle, Feb. 3, 9pm • Brooks Strause & The Glory Details w/ Dustin Smith/ Eric Whittaker, Feb. 4, 9pm • Dave Moore, Feb. 5, 8pm • DR. DOG w/ the Growlers, Feb. 6, 9pm • TUESDAY NIGHT SOCIAL CLUB w/ Grand Tetons, Anna Vogelzang, Annie Palmer, Feb. 9, 9pm • Burlington St. Bluegrass Band, Feb. 10, 7pm • Jam Session w/ Winard Harper Sextet, Feb. 11, 8pm • Damon Dotson, Feb. 12, 9pm • Ha Ha Tonka w/ So Much Fun, Feb. 13, 9pm • TUESDAY NIGHT SOCIAL CLUB w/ Skye Carrasco, Ami Saraiya, Feb. 16, 9pm • Chicago Underground Duo w/ Koplant No, Feb. 18, 9pm • Brighton, MA w/ Bright Giant, The Teddy Boys, Feb. 19, 9pm • Benefit for Russell Karkowski feat. The Recliners & Acoustic Mayhem, Feb. 20, 7pm • Awful Purdiesm Benefit for Pat’s Learning Adventure, Feb. 21, 5pm • Justin Townes Earle w/ Joe Pug, Feb. 23, 8pm • University of Iowa Jazz Performance, Feb. 25, 8pm • Orquesta Alto Maiz aka The Salsa Band, Feb. 26, 9pm • Death Ships w/ Datagun, Olivia Rose Muzzy, Vagabonds, Feb. 27, 9pm

Old Brick
26 E Market St., Iowa City
www.straphaelorthodoxchurch.org
Grinnell Singers, Rachmaninov’s Vespers, Feb. 11

Old Capitol Museum
Pentacrest, Iowa City
www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap
Piano Sundays: Uriel Tsachor and Ksenia Nosikova, Feb. 24, 7:30pm • Cupid’s Arrow, West High School, Feb. 14, 2pm • From the Top, Englert Theatre, Feb. 24, 7:30pm • Czech Mates, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Feb. 27, 7pm

Orchestra Iowa
www.orchestraiowa.org
Check website for locations
Cupid’s Arrow, Sinclair Auditorium, Feb. 13, 8pm • Cupid’s Arrow, West High School, Feb. 14, 2pm • From the Top, Englert Theatre, Feb. 24, 7:30pm • Czech Mates, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Feb. 27, 7pm
Ben Schmidt

Ben Schmidt
Silt CD Release
CSPS
1103 Third St. SE, Cedar Rapids
Saturday, Feb. 6, 8pm
www.legionarts.org

There are enough obviously stellar Iowa City shows this month (St. Vincent, William Elliot Whitmore, etc.) that we don’t even need to promote them. Instead, if you have learned to operate a motor vehicle, let us encourage you to attend Iowa City resident Ben Schmidt’s performance at Cedar Rapids’ CSPS on Saturday, February 6.

Mr. Schmidt, like many local musical heroes, draws heavily from folk traditions and good ol’ Mississippi delta blues. No Depression’s Jim Musser says that in Mr. Schmidt’s tunes, “You’ll hear elements of John Gorka, Jesse Winchester, Kelly Joe Phelps and, on the slipped-rhythm funhouse ‘Dance That Dance,’ doses of Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen.” That’s a lot of talent rolled into one guy. And chances are that if you’re into this sort of thing around here, you already know the quality of the product.

Mr. Schmidt commutes to Cedar Rapids as the artist in residence at the Johnson Elementary School of the Art, which really is a neat school. And his next album, Silt, “is an exploration of arrangement and musical texture as the backdrop for lyrics based in a post-flood landscape,” according to a CSPS press release. All of this is heavily local stuff that we can’t recommend enough.

The show starts at 8 p.m. and is opened by Dustin Busch, a guitarist who will also accompany Mr. Schmidt during his set. CSPS is located at 1103 Third St SE and isn’t that bad of a drive. Tickets are $11 in advance and $15 at the door.

The Picador
330 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.thepicador.com
All shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
Raise the Red Lantern, Jan. 30, 9pm • Mountains with Tape and Mario Eggplant, Feb.1, 9pm • Velvet Davenport w. Viking Fuck, Florida, Parade in the Old Country Sky, Feb. 18, 9pm • Liferuiner w. No Wings to Speak of, Reaping Asmodeia, When Forever Ends, The Challenge, Faces Turned Ashen, Revive the Fallen, Of Flesh Unseen, Feb. 25, 5pm

Public Space One
129 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.myspace.com/publicspaceone
Lipstick Homicide, Plane Crashes and Slow Dancing, Feb. 5, 9pm • Lookbook, Feb. 26, 9pm

Riverside Casino
3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
Kris Kristofferson, Feb. 12, 8pm • Valli to Valli: A Tribute to the Jersey Boys, Feb. 28, 4pm

University of Iowa Music
www.uiowa.edu/~music
See website for locations
La Finta Giardiniera, opera, Jan. 29-30, 8pm, Jan. 31, 2pm • Complete Piano Ballades and Scherzos by Chopin, Feb. 11, 7:30pm • Winard Harper Sextet, Feb. 12, 7:30pm • Maia Quartet, Feb. 13, 7:30pm • Center for New Music Ensemble, Feb. 14, 7:30pm • Symphony Orchestra, Feb. 17, 7:30pm • Wolfgang David, violin; Wolfgang Panhofer, cello; David Gompper, piano, Feb. 21, 2pm • Christine Rutledge, baroque viola, Feb. 28, 7:30pm • All-Chopin Recital, in Celebration of His 200th Birthday, Mar. 1, 7:30pm

White Lightning Warehouse
www.myspace.com/whitelightningic
Mondo Drag, Alex Body, Centaur Noir, Cocoon, Feb. 6, 9pm • Burger Kingdom, The Tanks, Feb. 14, 9pm • Antilles, Lord Green, Suicide Ritual, Void Gang, Feb. 20, 9pm

Bored?
Get the low-down on the weekend with the Little Village Weekender in your inbox.

Log on to www.LittleVillageMag.com and sign up for the Weekender
Yacht Club
13 S. Linn St., Iowa City
www.iowacityyachtclub.org
Shows at 9pm unless otherwise noted
* 5 in a Hand + Oh! Kuso + Sean Shiel, Jan. 30, 9pm • Robert John Band + Collectible Boys, Feb. 4, 9pm • 7th Annual Bob Marley Birthday Bash with Natty Nation, Feb. 5, 9pm • Dennis McMurrin & The Demolition Band’s 75th Show!, Feb. 6, 9pm • Pert Near Sandstone + Smokin’ Joe Scarplino, Feb. 11, 9pm • White Water Ramble, Feb. 12, 9pm • 5th Annual Sublime Tribute/Bradley Nowell’s Birthday Party, Feb. 13, 9pm • Euforquesta - early and late sets + Cymatic, Feb. 18, 9pm • Split Lip Rayfield + Mad Monks, Feb. 19, 9pm • David Zollo and the Body Electric, Feb. 20, 9pm • Trampled By Turtles + The Boomchucks, Feb. 26, 9pm • Big Funk Guarantee + Amanda Miller and the Smokin Sextion, Feb. 27, 9pm

Theater/Dance/Performance

Englert Theatre
221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
Second City 50th Anniversary, Feb. 5 & 6, 8pm • Peking Acrobats, Feb. 13, 2 & 7pm • Wonderful Town, Feb. 18-21 • Ralphi May, Feb. 25, 7:30pm

The Mill
120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Dreamwell Theatre’s Down With Love, Feb. 14, 7:30pm • The Vagina Monologues, Feb. 27, 6pm

No Shame Theatre
Theatre B, UI Theatre Building
www.noshame.org
Fridays in February, 11pm

Penguin’s Comedy Club
Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguincomeedyclub.com
Check website for showtimes
BT and Todd Andrews, Jan. 29-30 • Heywood Banks, Feb. 5-6 • Mark Sweeney, Feb. 12-13 • Jennifer Coolidge, Feb. 18 • Rocky Laporte, Feb. 19-20 • Mike Merrifield, Feb. 26-27

Riversides Theatre
213 N. Gilbert St., Iowa City
www.riversidesdrama.org
Check website for showtimes
End Days, Jan. 29-Feb. 21

Riverside Casino
3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
Jason Latimer, Jan. 31, 4pm

Summit Restaurant Comedy Night
10 S. Clinton St, Iowa City
www.thesummitrestaurantandbar.com
Shows start at 9:30pm
BT and Gretchen Hess, Feb. 3 • The Sandman, Feb. 10 • Claude Stewart, John Burton, Feb. 17 • JJ Boyd, Jason Marcus, Feb. 24

Theatre Cedar Rapids
4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.theatrecr.org
The Producers, opens Feb. 26 • Grand Reopening of the Iowa Theater Building, Feb. 26, 6pm

The University of Iowa Dance Space/Place Theatre, North Hall
www.uiowa.edu/artsiowa
Faculty / Graduate Dance Concert, Feb. 18-20, 8pm

The University of Iowa Theatre
Main Theatre Building, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~theatre
Check website for showtimes
Eye Piece, Feb. 5-14 • Ten-Minute Play Festival, Feb. 11-13, 8pm • Our Golden Years, Feb. 18-20, 8pm • A Dry Cycle of Years, Feb. 25-27, 8pm

U.S. Cellular Center
370 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.uscellularcenter.com
Jeff Dunham, Feb. 25, 7:30pm

Words

The Mill
120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City
www.icmill.com
Talk Art - Writers’ Workshop, Feb. 10 & 24, 9pm

Prairie Lights
15 S. Dubuque St., Iowa City
www.prairielightsbooks.com
All “Live from Prairie Lights” readings at 7pm unless noted
Jerals Walker, Feb. 1 • Joshua Ferris, Feb. 2 • Nick Pace, Feb. 5 • Ellen Lewis, Feb. 9 • John D’Agata, Feb. 10 • Lucy Silag, Feb. 11 • Wells Tower, Feb. 12 • Jeffrey Copeland, Feb. 16 • Karen Anderson & Jerry Gabriel, Feb. 18 • Geoff Becker, Feb. 18 • Matthew Davis, Feb. 24 • Kevin Gonzalez & Nick Lantz, Feb. 25

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History
Macbride Hall, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~nathist
Storytime Explorers: Backyard Birds, Feb. 21, 2pm

KIDS

Iowa City Public Library
123 South Linn St. Iowa City
www.icpl.org
Storytime at 10:30 Mon-Sat, 2pm Sun

University of Iowa Museum of Natural History
Macbride Hall, UI Campus
www.uiowa.edu/~nathist
Storytime Explorers: Backyard Birds, Feb. 21, 2pm

MISC

Critical Hit Games
89 Second St, Coralville
www.criticalhitgames.net
Board Game Night, Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24

Johnson County Historical Society
310 5th St., Coralville
www.jchs.iowa.org
3rd Annual Coralville WinterFest, Jan. 31, 1-4pm at the Coralville River Landing

PATV
206 Lafayette St., Iowa City
www.patv.tv
The Smartest Iowan game show Wednesdays, contestants needed, email smartestiowan@gmail.com
Curses, Foiled Again
- After robbers used heavy metal drain covers to smash their way into a Welsh bank in Cardiff and make off with $171,156, police quickly identified the culprits because a witness remembered the personalized license plate—“J4MES”—on the sporty blue BMW used as the getaway vehicle. Police found James Snell, 27, and his brother Wayne, 34, holding more than $48,944 of the loot and rounded up the rest of the gang. “It was the distinctiveness of the car which contributed to the robbers’ undoing,” prosecutor Daniel Williams said. (The Daily Telegraph)
- After receiving a report of a City Transfer truck broken down outside Renton, Wash., state police arrived to find a 19-year-old Tacoma man claiming the truck had run out of gas. At the same time, a City Transfer worker reported spotting the stalled vehicle, saying it had been stolen from City Transfer yard in Sumner. Shortly after police arrived, a City Transfer worker who witnessed the theft arrived and identified the 19-year-old as the thief. After the suspect’s arrest, Trooper Dan McDonald said the truck hadn’t run out of gas; the suspect had filled it with unleaded gas instead of diesel fuel. (Associated Press)

Procurement Follies
Cities that installed energy-efficient traffic lights are discovering the new LED bulbs don’t burn hot enough to melt snow and can become crusted over in a storm, leading to accidents. As a result, crews are being dispatched after storms to clean off the lights. Traffic engineers have discovered the new LED bulbs don’t burn hot enough to melt snow and can become crusted over in a storm, leading to accidents. As a result, crews are being dispatched after storms to clean off the lights. (Associated Press)

Elbow Room
The Wanxiang-Tiancheng shopping center in Shijiazhuang, China, opened a parking lot that’s wider than normal and painted pink and purple. In addition, the shopping center hired female attendants to guide women entering the spaces. “The added space helps us to park safely,” a driver identified only as Miss Zhang told the Hebei Youth Daily newspaper. “I think it shows respect for women.” (Agence France-Presse)

On the Cutting Edge
- Police in Beloit, Wis., said that when Yvone Coleman, 31, became suspicious of text messages from other women to boyfriend Lester Burks, 33, she confronted him with a knife. Burks responded by attacking her with a sword. Coleman required six stitches on her forearm. (Beloit Daily News)
- After police arrested Jared Weston Walter, 22, for snipping off the hair of a woman sitting in front of him on a bus outside Portland, Ore., they identified him as the “TriMet barber,” who prosecutor Chuck French blamed for “a number of incidents” in which women have either had their hair cut with scissors or “superglued” on TriMet buses. (The Oregonian)

Cunning Move
Canada’s second-oldest magazine is changing its name because its unintended sexual connotation has caused the history journal to run afoul of Internet filters and turned off potential readers. The Beaver, founded in 1920 as a publication of the Hudson’s Bay Company, will become Canada’s History with the April issue, editor-in-chief Mark Reid announced. “Market research showed us that younger Canadians and women were very, very unlikely to ever buy a magazine called The Beaver, no matter what’s about,” Reid said.

Patriotic Duty
Champion hurdler Jana Rawlinson had her breast implants removed to better her chances of winning a medal for Australia at the 2012 Olympics. Rawlinson told Woman’s Day magazine she “loved having bigger boobs” but didn’t want to “short-change Australia.” (Agence France-Presse)

When the Heimlich Maneuver Fails
While handcuffing assault suspect Andrew Grande, 23, sheriff’s deputies in Bay County, Fla., said they observed him swallowing what turned out to be a “large bag of marijuana.” When deputies ordered him to “spit it out,” he continued to resist. Deputies tased him, whereupon he fell to the ground and choked to death, sheriff’s officials concluded, on the marijuana. (Panama City News Herald)

Where’s Waldo?
Five years after Mark Weinberger, 46, fled from justice, authorities found him living in a tent high up in the Italian Alps, surviving on dried and canned food and snow he melted on a portable stove. Sought by U.S. law enforcement for performing unnecessary surgery to defraud insurance companies, Weinberger ran a clinic in Merrillville, Ind., and earned, according to his abandoned wife, Michelle, $200,000 a week before he wound up on the FBI’s most-wanted list. He had been sighted as far away as China before two Carabinieri officers located him atop Mount Blanc. After his capture, Weinberger asked to use the lavatory, where he pulled a hidden knife and cut his throat. Despite being an expert surgeon and an ear, nose and throat specialist, he missed the artery he appeared to be aiming for and was treated for a minor wound. (New York’s Daily News)

Marketing Partners
Melt Bar & Grilled in Lakewood, Ohio, began offering 25 percent off to customers who show a tattoo of a grilled cheese sandwich. Meanwhile, neighboring Voodoo Monkey Tattoo is offering discounts on its grilled cheese designs. (WJW-TV)

Justice Just Isn’t
Munir Hussain, 53, fought off three knife-wielding intruders who broke into his home and threatened him, his wife and children, then chased them down the street in Buckinghamshire, England, joined by his brother. They managed to bring down one of the fleeing men, Walid Salem, and conked him on the head with a cricket bat. Salem, who has 50 previous convictions, received a two-year supervision order, but Munir Hussain was sentenced to 30 months in prison, and his brother, Tokeer Hussain, got 39 months, both for using “excessive force.” (The Independent)

The Nose Knows
Rather than stimulating the appetite, aroma may be the key to controlling it, according to scientists at an independent food-research firm in the Netherlands, who say they’ve found a way to enhance the familiar smells in food enough to activate areas of the brain that perceive stomach fullness. “It’s all about flavor release,” lead researcher Rianne Ruijschop explained, “without adding anything artificial.” (The Washington Times)
I’m on a deserted island. How can I tell which plants are poisonous?

Quick scenario: deserted island, colorful fruits and vegetation. How do I know what I should eat and what I should feed to my mother-in-law? Is there any way to differentiate between poisonous fruits and nonpoisonous ones?

—Jermain

The traditional method, which admittedly works better on a group-project basis, is to try some. If you throw up, get convulsions, or die, it’s poisonous. The scientific method, as explained in the *U.S. Army Survival Manual*, is to memorize the local edible plants prior to getting marooned. Too late for that? The implicit message of the manual is: soldier, you’re hosed. However, it does offer a plan B, namely the 13-step Universal Edibility Test. This boils down to cautiously trying whatever potential edible you have a lot of and seeing if you throw up, get convulsions, or die.

That may not seem like the world’s most helpful advice, but there’s no foolproof way of avoiding poisonous plants. The best you can do is avoid high-risk items while keeping your fingers crossed about everything else. That said, while I don’t claim to be a survival expert, I think we can expand a bit on the sketchy advice in the army manual. Herewith some tips.

1. First see if you can find fresh water, meat, or fish. Without water you’re doomed. Fish or meat, if you can get it, is higher on the food chain than plants and provides a better nutritional mix.
2. Don’t eat mushrooms or fungi. They’re not all lethal, obviously, but when they’re bad, they’re really bad. For example, as we’ve discussed in the past, consumption of *Amanita phalloides* may result in nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, kidney and/or liver failure, coma, and death. The thing is, this mushroom doesn’t say *Amanita phalloides* on it. It looks like a mushroom. How likely are you to encounter one? I have no idea; you didn’t specify where your deserted island was. If you do know where it is, why are you writing me? Do like the army says, and memorize those edible plants.
4. Don’t eat anything that’s rotten, mildewed, growing in stagnant water, or otherwise disgusting. You’d think this would go without saying, but all the survival guides make a point of mentioning it, so I figure so should I.
5. Boil it, if you’ve got the means. The army disparages this practice, saying boiling doesn’t destroy all toxins. Maybe not, but it’ll destroy some toxins, and at the same time get rid of the tannins that render foods like acorns unpalatable. Nonetheless, apply the Universal Edibility Test (which we’ll get to below) before chowing down.
6. Watch what animals eat. This is another thing the army manual thinks is a bad idea, since humans and animals have different vulnerabilities. No doubt, but come on. If an animal eats something and drops dead, I submit that tells you something. More seriously, if an animal eats something without apparent harm, it’s really bad. For example, as we’ve discussed in the past, consumption of *Amanita phalloides* may result in nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, kidney and/or liver failure, coma, and death. The thing is, this mushroom doesn’t say *Amanita phalloides* on it. It looks like a mushroom. How likely are you to encounter one? I have no idea; you didn’t specify where your deserted island was. If you do know where it is, why are you writing me? Do like the army says, and memorize those edible plants.
7. Avoid white or yellow berries, as well as plants with beans, seeds, or milky white sap. Castor bean seeds, for example, contain the deadly toxin ricin; a couple can be fatal. Purple or black berries are worth a try. Red fruit is iffy. Some are fine; many others (yew, holly, woody nightshade) not. Take no chances. UET ‘em all.
8. Avoid plants that look like parsley or carrots—could be hemlock. Also, remember: “leaves of three, let them be”—groups of three leaves being the sign of poison ivy, sumac, and oak.

That gets us past the first cut. Now we run the Universal Edibility Test on what’s left. I have a hard time believing you’re going to remember 13 steps, and anyone together enough to bring the manual listing them would surely also stash a copy of *World’s Edible Plants*. So here’s a simplified version:

- Find something abundant. No sense wasting time on a plant that could turn out to be both poisonous and scarce.
- Pick out one part of the plant to test—for example, just the leaves and not the roots. One may be poisonous while the other isn’t. Which is more likely? No idea. That’s why you’re doing the test.
- Fast for eight hours, to give anything you ate earlier time to act up.
- While waiting, hold the plant against your wrist or inside elbow for 15 minutes to see if it irritates your skin.
- Touch a small amount to your lips for three minutes.
- Swallow. If you don’t get sick after eight hours, try a quarter cup of the plant and repeat the above.


—CECIL ADAMS

Comments, questions? Take it up with Cecil on the Straight Dope Message Board, straightdope.com, or write him at the Chicago Reader, 11 E. Illinois, Chicago 60611. And now you can subscribe to the Straight Dope podcast—search for “straight dope” in the iTunes Store.
ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR FEBRUARY 2010

FOR EVERYONE—Shelter from the storm. February offers a brief but very helpful lull in the action, a protected space where we can all catch our breath. It will give us a chance to adjust to all the big changes that just went down and make plans for the future. There is a lot of luck and inspiration going around. Excitement will be in the air. An awareness of challenges ahead will mix with a strong sense of emerging opportunities. There is one big catch. We have to be doing something new. We need to toss out old ideas, and forget old ways of getting things done. And we especially have to be straight with ourselves and each other. No tricky stuff right now.

ARIES—Respite. You have some challenging issues to tackle. However, February offers a short break in the action. You can walk a little faster and push your limits to a certain extent. The supportive, healing force is at work deep in your psyche. Profound and helpful insights will arise. You will see evidence of a guiding, invisible hand. The profound and helpful insights will arise. You will see evidence of a guiding, invisible hand...
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