LOVE IT then LEAVE IT
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**GABE'S IOWA CITY**

**EVERY THURSDAY: MIXOLOGY DOWNSTAIRS**

Fri, January 6
**Radio Moscow**
w/ Brutus and the Psychedelic Explosions

Sat, January 7
**15th Annual Elvis Tribute**

Fri, January 13
**Club Find-a-Friend**
w/ Das Cooltey + Hayden Fried (FREE)

Sat, January 14
**Mad Monks**
w/ The Maw, The Oculum, Joe Lederer, hosted by Doug Roberson

Thurs, January 19
**Free Soul Dance Party**
w/ Mr. Rico, Supa-Fusty, Mr. Boogieman, Joe Lederer, hosted by Doug Roberson

Fri, January 20
**Dubstep for Dummies**

Sat, January 21
**Punk Farm 2012**
w/ The IIs, Brains Brains Brains, Lipstick Homicide, The Blendours, Toe Tappingly Tragic, The Wheelers, Nebula Was, Drawn To Fury, Muddy Nails

Fri, January 27
**Miles Nielsen**

Sat, January 28
**Item 9 & the Mad Hatters**

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**FRI**
1.06 Organic Underground
1.13 Dr. Z’s Experiment
1.19 Phantom Vibrations w/ Attic Party
1.20 Jeff Edison w/ Organic Underground
1.21 Yacht Club 9th Anniversary Party w/ The Big Wu, DSG, Aaron Kommi & the One Drops, Whistle Pigs, Tallygrass, Limbs, Dream Thieves, Gone South, The Enz

**FRI**
1.27 Henhouse Prowlers

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ON THE COVER
Rick Perry’s handlers prepare to exit a campaign stop at Hamburg Inn No. 2, Aug. 15, 2011. (photo by Jon Winet)

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Aunt Millie Knows

Last month’s Stephen Bloom Atlantic essay about Iowa set off a firestorm, to say the least. This is not a column about Stephen Bloom’s essay. But it bounces off of it. A common reaction to the essay was speculation that Professor Bloom must be miserable living in Iowa and puzzlement over why he doesn’t leave if that is so. I don’t know Professor Bloom, nor do I know—or, frankly, understand—his motives in writing the piece, nor do I know whether or not he really is miserable living in Iowa. But the essay and the reaction to it do spark a question that I have struggled with myself over the years—what do you do when you hate a place?

As I’ve mentioned before in this column, I grew up in Rockford, Illinois, an industrial town whose best days passed it by many decades ago. Rockford is an easy place to hate, and I know many who do. While Iowa City touts its frequent placement on “best of” lists, Rockford cringes and rails against its regular placement on “worst of” lists. This town of 150,000 regularly lands at the bottom of lists that measure a community’s economy, quality of life, safety—you name it. Since its manufacturing core collapsed decades ago, Rockford has yet to reinvent itself.

Last Labor Day, my kids and I visited Rockford. My younger brother, Ken, still lives there, and we went to visit him and his wife, Julie, and see Here Come the Mummies at the annual Waterfront Music Festival. When I was a kid, the south part of town’s miles and miles of small factories were already pretty rundown. Driving through the district now, I marveled at the utterly and completely blasted, empty shells. The economy that has replaced them on these streets is drugs and armed robbery.

At the same time, I grew up in Rockford, and, in doing some personal archaeology, I’ve written about how my strong sense of place and community was formed in my hometown. Over the Labor Day weekend, we also visited “Aunt Millie,” whom I have come to realize embodies everything I do hold dear about Rockford. Millie is not really my aunt but rather my godmother, a family friend from before I was born who is really just that—family. Aunt Millie is now 94 years old. You would never, ever know it. Aside from some hearing loss, she is in perfect shape. She lives in the home she has lived in since she married “Uncle Herbie” (who died over 20 years ago) in 1946. The beautiful brick two-story duplex was Herbie’s childhood home.

We often made fun of Aunt Millie because so much of her time was spent going to funerals. She would be what some might call a “church lady,” providing comfort—and food—for all the church members at times of great joy and sorrow. Millie and Herbie never had kids of their own, but they shared their love bounteously with all their relatives, friends, neighbors and community members as if we were all their kids.

When we pulled up to Millie’s house on Labor Day, I noticed two giant corn stalks in the front yard of the identical brick two-story duplex two doors down, with two women wearing Muslim garb and a little boy running along the sidewalk. Millie told us they were the Yemeni folks who had moved in recently. The old Swedish neighborhood was certainly changing.

Millie’s house, inside and out, looks exactly as it did in the 1960s when as kids we would walk the three blocks to visit her. As her 100-plus-year-old Swedish clock from Herbie’s ancestral home in the old country ticked in the background, the conversation turned to the condition of Rockford. Millie fully and completely understands why her neighborhood and city have changed so much. She still gets to know her neighbors and helps them when and in what ways she can. Yet she understands, for example, that decline has...
Millstream Brewery – Amana, Iowa

Back Road Stout

BREW OF THE MONTH: JANUARY

Politically speaking, Rick Santorum and I are a couple of universes apart. However, to my amazement we apparently have one thing in common: an appreciation for good beer. Last month Santorum made a campaign stop at Millstream Brewing Company in Amana and enjoyed a pint of Back Road Stout—an excellent oatmeal stout I coincidentally decided to make January’s beer of the month.

Introduced in 1996 as Colony Oatmeal Stout, a winter seasonal, it was rebranded Back Road Stout in 2010 and is now brewed year-round. It won a gold medal at the Los Angeles International Commercial Beer Competition in 2010 and another gold at last year’s Great American Beer Festival.

Ideally poured into a pint glass or mug, Back Road Stout is a sinister opaque black. When held to a lamp, zero to little light will pass through. A couple fingers of dense, tan head will dissipate slowly to leave a thin cap before dissolving to a ring around the edge. Just popping the bottle cap offers a scent of the roasted and creamy delicacy inside. Back Road Stout smells of coffee, chocolate, oatmeal, caramel, black licorice, brown sugar, molasses and black raspberry. The taste exhibits much more roasted bitterness, but it basically mirrors the smell with flavors of coffee, chocolate and black raspberry.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 6.7 percent ABV
SERVING TEMPERATURE: 50-55º F
FOOD PAIRINGS: Millstream co-owner Teresa Albert recommends “rich, spicy food like barbecued beef, Oaxacan mole or hearty Szechuan dishes.” She also recommends using it to marinate steak and says it is “great with very buttery, well-aged cheddar.” For dessert she suggests chocolate espresso cake and cream puffs or profiteroles.

WHERE TO BUY: John’s Grocery, New Pioneer Food Co-op, Hartig Drug, The Liquor House and most area Hy-Vee stores. Also, it is on-tap and available in cases at the brewery in Amana, and on-tap at Dave’s Fox Head Tavern (402 E. Market Street in Iowa City).

PRICE: $8 per six-pack

Casey Wagner is no longer California dreamin’.

Try a new brew!

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Always offering the Little Village Brew of the Month
A h, football. What is it about this sport? It’s more than the hot chocolate warming our hands through our mittens, the bass drum catching hold of the chilly air, or the outsized energy of the players. For me, after all the touchdowns are tallied and all the drinks are drained, the greatest thing about this sport will always be you, dear fans. Just look at you out there waving your colors in the wide open air! Walking through the parking lots surrounding Kinnick on game day, who can tell rich from poor, failing-out-Freshman-year from Rhodes scholar? Who can deny the perfection of the bearded Hawkeye Jesus in his striped overalls going long across an acre of concrete? As the ball morphs to orange and round, and indoor Hawk fans take center stage, I offer this pictorial salute to the foul-weather fans, those who brave the wind, the rain and the sleety-snowish ice, be-decked and bedazzled, brat-full and whiskey-warmed. Those heroes who carry their flamingos and logs (?) to the altar of Kinnick, putting their comfort on the line each and every Saturday for our Hawkeyes.

Last November, the LV team scoured the streets and tailgates looking for style standouts in a crush of hooded sweatshirts, jeans and sneakers. We wanted to recognize the fans that got personal with their Hawk looks, tying their threds together with expert precision. From hand-crocheted Mohawk hats to glitzy Pocahontas headbands, retro track suits and sat-in embroidered jackets, every individual in the vibrant spectrum streaming into Kinnick each Saturday is spinning the same simple, wonderful theme: We are black and gold. We are number one. We are Hawkeyes. (We love beer.) I may not be a fashion expert, but damn Hawks—you so fly! As my post-holiday gift to all the fans who’ve stuck with the Hawks (and with Townie Hawk) through this crazy 2011 season, here is the ultimate in Hawk Couture.

Stephanie Catlett is NOOOOOORRRRRMM!!!

Photos by Jay Geisen
THE YEAR TO COME

Saying the face of downtown will change this year is no hyperbole, given the spread of likely-to-be-developed properties. This column will give you the lowdown on some things to expect this year. But first, let’s check in on our old friend John Millar…

LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS TRADER JOE’S

In December, John Millar and the rest of his cadre at Divaris released their Downtown Iowa City, Iowa Strategic Assessment. Headlines in the Press-Citizen and Daily Iowan proclaimed the report’s revelation of downtown’s “hidden economies,” which I honestly thought was a reference to drug dealing.

What was actually meant by “hidden economies” was the gap between local census income information and actual buying power. Local incomes appear unusually low on the census because many students have no income; however, these students have buying power because of parental allowances. So in fewer words, the city paid Divaris $55,000 to tell us that college kids get money from Mom and Dad. Congratulations, everyone. And because there’s this huge “hidden economy,” Divaris concludes that we actually have a massive unmet demand for more retail space. The study even claims that Coral Ridge Mall is “under-sized for specialty retail” (see the text yourself on the city’s Economic Development department’s website).

The results of their survey are not surprising, given that survey’s specious construction (previously covered in these pages by Bob Burton). Cliff’s Notes: Trader Joe’s is the most demanded chain business, followed by Crate & Barrel. Whatever.

The report also suggests analogous college towns which could provide models for Iowa City’s retail development. One is Boulder, CO, a flawed analogue considering it’s 45 minutes from a major city (Denver). The other is Charlottesville, VA, home of John Millar’s business school alma mater.

In conclusion, it’s important to remember what this document is and is not. It does not carry the writ of law; rather, it only serves to inform local politicians and potential businesspeople on one potential future of downtown Iowa City. A different future is possible and it is up to regular Iowa Citians without franchising opportunities to envision that future. So get to it and good luck.

Several downtown properties are up for development. The question is, what kind?

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

• Linn and Bloomington (SW corner)
As of press time, this development is not moving forward. On Oct. 18 the city council voted down an amendment to the city’s comprehensive plan which would rezone 221 and 225 N. Linn St. and 223 E. Bloomington St. By keeping the old residential stabilization zoning, this vote effectively stopped the multi-story, mixed-use development proposed by Jesse Allen, 30, of Allen Homes. So the project is in stasis.

At the Oct. 18 meeting, critics articulated fears of a “domino effect” (to use resident Pam Michaud’s words) of denser developments radiating from this property. Councilor Connie Champion cited past examples of “apartment encroachment” into residential Iowa City neighborhoods and said that her voting against the zoning amendment was part of a desire to “save the Northside.” Councilor Regenia Bailey, however, thought the project would provide entrepreneurs more space to locate in the Northside.
As if to assuage fears of the domino effect, on Dec. 15 Planning and Zoning recommended removing the next three Linn Street properties north of Bloomington from the Northside commercial district. The city council has deferred a new vote to rezone the Allen properties until the Jan. 10 meeting. Public comment will be allowed.

• South Side of 500 Block of Washington Street, between Van Buren and Johnson
The block across from New Pioneer Food Co-Op is also under the eye of Jesse Allen. According to the assessor’s website, Nila Haug owns the three properties at 511, 517 and 521 E. Washington, which house The Red Avocado, Defunct Books and the Golden Haug B&B. These three properties will be fully transferred to Allen after the start of the new year, according to Nila Haug. Haug is optimistic about the development, saying that this is a chance for “young people to do something new in the neighborhood.”

THE LAST DAYS?
Rachael Langin (L), Katy Meyer and David Burt hope The Red Avocado can continue in an updated location.

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Burt, co-owner of The Red Avocado, has been in communication with Allen about operating the restaurant in the new development. Burt is also optimistic about the future—he has “no plans to close”—but there are few specific details known right now.

The existing properties are currently zoned CB-2 (central business service zone), which allows 45-foot structures on the property. Plans have yet to be made public, so pay attention to local news and the Board of Adjustments (to whom Allen will need to apply if he wants a residential mixed-use permit) for developments.

• Soon-to-be-former site of Agudas Achim Synagogue, NE corner of Johnson and Washington

Agudas Achim is moving to Coralville and, in that location, Hunter Companies of Cedar Rapids is seeking to develop a three-story apartment complex. Neighbors have expressed worry about the new development conforming with the aesthetic of the historic neighborhood. Planning and Zoning has yet to vote on recommending rezoning of that land and discussion has been deferred to Jan. 5.

• Former site of Bruegger’s Bagels and the Van Patten House

Goodbye historic buildings. According to an anonymous source involved in local historic preservation, the shells of both buildings constitute an “emergency situation” (as ruled by the building official) and are to be demolished without review from the Historic Preservation board. I would not be surprised if the structures were both gone by the time you read this.

According to a November Press-Citizen article, Bruegger’s plans to renew operations on that site. That property is owned by “Net Lease Funding 2005 LP,” a company with little paper trail and which apparently is incorporated in Florida. So if you’re a betting type, don’t wager that the site is going to feature a quaint, two-story historic-reproduction brick building. Sorry.

The Van Patten House around the corner (9 S. Linn, the historic brick building north of the Yacht Club) is owned by Kevin Monson, who is involved in the controversial One University Place development in University Heights. While the fire is known to have started in the Bruegger’s kitchen, the exact cause is still undetermined. This has snagged up the development process and no plans have been made public.

In all of the above developments about which details are known, higher density is what’s in store. Higher densities in new buildings could mean more congestion and the demolition of attractive historic properties, or it could mean a larger customer base for downtown businesses and a more lively city. New construction does not need to be synonymous with the forcing-out of local business—the Writer’s Square development, which houses the Motley Cow, RSVP and T-Spoons is a good example. But there are costs and benefits to all of the proposed projects and if you do have a side I encourage you to voice it at the above-listed public meetings. The town is changing—don’t let it go without saying something first.

Steve Sherman is the new managing editor of Little Village. Contact him at sherman@littlevillagemag.com
Braving the Elements

There’s nothing quite like an Iowa winter to make you want to lock yourself inside the house (with a few dozen tins of leftover holiday cookies) and not come out until March. As the temperatures drop, my wimpiness skyrockets. Venturing out to the grocery store makes me feel outdoorsy and I grant my bicycle an extended leave of absence.

While many of us put on the brakes come winter break, a handful of hardcores cycle through the season. Neither rain, nor sleet nor snow will keep them off their bikes. We asked Adam Blake, mechanic at World of Bikes, and Michael Chamberlain, owner of Broken Spoke, to give us the inside spin for a happy winter on wheels.

FREE OR CHEAP

GET SLICK

Five bucks and an old t-shirt can do wonders for your bike—and your future funds. Pick up a bottle of basic Teflon lubrication (available at hardware stores or any bike shop) and wipe down your chain or any moving part each day after you ride. Sand and salt can chew up your bike fast, creating less than ideal riding conditions. Daily upkeep of your ride will keep you pedaling smoothly through the winter and into the spring, saving you money on repairs and replacements.

LAY ON THE LAYERS

Adam Blake says that new apparel isn’t necessary for winter—you just need to wear your existing duds in a new way. “It’s not that you have to go buy a whole new wardrobe. It’s wearing it in an intelligent and functional order,” says Blake. He suggests a three-layer system consisting of a dry fit, a wool layer for insulation and a shell on the outside to break the wind and water.

LOSE THE ’TITUDE

You can buy as many cycling doo-dads as you want, but you won’t be a true year-round cyclist until you embrace the outlook. “The right attitude is totally free and totally necessary,” says Michael Chamberlain. “You need the willpower to keep riding through the winter. Take it on as a challenge—don’t stop riding.”

$20-100

FENDER FOR YOURSELF

Fenders protect both you and your bike from being sprayed with whatever the weather has in store, be it slush, mud, water, salt or sand (or all of the above…this is Iowa). Available at your local bike shop, mechanics can help you choose which fender is right for your tire size and help you install it.

HAND CHECK

Lobster claw style gloves offer the warmth of a mitten with the control of a glove. “These are typically pretty good because they’re warm and they allow some sort of dexterity for shifting and using the brakes,” says Chamberlain. If your hands are extra sensitive to frigid temps, bar mitts are an even better choice for winter riding. Available online and at some bike shops, these neoprene mittens attach to your handlebars and let you slip your hands in. They are functionally designed to give you control over the brakes and gears, while staying both water and wind resistant.

$100+

TRADE IN YOUR TIRES

Studded tires help prevent slipping and sliding while you roll over snow and ice. These tires are adorned with knobs and studs to create traction against slippery surfaces. They will run you around $120 or more, so they should be used only in slick conditions. “I recommend judicious use with these tires. The studs can start to wear, and that’s what you’re paying for,” says Black. If studded tires are out of your price range, Chamberlain suggests a knobbier, chunkier tire.

GIVE FROZEN TOES THE BOOT

Nothing ruins a ride quite like a pair of frozen feet. The key to toastey toes? Wool. “Wool in general is a great material in the winter,” says Black. Top your wool socks with a pair of insulated boots—try something with 300 or more grams of insulation. Keep in mind that you’ll need to switch to standard pedals if you’re buying a standard outdoor boot. If you want to continue clipping in through the season, you can purchase shoe covers to don over your cycling shoes.

Megan Ranegar spends her nights dreaming about crafts and sugar. You can find her at ranegar.blogspot.com
Recently, my alter ego RoboProfessor had a run in with Michele Bachmann during her visit to the Hamburg Inn No. 2, which generated surreal headlines like "Republican candidate Michelle Bachmann harangued by 'gay robot' on the campaign trail in Iowa" (the UK's Daily Mail). This put me in a nostalgic frame of mind, so I thought I'd share with you, dear reader, my very first media prank.

When I was just out of my teens, a handful of friends began staging spontaneous spectacles at James Madison University in Virginia. My pal Phil Sweeney and a core group of self-described "freaks" started small, like acting weird or deranged in front of a few dozen prospective students and their parents during campus tours.

We then set our sights higher, aiming for a university-wide audience—and what better way to get students' attention than to endanger the school mascot? So we held a rally to transform JMU's Duke Dog, a blue bulldog with a cape and crown, into a Three-Eyed Pig With Antlers. Though it was a class project (for which I got school credit!), many others played directorial and acting roles.

After we reserved the school commons as our protest site, I wrote letters to the campus newspaper about why JMU's mascot should be replaced. They were written at the height of the backlash against Political Correctness and intentionally pushed buttons with lines like: "it is degrading to celebrate a dog that yearns to be free, but can't," and "it seems sexist to honor an aggressive, masculine dog wearing a crown—a symbol of historical patriarchal oppression."

The freaks hoped some people might get bent out of shape, but it seemed unrealistic to believe that the mascot-changing proposal would become a scandal. We were wrong. After I collected over 400 signatures in favor of our scatological, sophomorically-named alternative mascot, "Dukie," a countermovement sprang up to "Save the Duke Dog." One day, a pro-Dog student—not knowing she was talking to the enemy—asked me to sign her petition. I captured this memory in my journal.

"Sure, if you sign mine," I told her. "She read it and started yelling at me, and when I started laughing hysterically she just got madder."

When a friend in the Student Government Association submitted a bill in favor of the mascot change, all hell broke loose. During that year's homecoming game the marching band spelled out "We Love the Duke Dog" in its tubas and, in a sign of solidarity, wore plastic dog bones around their necks. When a student threw a makeshift Three-Eyed Pig With Antlers effigy into the stands, loyal fans destroyed it. "Why are they ripping that stuffed animal to shreds?" someone asked. "Oh, some faggots are trying to change the mascot," came the nonchalant reply.

At the height of the nuttiness, our student newspaper The Breeze listed the day's top news stories in order of importance: "Duke
Dog Controversy,” followed by “Traumatic Drama at Gunpoint: Find Out How a JMU Grad Dealt with Being Shot.” This was not the first time in the history of the world that a trivial, sensationalized story trumped human tragedy, but it was the first time I went for a spin in the media machine.

The pro-Dukie rally was planned on Halloween—my twenty-first birthday, incidentally—and it took the form of a mass wedding ceremony I officiated. About one hundred people participated and many more observed. We offered several clues that it was a prank, including publicity flyers that stated the protesters would marry themselves to bananas to demonstrate the “seriousness” of the cause. Our humor was lost to many. As my friend Phil Sweeney put it, the banana marrying ceremony “served to reinforce the idea in most of the students’ minds that we were very unreasonable people.”

I dressed appropriately for the occasion by rocking a priest’s collar, strap-on pig nose, antlers, plastic third eye glued to my forehead and a white robe with a large question mark painted on the front. It made for good television. Two stations showed up to cover the event and all NBC affiliates in the state of Virginia aired the story on their local newscasts. The Three-Eyed Pig rally footage was later incorporated into a CNN piece about opposition to racially offensive mascots like the Washington Redskins and the Atlanta Braves, which was raging at the time. The Three-Eyed Pig With Antlers sure was a strange fit.

Newspapers also jumped on the bandwagon and when the Roanoke Times & World-News called, I ran a few experiments. In order to see what the reporter would print without fact checking, I made up outrageously false stories about the origins of the new mascot. I spoke of a nonexistent woman named Nancy X, who supposedly dreamt up the new mascot during a LSD-inspired vision quest at one of JMU’s many “naked parties.” I casually spun a ludicrous tale, telling the reporter, I mean, of course everybody knows that the antlered pig was a pagan symbol of sexual-
hidden, although apparently nothing else—proposed a regular two-eyed pig with antlers, a pagan symbol of fertility and sexuality. But another faction wanted a three-eyed clown, so they compromised.” Straight from my loose cannon lips and onto the front page of a newspaper, with no qualifiers or quotation marks.

A LUDICROUS TALE, STRAIGHT FROM MY LOOSE-CANNON LIPS, ON THE FRONT PAGE OF A NEWSPAPER, WITH NO QUALIFIERS OR QUOTATION MARKS.

Reflecting back on the Three-Eyed Pig With Antlers drama, it made me understand better the ways that trickery shapes mass media and, in certain ways, our perception of the world. I watched as news outlets gave broad coverage to this ridiculous event when plenty of politically explosive issues were downplayed or ignored.

Think about what I was able to do, a college student with very little money and no media experience, and compare that to the resources available to PR firms, lobbyists and the corporations they represent. This absurd, eye-opening experience altered the course of my life, transforming me from an aspiring entertainment industry insider to a professional gadfly. IV

Kembrew McLeod will be plotting world revolution over the holiday break. This is the last in a series of columns on pranks, some of which will be included in his upcoming book Making Mischief With Media, to be published April Fool’s Day, 2013. He would like to thank his editors at Little Village for humoring him (no pun intended).

an incredible array of guest artists—Arthur Fiedler, Vincent Price, Eileen Farrell, Garrick Ohlson. I played in innumerable piano recitals and contests at the Mendelssohn Club (now the Mendelssohn Performing Arts Center), the oldest continuous community music organization in the United States. I have never seen another park system so beautiful and extensive. There are miles and miles of the most gorgeous homes imaginable, many built with pride by the town’s Swedish immigrants; think Iowa City’s Summit Street and multiply it a hundredfold.

I hesitate to say I “hate” Rockford. But I know I have no intention to live there ever again. I have intentionally chosen Iowa City as my home community because, as I have often said, I literally love it. Even though there are plenty of folks who despise Iowa City, our town, frankly, is pretty easy to love. Rockford is not easy to love. But when I teach and preach about commitment to place, I wonder if I should have tried harder at making that commitment to my hometown, the place that raised and nurtured me, despite all its warts and problems. Was I right just to abandon it, even if maybe it would have made me miserable in a lot of ways?

Aunt Millie sure didn’t do that. And I can’t think of a more grounded, generous, and caring person, who, at 94, still has no intention of leaving her town, no matter what ugly list it ends up on. She has every intention of caring about her town, her church congregation and her neighbors for as long as she can. Aunt Millie is no fool. She knows the score. But she also knows what it means to be a member of a community. She can teach us all something from her observations from 70 years of Rockford life. IV

This year, Thomas Dean has lived in Iowa City, Iowa, the same number of years that he lived in Rockford, Illinois.
Star Kite

Sand digger, joints poised,
thinking wants friends to play with. Ah, me. Ah, the never
again will do rims the canyon. Sets the record
for a woman running thus said
gives to you, gives in to you because simpler
I is watching a man

limp, toss a stained bag between southside and recent
adulthood showing its
dissonant skylights
a banana smashed in a fist

suspects the right thing, drinking its foam, its la-la-la terribly
grates over the shops
and the caulk silent. Where free to
runs fingers down the grimed skylights

is watching
the boy spins and the boy
wagons the hill, freedom
stuck to the bumper. Blue, limp and how sad, the wet
inner explosion, the sky tugging the kite
whereon

How high can your kite fly? Ceramic and ground pepper
sky, the century link prairie fire
heart amass strings, leaves
this still shooting.

Fair Wedding

its mare, its truck climbs old mine
mud runs 100
heat and loudspeaker
wedding
hills, coaster pit, elaborate operation what we
water piped in
the wedding dress, canary
ties, white shoes to better bull
-dozens, -slingers
-boys. Outcast, stained shirts I wants

and the filter smokes
the hand on the stroller bar engines
catgut, goat’s-rue, he, at first game clapping,
covers his small

trucks:
cry for what’s wrong
with the cranial, what’s wrong
with that kid, walking back into
the blessed, anonymous

night Lincoln-inaugurate everywhere
driving
a sciatic sky, driving means
a nebula drowning its shallows.

Margaret LeMay-Lewis attended Barnard College and
the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Her poems have appeared
in Another Chicago Magazine, Blast Furnace, the White
Whale Review and elsewhere. Her work was shortlisted
for the 2007 Four Way Books Levis Prize and the 2011
Discovery/The Boston Review Poetry Prize.
For Iowans, December is a time of making personal connections on the ground, judging presidential candidates by their handshakes and eye contact, and watching debates in order to draw distinctions that will help them to cast their caucus votes. The 2012 Iowa Caucus rings in Iowa’s 40th year of hosting the inaugural event of the Republican and Democratic nomination process. Iowa’s role as the first caucus seems to be a symbolic articulation of how we transform the diverse amalgam of 309 million people into the space we call America.

Iowa’s role as the first caucus seems to be a symbolic articulation of how we transform the diverse amalgam of 309 million people into the space we call America.

For Sue, participating in this year’s Iowa Caucus marked a rite of passage that initiated her into the inner sanctum of the American Experience. Bruell, who was born a stateless citizen, was “excited to be part of participatory democracy.” Bruell explained, “People like to follow the leader.” For her, Iowa’s controversial first-in-the-nation status was all about “mustering sheep.”

But more than that, Bruell believes that “it would hurt America if Iowa weren’t first.” To support this assertion, Bruell invokes the “T” word—Tradition. And in almost hallowed tones, she brings up the Midwestern sensibility—solid, nice, trustworthy, sensible, open-minded.

The quintessentially American Midwest essence comes up again weeks later at Newt Gingrich’s speech about the promise of brain science research to save our economy. Libertarian-leaning University of Iowa medical student Denny Porto attended the speech. Although Porto “likes and respects Speaker Gingrich,” he expects to caucus for his very first time this year in support of Ron Paul. Porto notes that caucus season “is an especially great time to be an Iowan,” and he emphasizes the importance of maintaining the tradition of Iowa’s first in the nation status because of its many strengths. For Porto, Iowa “represents a broad differential of America in general. We have rural America. We have bigger cities. We have great academic centers, and when you look at all those different parts, you can get a broad cut of what America is.”

Porto goes on to say, “Iowa brought Barack Obama to the forefront last year. And if it wasn’t for Iowa, I wonder who our president would be right now.” Although Porto expresses a proud nostalgia for Iowa’s role in President Obama’s nomination, he does not seem to actually be an Obama supporter—Obama’s health care package being a point of suspicion for him. He states, “Obama care is more bad than good. When you try to add a foreign element to the doctor-patient relationship, which is a sacred relationship, it interferes with what we are trying to do, and it gets in the way of the healing process.” Porto defends insurance companies’ rules and bureaucracy, stating “insurance companies are trying to help the patients the best that they can. The problem lies when you start to have these public-private partnerships with insurance companies and when there are barriers to competition.”

Thus the common denominator for the Iowans we spoke with seems to be less about who actually comes out of the Iowa Caucus
process and more about Iowa’s role as the bastion of American values—the geographic incarnation of true American-ness. However, according to 2010 U.S. Census data, Iowa is not the mean center of population in the United States. That distinction goes to Plato, Missouri—and the center continues to move in westerly, and in recent decades a southerly, direction, reflecting the settlement of the West and the recent growth of the South. This suggests that Iowa is not dealing with the kinds of growth trends that most of the U.S. is. And the demographic differences are astonishing. People of European descent, what the census categorizes as White persons, make up 91.3% of the state population and about 83% of the population of Iowa City, while they make up 72.4% of the U.S. population.

But that’s not how Iowans see it.

2011 Iowa Code 43.4 states that Iowa precinct caucuses must be held a minimum of eight days before any other state. Bill Keettel, co-chair of the Candidate Recruitment/Join Our Team

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Support Standing Committee of the Johnson County Republicans and a University Heights resident who grew up in Iowa City, feels that the nomination process produces too many similarly positioned candidates who overgraze the presidential meadow—Are there really any substantive differences between Michelle Bachmann and Rick Santorum, besides maybe their hair? For Keettel, “Iowa’s function is to clear out the deadwood” and send a few viable candidates out for the rest of America to continue to scrutinize.

**A TALE OF TWO DEBS**

Preparing to blog about the Dec. 8, Des Moines, ABC GOP debate, Deborah Thornton sits in her eastside kitchen, which smells of spices from the apple cider she has mulled for us and other guests she has invited to meet with us. Thornton is a Research Analyst with the Public Interest Institute of Mount Pleasant, Iowa, which analyzes public policy issues that affect Iowans. She also serves as the Chair of the Johnson County Republican Issues Committee. Thornton thinks that Iowa’s small population—which seems to make Iowa a bad fit in being a representational state in the presidential nomination process—is part of
the importance of it holding the first primary contest. Iowa is doable—an accessible state where voters can actually meet the candidates.

Media pundits argue that this do-ability also gives Iowans disproportionate access to candidates, who visit multiple times, which in turn brings an inordinate amount of media attention to Iowa, making the precinct caucuses less about representational democracy and eye-to-eye politicking and more about creating a media spectacle. In such a mediascape, it’s more important when a candidate peaks in Iowa, rather than who that candidate is. Texas Governor Rick Perry immediately shot to the top of the polls as the likely nominee for the Republican Party. A lot of people were interested in Perry and wanted him to get into the race. Then Gingrich experienced a surge. But two weeks before the Caucus, an Iowa State University/Gazette/KCRG poll of 333 expected Republican caucusers put Ron Paul in the lead, with Gingrich’s polling numbers dropping like a rock. Going into the Caucuses, the GOP field is wide open.

In fact, Thornton predicts that the 2012 Iowa Caucuses will not produce a clear, landslide winner, but instead will produce a plurality of viable candidates that will forge an American presidential nominee conversation rather than close that conversation off.

Thornton concedes that in terms of politics, the significance of the Caucus vote is “a spin and a bounce, the Big Mo—the big momentum kind of thing.”

But beyond the political, Thornton, who identifies as a Christian and a conservative, still advocates for Iowa’s symbolic significance: “The Republican State Party in Iowa believes that Iowa being first in the nation and retaining that first in the nation position is very important. And I think the Party believes it’s important because Iowa is the heartland. We’re not the Left Coast or the Right Coast. . . . We are Middle America. Heartland. We represent the best of America as a developing country. People who are hardworking, family people who are doing the best they can in their communities and their families to make a good living and to raise their children and to have a good life.”

As for the Caucuses’s electoral clout, Thornton states that the Johnson County GOP will get behind whichever candidate comes out of the Iowa Caucus process because Obama’s first term has been plagued by bad foreign policy—as the leader of the Free World, she says, we are not leading—and a domestic policy that defies a more fiscally conservative approach.

Deb Derksen, chair of the Public Relations/Communications Standing Committee of the Johnson County Republicans and Johnson County resident, defines herself not so much as a Republican but rather as a religious conservative with strong family values and a fervent belief that all forms of life are important from conception until death. Derksen speaks as a Herman Cain supporter whose man has already been rooted out of the political process; as such, she says the other candidates will have a lot to prove to earn her support. Derksen is suspicious of Mitt Romney’s inconsistent position on abortion. Although she thinks Gingrich is knowledgeable and a good adviser, she does not think that Gingrich has enough support to beat Obama. Besides, she just doesn’t see him as the president. She doesn’t know if Bachmann has what it takes. She knows Santorum doesn’t. She suspects that Ron Paul is setting the stage for his son to run. She doesn’t appreciate that Perry pushed Gardasil, a vaccine for use in the prevention of certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV), when he has a vested interest in pharmaceuticals. And besides, his eye contact sucked when he shook her hand. And because Romney hadn’t yet visited Iowa, she hadn’t met him at all.

Having met Cain several times, Derksen’s support comes from the kind of personal candidate access opportunities that define the ramp-up to the Iowa Caucuses. Commenting on her impression of Cain, Derksen states, “When he came to Iowa City, I picked him up from the airport, so his whole entourage was in my vehicle. You know, when you get to meet a candidate with a room full of people, that’s one thing. But when you meet someone, and they let their guard down a little bit more because they are not showing off for anyone or doing any political process at that time—he was just a real person at that time. So I felt like, in the couple of hours that I was able to be around him on that day, I got to know him even better. [I] did meet him also when he was up in Cedar Rapids—he had come to a chili dinner that they had up in Linn County—and was able to talk to him quite a bit at length there.”

It is this personal side of the political process, bringing a candidate into your community—even into your car—that is so important to

CAUCUSES CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >>
The Moderate’s Dilemma

In the modern age of the GOP—which originated with the Newt-Gingrich-led historic 1994 midterm grab of the House of Representatives—moderate Republicans tend to travel an unusual road during presidential primary season, particularly in relation to the Iowa caucus. Four years ago, early Republican front-runner Rudy Giuliani took trumped-up media warnings about his caucus viability to heart. Sensing that an East Coast pro-chooser could never win in corn country, he bypassed Iowa altogether. On the advice of his campaign manager Mike DuHaime, he also skipped New Hampshire and South Carolina and focused his full campaign efforts on Florida. But by the time Florida—with all of its pro-Rudy retired New Yorkers—rolled around, Giuliani already had three losses to his name and the media had made him an afterthought. He finished third in the Sunshine State and dropped out before Super Tuesday, later admitting his strategy to be a colossal mistake.

Mitt Romney now faces an even more curious dilemma. The once-liberal former Massachusetts governor and son of one of history’s most prominent Rockefeller Republicans, Romney has maintained just enough organization in Iowa to make a dent, but not enough so that it looks like he’s trying. Any sign of concerted effort on his part in Iowa will only make it more embarrassing for him when he comes in third here.

Blame the media or blame the demographic makeup of Iowa’s GOP base, but moderate Republicans—as in Romney’s case, the strongest in general elections—no longer engage with the Hawkeye State except in a pattern of confusing mixed messages. Romney was the lone candidate to skip a family values-themed debate in Iowa, then he flip-flopped in order to publicly support ethanol subsidies—one of the most important issues in the Iowa Republican caucus. No moderate Republican has won Iowa, or even really attempted to, since 1980, when George Bush topped Reagan in the caucus 32 to 30 percent.

That the Iowa caucus comes first on the calendar makes it a media event, but that doesn’t necessarily make it a proper Republican litmus test. If it weren’t first in line, chronologically, wouldn’t Iowa be just like any other interchangeable, predominately Christian state handing delegates to the most morally conservative candidate (like Mike Huckabee in ’08)? In kicking off the race, the Iowa caucus voters. Considering Romney’s health-care record in Massachusetts, the “Mitt is more conservative than Newt” concept seems a pretty big pill to swallow.

As much focus is placed on how Romney and Gingrich engage with Iowa Republicans, we should also think for a moment about how the Iowans must feel. A one-term Massachusetts governor who once labeled himself a “progressive”—who designed the very model upon which Obamacare was based—willfully avoids Iowa because he thinks he’s too rich and educated to be likable there. And who’s he running against? That flamboyant fellow who kept shutting down the government back in the ’90’s, who almost ruined his own party by pursuing impeachment proceedings against a second-term president with a 70 percent approval rating during good economic times. Dear God. It makes you wish Chris Christie had jumped in when he had the chance (then again, he’s an East Coaster with the same campaign guru, Mike DuHaime, who steered Rudy to failure in ’08).

At the time of this writing, it seems the Iowa caucus will go to Gingrich, with a decent vote count for Romney. The media will interpret the results ten million different ways and then we’ll move on—to New Hampshire (Romney), South Carolina (Gingrich), Florida (up for grabs) and then Super Tuesday (get out the popcorn). As in every case since 1980, Iowa Republicans will give a bigger-than-deserved boost to the morally conservative candidate at the expense of the moderate who might actually win in November. And since Iowa comes first, this will seem far more important than when, say, Alabama or Utah does the exact same thing.

Tom Harland is a conservative writer based in the People’s Republic of Johnson County.

THE IOWA CAUCUS COMING FIRST ON THE CALENDAR MAKES IT A MEDIA EVENT, BUT IT DOESN’T NECESSARILY MAKE IT A PROPER REPUBLICAN LITMUS TEST.
It is a bit odd to condense a year’s worth of listening into such a short, impossibly definitive list, yet each of us is attracted to the act of putting a stamp on a handful of albums that may (or may not) represent the best of the year in question. It is all about a sense of style, a method of sculpting self-identity by which others will judge us and against which we will judge others. So, having acknowledged both the absurdity and necessity of making such lists, let us now gaze upon the Elite 8 records of 2011.

8. BJORK

**BIOPHILIA**

After a decade of rewarding creativity (Vespertine) and occasional meandering (Volta), Bjork returns with an album of dizzying layered vocals, dope beats, and synthesizer flourish. It makes some of her younger contemporaries, like Julianna Barwick and Zola Jesus, seem one-dimensional in comparison. But 2011 was that kind of year in which old heroes—PJ Harvey, Kate Bush—returned to form, not with retro-gazing music but with fresh statements. In particular, Bjork, while making a grand effort here to further incorporate her ideas with the modern world (the album was released with integrated iPhone and iPad applications), does not get lost in the plot. Biophilia’s songs are some of her most consistent and compelling to appear in several years.

6. THE FIELD

**LOOPING STATE OF MIND**

On Looping State of Mind, Swedish musician Axel Wilner (aka The Field) stays true to his minimal techno roots but that descriptor—minimal—is a bit deceiving: This music is full of hypnotic pulses, dreamy loops and consistent, if subtle, bass lines tying everything together. A disciple of patience, Wilner reveals his songs with careful timing and aplomb. As the layers build, the listener is subdued by the intensity of Wilner’s compositions. And if an album ever deserved several spins this is one of them. There is always a missed layer, a hidden treasure, some distorted guitar or vocal sample tucked beneath a staccato of percolating synths. A versatile listen, this album possesses both the glacial beauty of ambient music and the euphoric builds of excellent dance music.

7. ST. VINCENT

**STRANGE MERCY**

The success of Strange Mercy lies in St. Vincent’s ability to disguise “advanced” and “difficult” music as infectious and approachable pop. Teasing growling tones out of her guitars, displaying a fondness for buzzing synth-bass lines, and merging live percussion with pulsing electronics, St. Vincent has created a sonically impressive suite that approaches both ecstatic heights (“Surgeon”) and haunting lows (“Champagne Year”). Quite simply this album is as fun as it is smart.

SHABAZZ PALACES

The year’s best in hip hop

ST. VINCENT

Strange, merciful pop
4. (TIED) KURT VILE – SMOKE RING FOR MY HALO
THE WAR ON DRUGS (LEFT) – SLAVE AMBIENT

The music on these remarkable records embraces two enduring slacker poses: Let’s get high and I’m already high. And it’s true: Not enough can be said about the dreamy altered states achieved by Vile’s elliptical guitar picking and attention to textural detail, and The War on Drugs’ effortless slithering between shoegaze instrumentals and E-Street guitar anthems. And though the music envelops and transports the listener to another place, Vile and The War on Drugs frontman Adam Granduciel have some valid points to make. If anything, lyrically speaking, these records are about the fight against inertia. In Vile’s case, his anti-heroes want to be loved as much as they want to remain alone. Sarcastic and simmering Vile rattles off, “This goes out to all those who want the rat to survive,” on the scorching “Puppet to the Man.” Similarly, after finding his way through the mid-album standout “Come to the City,” one of Granduciel’s characters comes to a startling non-realization, “Lead me back to the one I love/All roads lead to me… I’ll be drifting.” From the outside this might seem a little like overbearing self-pity but these sister records are poignant reflections of the ennui engulfling our dusty American lives. Luckily, like their forbearers Dylan and Springsteen, Kurt Vile and The War on Drugs continue to make a case for rock and roll as the answer.

5. EMA
PAST LIFE MARTYRED SAINTS

Leaving behind the noise-folk of her previous band Gowns, Erika M. Anderson has re-emerged as EMA. On her new record she has a grand time mashing up avant-garde tendencies with a sharp ear for hooks. As a result, this will be the record that propels her from basement corner to rock club stage. Many bands choose to establish a sound and ride it out for ten or twelve songs but Anderson’s approach is different: Each song on Past Life Martyred Saints explores a new musical idea. Whether it’s the post-rock sprawl of “The Grey Ship,” the goth/hip-hop feel of “California,” or the lullaby glaze of “Marked,” Anderson finds a way—via screeching synths, ultra-effected drums and distorted guitars—to help each of these tracks achieve a unique charm. The underlying thread is her wonderfully imperfect voice. The result is that we feel close to her, assaulted by her and left thoroughly in awe of her talents.

2. SHABAZZ PALACES
BLACK UP

When Shabazz Palaces MC Ishmael Butler rallies, “Don’t compare my beats to his,” you know he’s telling the truth. Channeling the dark energy of 3 a.m. bad-ecstasy come-downs and the short-lived thrills of a “just one more pill” mentality, the production on Black Up is entirely psychedelic, unnerving and disorienting. The lyrics are street-wise and vicious but there is as much tension in the delivery as there is in the content. Spitting concise observations like, “Nothing’s gonna stop it/If it’s gonna make a profit,” this isn’t exactly gun-toting, coke-dealing rap; rather it’s the work of the gritty intelligentsia rallying with the collective frustration of the American condition living in its post-911, post-Change reality. Hip-hop atmosphere hasn’t been this heavy since early Mobb Deep or Cuban Linx I, but this isn’t the old shit: It is rap music’s return to form and the newness all wrapped into one devastating record.

1.TIM HECKER
RAVEDEATH, 1972

The path to beauty is not a pleasant one. At least that’s the tenet offered on Ravedeath, 1972, an album that walks backwards through a haze of wildly manipulated samples and fiercely aggressive electronics to hint at its exquisite origins. To wit, Tim Hecker began this album by recording a day’s worth of organ music in a church in Iceland. Returning home, he meddled with his recordings applying his ambient treatment to the already ethereal sounds he had captured. Tugging his source material in several directions—cloudy static, harsh noise, throbbing, delayed overtones—and adding more layers after the fact, Hecker has amassed a suite of music which is not only this year’s best album but also a masterwork of ambient-electronic music. Despite the seemingly avant-garde approach to constructing this album, it doesn’t take a PhD to appreciate Ravedeath, 1972: At its core this is some beautiful shit and anyone can get behind that.

Andre Perry lives and works in Iowa City.

Andre Perry lives and works in Iowa City.
The past year saw a number of celebrations and commemorations in this City of Literature. With the 75th Anniversary of the Iowa Writers Workshop uniting decades of students over the summer and Philip Levine named U.S. Poet Laureate in the fall, 2011 played its nostalgia cards well. At the same time, national year-end lists have been calling out the accomplishments of emerging writers, with several recognitions falling on Iowa City residents. Meanwhile the visible and virtual literary landscapes continued to expand, and literature inspired by the landscape blossomed.

Oakland Cemetery’s lauded landmark the Black Angel had a booming year as the subject of not one but two new books: the murder mystery Killing Kate by Minnesota author Julie Kramer and Here Lies Linc, a Junior Library Guild Selection by local Delia Ray. Ray’s 12-year-old Linc discovers his own family secrets as he investigates the Black Angel’s curse. On her charming all-ages-friendly website, Ray explains, “The more secrets I uncovered, the more I began to realize that the true stories behind graveyards and ‘haunted’ sites like the Black Angel are often much more interesting than the ghost stories that surround them.”

As a resident artist at the Herbert Hoover Museum in West Branch, Stephen Longmire found similar inspiration photographing Rochester Cemetery and his Life and Death on the Prairie combines those stunning photographs with essays elucidating its history as once-booming pioneer center, ecological significance as prairie remnant and ensuing controversies over priorities in land stewardship. Deep love of the place illuminates every image, from burr oaks to crumbling unreadable tombstones to recently placed flowers to the caretaker mowing near his own family plots. At a recent Prairie Lights reading, Longmire described Rochester as “both a very particular place” and a place that allows him to “tell a story” about our relationships with landscape. Longmire treats all of the cemetery’s constituencies with respect, so his book serves several purposes, even including a “flora of Rochester County” by UI botanist Diana Horton. The photographs were recently on display at The Old Capitol Museum in conjunction with the UI Museum of Art and hopefully will be at the Hoover Museum in spring.

Speaking of art and book crossovers, the Iowa City Literary Walk has expanded to the Northside, with new banners, tree grates and bronze-cast book piles highlighting quotations from Iowa-City-related writers including Lan Samantha Chang, Sarah Prineas, Roberto Ampuero, Lori Erickson, Carl Klaus, Christopher Merrill (whose The Tree of Doves: Ceremony, Expedition, War came out this year) and Stephen Bloom (who’s been stirring the pot with his editorial on Iowa’s caucus-worthiness in the Atlantic).

Even if you missed those, no doubt you noticed the series of colorful giant book sculptures popping up throughout Johnson County. Previous cities to enjoy the serial public sculptures adapted Cows on Parade to their own

**LITERARY ICON?**
Rochester Cemetery’s “Black Angel” made several cameos in 2011.
Shane McCrae is one of two Workshop grads to win a Whiting Award in 2011.

If public art can ask questions about book evolution, no wonder the Iowa City Book Festival went virtual in a few of its offerings, including the collaborative Twitter project Novel Iowa City. Over the course of a weekend, invited and volunteer writers from across the globe co-wrote a Twitter “novel” tweet-by-tweet using the shared hashtag #icbfn, with the last hour’s worth streamed live in the Englert Theatre.

New writing in established forms got attention, too. Iowa City’s Shane McCrae won a prestigious Whiting Award, along with another Workshop alum Eduardo Corral. McCrae’s new book of poems, Mule, unflinchingly tackles personal territory such as interracial identity, religion and raising a child with autism—perhaps why McCrae told Keith Montesano of First Book Interviews that he wasn’t the “book contest winning sort.” A chance to hear McCrae read, as he does periodically around town, should be taken; his quiet demeanor, like his controlled poetic form, barely hides the explosions of ideas beneath.

As for the new year, 2012 already promises some intriguing developments. Another local, Olivia Glass, will be featured in Best Women’s Erotica 2012 with her story, “Drought,” first published by Filament magazine in 2011. Filament had been plagued with “all kinds of troubles, especially with censorship,” Glass said. Recently the Australian government ordered the magazine be sold with an opaque plastic wrapper at newsstands. “It’s really sad that plenty of sleazy magazines that exploit women manage to stay open without any trouble, but one of the only smart, sexy magazines for heterosexual women has to close its doors.” Glass (who writes in multiple genres under more than one name) herself once assumed that erotica would be “kind of trashy,” yet she aims to “combat the idea that people can’t write explicit erotica that can also be literature.” Regarding the recently-threatened sex-positive shop The Toolbox, Glass encourages “anyone who supports The Toolbox’s mission to email them (IowaCityToolbox@gmail.com) and let them know that they have your support, and also to patronize them.”

In 2012, Laureate Levine plans to use his post to champion unrecognized writers. One of the fifty writers (and one of eight Pulitzer winners) to speak at the Workshop’s 75th anniversary this summer, he has been hailed as the “proletariat poet” of the Midwest, often recalling his Detroit auto factory co-workers from before he came to Iowa in the mid-1950s. Levine’s most frequent critique matches his most frequent praise—a poetry so plain-spoken it defies poetic expectation, and a dedication to the work he long ago left behind. From his new position Levine eschews the “workingman” label for himself and hopes, according to an AARP bulletin from this fall, to encourage and promote “poets who are significant and underappreciated.”

Soon enough the readings calendars will be back at full steam for another year. If speculative fiction’s your game, you don’t have long to wait, as authors E. J. Fischer and An Owomoyela kick off the action reading at The Haunted Bookshop at 7 p.m. on January 20.

And so passes another year in the City of Literature. The new year is sure to have bigger things in store, so keep your ear to the ground and your face in a book.

Jennifer Shook is a PhD student in English and teaches Interpretation of Literature at UI. Also a dramaturg and theatre director, she is the Founding Artistic Director of Chicago’s Caffeine Theatre.
In 2011, a year of many good movies (my own motley list includes: Cave of Forgotten Dreams, Bridesmaids, Weekend, The Muppet Movie, Buck and Rise of the Planet of the Apes), one stands out in every possible way: Terence Malick’s The Tree of Life. Naturally, we in Iowa City never got to eat of The Tree of Life, at least not on the big screen. Luckily, this masterpiece can still transport you back to Eden on DVD, though I myself made a point of traveling to a more complete civilization—Chicago—to see it in all its glory.

At Tree’s core is a riveting story of a late-1950s family, but there are a few other significant sequences: a now-infamous twenty-minutes about the history of the entire universe, an architect wandering aimlessly among his cold glass-and-steel creations and a final mystical realization on a beach. The usually perceptive Michael Wood has argued that everything but the family’s story is “truly terrible.” It’s certainly the case that the family’s story is most like what we demand of the movies and that Malick’s other sequences don’t fit into the standard aesthetics of entertainment. But the movie is so strangely fascinating, wildly ambitious and ultimately profound that as a critic I feel like I have to rearrange my own aesthetics to meet it rather than demand that it conform to my expectations.

First of all, the family’s story—loosely based on Malick’s own childhood—would be enough to redeem any film. I’m calling it a “story,” though it’s really a series of memory-fragments that flash and disappear to the accompaniment of whispered thoughts and glorious music. Packed into every minute of this sequence are dozens of brief glimpses that even great filmmakers never achieve in a lifetime: Emmanuel Lubezki’s tears-inducing cinematography of glittering sparklers on a summer night, a boy’s outstretched hand registering the flapping air out a car’s rolled-down window, the play of reflected sunlight on a nursery wall. Watching these flashes, I had a completely new experience at the movies: I actually felt like I was having the memories. We’re used to seeing memories on screen in the form of flashbacks. But Malick and Lubezki have found a way of so entering into the interiority of experience that they have blazed what I hope will be a new path for the art of cinema.

Insofar as the movie suggests a narrative, a young man dies (we’re not sure why), and...
his brother (Sean Penn as an adult, the Oscar-deserving Hunter McCracken as a boy) reacts to the loss by thinking back to their childhood and wondering about what it all means. He hears his mother’s voice saying, “There are two ways through life: the way of nature and the way of grace,” and meditates on how his father (Brad Pitt, in the best performance of his career) and mother (the ethereal Jessica Chastain) incarnate the complementary forces that course through the entirety of life, as well as how his father and mother—and by extension the elementary forces of the universe—war within him.

In Malick’s vision, nature represents struggle and strength; and grace stands for acceptance and suppleness. But as soon as he divides the family and the cosmos into these oppositions, he complicates them by showing how in every entity and action they battle and blend. There are literally hundreds of such images, but I think especially of a scene of hot lava and cold seawater striking against each other and sending up steam, or of a dinosaur digging its foot into the throat of a weaker dinosaur and then, as if empathetically, releasing the pressure.

The Tree of Life begins with an epigraph from the Book of Job: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth...when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Imagine a review of Job by the ancient version of Michael Wood: “Great opening story about God and Satan betting with Job’s life, great closing speech by God; but a lot of truly terrible speeches in the middle.”)

There’s a medieval Christian way of reading the Old Testament as prefiguring the central mystery of Christ. Likewise, Malick treats the Bible as a figuration of his own life. Almost every scene from his boyhood seems linked at a subatomic level to the tales of Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel and so on. But the Book of Job is, as the epigraph alerts us, the movie’s master text, particularly God’s final speech, which answers humanity’s fundamental question—Why do I suffer?—not with any kind of human logic but by raising the question to another power, by linking the inscrutability of suffering with the glorious, terrifying inscrutability of everything, from the singing stars to the mundane moments of any given day.

The title of the movie refers to Eden’s Tree of Life, which Adam and Eve, having eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, are permanently barred from enjoying. Through the glass darkly, this myth seems to suggest that by trying to grasp the universe we’re unable to participate in it fully. The way of our nature blocks the way of our grace. But Malick’s movie, via the Book of Job, suggests another reading. It’s only through our attempt to understand suffering, and our inevitable failure to do so, that we can finally access the way of grace, meet ourselves and inherit the glory.

Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College and blogs about music with his son at billyanddad.wordpress.com.
Hello reader and welcome to On The Beat, a monthly column that will explore and comment on the local music scene as well as highlight some solid shows coming up during the month, exactly like The Haps previously.

From what I see in this month’s shows, 2012 is coming out of the gate strong. On the fourth day of the new year, reggae legends The Wailers will groove out at the Blue Moose. Best known for supporting Bob Marley, The Wailers are an integral part of his music, providing the instrumentation for classic tracks like “Get Up, Stand Up” and “Trenchtown Rock.”

Although Marley passed in 1981, The Wailers’ name is kept alive by remaining original bassist Aston Barrett who was recruited by the band’s founders Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer following studio work with Barrett’s first band The Upsetters. With The Wailers, Barrett worked on much of the music and is widely considered Marley’s right hand man. With more than five decades of music in their arsenal, The Wailers continue taking their brand of reggae around the world to bring attention to those less fortunate, just as they did when Bob was alive. They will be supported by NYC political rap-rockers Outernational. I would put money on many consciousnesses being raised at this show.

The legend cavalcade doesn’t stop with The Wailers. On January 5, classic indie rockers Camper Van Beethoven will rock The Mill’s stage. Like Let’s Active and The Go-Betweens, Camper Van Beethoven is one of the immensely talented but overlooked bands to come from the 1980s college rock scene. They have influenced diverse bands like The Dodos, Sublime, Teenage Fanclub and moe. with timeless music that mixes ska, punk, folk and rock and roll into a distinct sound.

While they haven’t released new original material since 2004’s New Roman Times, CVB has been touring and releasing unheard and cover material regularly since they reunited in 1999.
I always like shows like this because they provide necessary history lessons for young indie rockers who might not know all the influences of their favorite bands. For those old-timers who missed this California quintet the first time around (or didn’t) this will be a great chance to feel their music live.

In either case, both sets of fans will be treated to material from a forthcoming album (release date unknown) and classic gems such as “Eye of Fatima” and “Take The Skinheads Bowling.”

In addition to these classic bands, there is a great opportunity this month to see the diversity of excellent bands from both Iowa City and Eastern Iowa/Western Illinois. January 21 will bring an epic, two-bar concert and signal the resurrection of a space that I thought would be lost to time.

One half of this concert is the Yacht Club’s 9th Anniversary Show. While it used to be a morgue, this brick building on S. Linn Street has become a lively haven for rockers, groove, jam bands, bluegrass troupes and local/regional music acts—some that are well established, others that are just trying to get their start. To celebrate their 9th Anniversary, the Yacht Club will put on a day-long show featuring The Big Wu, OSG, Aaron Kamm & the One Drops, Whistle Pigs, Tallgrass, Limbs, Dream Thieves, Gone South & The Enz with Coolzey & Hayden Fried spinning sets.

For those who might not be so interested in the jamming and/or bluegrass, the other half of this musical feast is Punk Farm 2012 at Gabe’s. With nine bands on the bill ranging from the punk-pop of Lipstick Homicide to the hellish fury of Supersonic Piss, this will be a potently display of the best punk bands operating in the area right now. If you are into punk, you really should not miss this. The bands are all solid and provide something for everyone whether it’s speed, attitude or catchiness.

The reason this mega show is even possible is because Gabe’s was recently purchased by Scott Kading, the owner of the Yacht Club. When I moved here in 2008, Gabe’s was The Picador. It was a good place to see a show because quality bands were regularly booked and the sound was good. When the ownership switched and The Picador became Gabe’s again, the bar became this void where the only interesting thing was the graffiti about Charles “Taterbug” Free on its exterior.

The Yacht Club’s purchase of Gabe’s gives me hope that this space can become relevant again in Iowa City. How could it become important? For me, that would be booking punk, experimental and hip-hop shows, as these are genres that are in dire need of their own space downtown. Whichever way the club goes with its sound, I really only want one thing to return: the urge to go to Gabe’s for a show.

A.C. Hawley digs rap music and disco. He is the host of the Chrysanthemum Sound System on KRUI (10 p.m. to 12 a.m. Thursdays). Do you have a scoop? Email it to ac.hawley@littlevillagemag.com or tweet it to @acethoughts.
Iowans. In this way, all those moments that allow voters to have connections with candidates are what drive the significance of the Iowa Caucus. Derksen continues, “the whole political process of vetting someone or finding out if they are a real person or not, and how far their convictions go, I think it’s very important. And I think we’re lucky in the state of Iowa that we get to do that. That we get to meet people up-close and personal, and one-on-one, face-to-face.”

Face-to-face politicking is quite powerful, but does the very fact of being a small enough state to make that a reality mean that Iowa is not in fact a representational space for the rest of the country? Given the social and demographic differences that Iowa has in relation to the rest of the U.S., does Iowans’ constant invocation of Midwestern essence harken back to an outmoded vision of the Jeffersonian yeoman? And with the regional decreasing birth rates and the educated farmers’ kids moving away—and even the not-so educated ones, and even the ones whose parents aren’t farmers—hasn’t investing in this representation of America as rural wonderland in fact come back to bite white people in the ass? Perhaps. And perhaps Iowa isn’t “representative” of the demographic, social and economic diversity of America in any mean, median or algebraic way. But Iowa must be represented. Iowa must be part of the discussion—it cannot be lost in the shuffle because, although Iowa is not representative of the whole country, Iowa is representative of a certain sense, a certain Midwestern insistence; it is representative of a large segment of Americans who feels their voice is not being heard. The candidates that come out of the Iowa precinct caucuses are not meant to decide the race for the rest of us, but instead serve as Iowa’s meaningful participation in influencing who gets the honor of being included in the conversation.

Raquel Lisette Baker is working on a PhD in English Literary Studies at The University of Iowa, specializing in Postcolonial Studies with an emphasis in African Literatures in English. She received a BA in Psychology from San Francisco State University and a MA in Creative Writing from Mills College in Oakland, California. She teaches Literature courses. Her short stories have been published in The Womanist literary magazine and the anthology Crux.

Jon Winet is an Intermedia artist and serves as director of The University of Iowa Digital Studio for the Public Humanities. He is an avid follower of the electoral process.
each artist invokes. “Adam and Eve lay in the leaves—devil made them think they were incomplete” doesn’t have any objective relation to Bresson, but in Comerford’s dream logic they do. “It’s not what’s said, it’s what gets made, a shrine to the dead” is his tangential tribute to Joseph Cornell’s curiously evocative boxed assemblages of found objects.

Archive + Spiral suggests where others might state things directly. “I don’t have stories to tell, make you feel how I fell” he sings in “Gravity,” but he’s fibbing a bit. He has many stories, but you have to infer them from the details that surround them. You can enjoy this album as pleasantly understated modern folk music, but its depth derives from the way Comerford follows Emily Dickinson’s advice to “tell all the truth but tell it slant.”

Bob Bucko, Jr.
Tearjerker
bobuckojr.bandcamp.com

Bob Bucko, Jr. might be known best in Iowa City for the Dubuque-based roots rock band Old Panther. Tearjerker is a horse of a different color. Comprising of improvisational pieces recorded at home to multi-track cassette, he visits every corner of what seems to be a rather dark musical landscape. It opens with five tracks of noisy free jazz, reminding me a bit of John Zorn’s more chaotic work. These tracks are visceral and a little scary, but if you’re willing to put up with a little pummelling there’s some harsh beauty to be found.

The centerpiece, the three-part “Triptych” starts out with a hushed, stumbling maraca rhythm, gradually adding layers of heavy breathing and looped singing over the course of four minutes. Part two is made up of howling microphone feedback that may (or may not) include Bob’s voice somewhere. Part three adds radically overdriven vocals to multiple layers of spoken and sung voices, then suddenly switches to quieter overdubbed vocals whose pitch is manipulated into woozy atonal glissandos. Calming down slightly for “Temple Walls/1st War,” which is driven by repeated guitar riffs that sound by comparison quite coherent, the record finishes with the loopy keyboard mantra of “There Is No Other.”

With no intelligible song lyrics or conventional song structure, this might be a hard record to relate to, especially if you have no time for free improvisation. But when I listen to TEARJERKER I hear something more than toddler-esque finger painting.

As the principal singer and songwriter in the band Kaspar Hauser, Thomas Comerford has built a reputation for his inventive take on roots rock. Archive + Spiral is less rocking and more country, with a vibe more living room than rock club. Comerford’s slightly nasal baritone recalls Lou Reed (a comparison underlined by his cover version of the Velvet Underground’s “Sunday Morning”), but he can actually sing and he isn’t an asshole. What he has picked up from the inimitable Lou is his rush-then-drag vocal delivery, as though what he’s trying to say is struggling against the surrounding music.

Thomas is all Midwest, a guy with an unironic fondness for mesh-back feed hats. The understated keyboards, acoustic guitars and especially the wistful slide guitars fit into what European reviewers like to call Americana. But Comerford is not a regionalist. Two of the most intriguing songs on this record are about the artist Joseph Cornell and the French film-maker Robert Bresson. Neither are direct homages, instead they’re meditations on the mood
The Envy Corps
It Culls You
theenvycorps.com

Those jokers at Raygunsite.com will sell you a T Shirt, designed in collaboration with the band, that says “The Envy Corps: Radiohead For Coldplay Fans.” So they’ve spoiled the main insight any music critic would bring to bear in describing their music. From the moment Luke Pettipoole drops the first verse of “Make It Stop” there’s no denying that these guys sound quite a bit like Radiohead. The best way to proceed, therefore, may be to list the ways in which they do not sound like Radiohead:

1. Luke Pettipoole’s head voice is not as nasal as Thom Yorke’s.
2. Their songs are road-ready in ways that Radiohead’s later work is not; they can play this stuff live without having a full time computer tech.
3. They write their own songs. They might be evocative—redolent even—of the Radiohead style, but pretty much anyone who goes to the trouble to write subtle, non-trivial pop songs ends up sounding a little like Radiohead. I don’t even think Thom Yorke could write an Envy Corps song, and if he tried, they wouldn’t be these songs.
4. The Envy Corps guitars sound like guitars. They’re a rock band. They play some keyboard parts, but neither do they own an Ondes Martenot, nor do they program Max/MSP patches to make a guitar sound like a computer falling down a flight of stairs.

All that hooah aside, what makes It Culls You special is that these songs are full strength, no filler examples of pure songwriting, delivered with unwavering conviction. The Beatlesque “Everyone’s Trying To Find You” fits together like a finely machined music box. The skeletal reggae thump of “Command+Q” opens up in the chorus with lush synth strings that contrast with and welcome the return of the thumpy verse. I don’t know if he’s repeating “Lobotomy” or “Phlebotomy” but it’s as though the syllables inspired the beat. At the end when the synths soar (shades of Gary Newman’s “Cars”) the whole song seems to rise up out of itself and fly away.

With It Culls You, Envy Corps has made something remarkable: an album that sounds like a major statement by an internationally important band. They aren’t quite there yet professionally, but it’s certainly better to get there first musically and let the critics and fans catch up when they can.

Larry “The Wizard” Sievers
Captain Lord Wizard
larrysieves.bandcamp.com

Most musicians will tell you that they stand on the shoulders of giants. Whatever particular artistry they might possess is expressed within an established tradition, their influences embossed on every phrase. Then there’s

Larry “The Wizard” (formerly “Machine Gun”) Sievers. He wears his influences literally on his sleeve—the logos of his favorite Metal band—but his music has nothing to do with the heavy metal records he’s collected over more than forty years.

He’s a self-taught keyboard player who has constructed his own musical vocabulary out of the preset sounds on his Kawai keyboard. The only thing I can compare it to is the music from ’90s video games like Legend of Zelda. Unlike conventional composers, who structure their works as a structured elaboration of finite phrases, Larry’s pieces wander an imaginary landscape that he’s constructed in his mind.

His last album had a medieval theme, while on Captain Lord Wizard he’s traded in his sword and tights and taken to the sea. Perhaps it happened when he got that sweet black leather ostrich-plume-trimmed hat he’s been wearing around town, but he’s definitely riding a pirate vibe now. Since this is instrumental music, the theme is evident mostly in song names like “Swashbuckle Piracy,” “Treasure Island,” and “Ship Ahoy.”

If you’ve heard his previous work what you’ll notice immediately is that he’s paid more attention to production values. There are nautical sound effects and occasional piratical exclamations from Larry. There might even be a few overdubbed bass lines. He uses a pervasive hall reverb effect that reminds me of when Schooly D got access to an early digital reverb effect and put it on everything.

Larry’s unique musical vision hasn’t changed. He still favors big portentious two handed chords that change without regard for bar lines or conventional phrasing. There’s no verse-chorus-verse action; Larry’s pieces are through-composed as a series of linked episodes rather than elaboration on repeated musical themes. But Captain Lord Wizard has it’s own obscure, discursive charm, as eccentrically unique as its creator.

Kent Williams thinks that love don’t come easy, it’s a game of give and take.
Why can’t we use lasers as ray guns?

Now more than ever, the world seems to be in need of ray guns. I’m curious why lasers aren’t used more of this type of work. Surely the success of such weapons in Flash Gordon, Star Wars and Star Trek is more than enough justification for their use instead of pesky gunpowder or nuclear weapons. What’s the holdup? Can the problems be solved? Should I be scared of laser pointers? —Joe Schmoe

No question, lasers have been one of the great disappointments of our time. Sure, lasers have had their uses in communication, entertainment, medicine, precision fabrication, scientific measurement, and feline recreation. But what we were really hoping for was ray guns. So much else from science fiction has become reality—pocket communicators, handheld computers. Ray guns, no.

Okay, we’re still waiting on transporter beams too. But lasers seemed so close. The requisite technology is there. We know from projects like the Reagan-era Star Wars program, with its proposed laser-based ballistic-missile killers, that the Pentagon was trying. But the best we’ve been able to come up with is Blu-ray players. It’s as if all we’ve done once we invented the wheel was make toys.

At the Straight Dope we knew what we had to do. First, assess the current status of laser technology. Second, see if Straight Dope Labs could, in its humble way, use a homebrew laser ray gun to advance the state of the art.

We note the following facts:

In a 2010 Pentagon test, an aircraft-mounted laser successfully destroyed a just-launched ballistic missile. An impressive feat, but also illustrative of the practical problem with lasers: getting the weapon aloft took a 747. In a test last year, the Navy managed to set fire to a small motorboat with a laser, this one mounted on an 8,000-ton destroyer.

Even small laser weapons aren’t that small. The Defense Department is testing a rifle-sized device it calls a “Personnel Halting and Stimulation Response” (abbreviated PHaSR—get it?) that uses a laser to temporarily blind bad guys. (Permanent blinding is prohibited by the Geneva Convention.) A photo of the prototype shows a guy hoisting what looks like a bison-scale Super Soaker. Is it portable? Yeah, it’s portable. So is a bag of cement.

The issue, as you might surmise, is power. Lasers have great range and accuracy, but doing appreciable damage demands serious juice and bulk. The military’s portable laser research accordingly focuses on nonlethal weapons that briefly blind or sting. How likely are such devices to persuade the recalcitrant? We decided to get a laser and find out.

Most laser pointers are Class IIIA, meaning they put out just one to five milliwatts and are a hazard only if you stare directly at the beam. Class IIIB lasers, often used by astronomers, can be up to 100 times as powerful and are potentially a serious danger to vision, particularly as sometimes used by jerks who shine them at aircraft. The next step up is a Class IV laser, at least 200 times as powerful as a laser pointer. That’s what my assistants Una and Fierra got, specifically a battery-powered one-watt blue laser bearing a strong resemblance to a light saber. Preliminary conclusion: as a method of crowd control, lasers won’t replace water cannons and tear gas any time soon.

The researchers first set up targets intended to simulate human flesh, namely a pork chop and some strips of bacon, all warmed to room temperature. Then, donning laserproof goggles, they commenced blasting away from various distances. Monitoring the affected areas with an infrared thermometer proved problematic, so instead they timed how long it took the meat to cook, rigging up a second, red laser beam to scintillate off telltale particles of smoke.

Heating the bacon took a lot longer than heating the pork, and the pork took a while—eliciting smoke required 27 seconds of continuous exposure at a range of one foot, 35 seconds at 32 feet. Hoping for more dramatic results, the investigators then substituted matches for the meat. Igniting them with the laser took 11 seconds at one foot, 15 seconds at 32 feet.

Admittedly the coolness factor here was high—nothing like having your own personal laser light show. (Check out the photos at the Straight Dope website.) On the other hand, the likelihood that this laser would actually change somebody’s mind (other than via intimidation alone) is virtually nil. Cooking temperature no doubt is higher than the threshold of pain; the fact remains that no bad guy is going to sit still while you try to fry him. We’re guessing you’d need at least a 100-watt laser to get results quick enough to be effective, and good luck dragging around the battery pack for that.

In sum, the near-term prospects for handheld laser ray guns are dim. Despite decades of death-ray hype, the proven uses for this once-promising technology remain distressingly benign.—Cecil Adams
Curses, Foiled Again
• David Foley intended framing his landlord in Whitefish Bay, Wis., by sending a Milwaukee television station a CD containing child pornography. The station turned the disk over to police, who discovered it contained not only the planted porn, but also a stockpile of child porn belonging to Foley. Investigators said it also identified at least two children they said the one-time mentor for the Big Brothers, Big Sisters program had molested. (Milwaukee’s WITI-TV)
• German police reported that a 57-year-old man tried to rob a bank in Osnabrueck by seizing a female hostage, brandishing a gun and demanding a 10,000-euro ($13,483) ransom. “The plan failed, however,” according to a regional court statement at the man’s trial, “due to the fact that the building has not held a bank for more than a decade but rather a physiotherapy practice.” The robber, imprisoned by demanding that a pass-by withdraw money from a cash machine in the building. She withdrew 400 euros, which he took before fleeing in a stolen car. He abandoned the car but left behind the gun, which turned out to be toy but was covered with his fingerprints. The man, labeled by the Bild newspaper as “Germany’s dumbest bank robber,” received a seven-year prison sentence. (Agence France-Presse)

Ho, Ho, Ho, No!
• The day after Linda Gipson lost her job, she was Christmas shopping at a mall in Ypsilanti, Mich., and took a break to drop off some gifts at her car. She loaded them into the trunk and headed back to the mall. An hour later, she returned to find her car there, but the one she had put the gifts in was gone. Another, identical gray Ford Focus had been parked in the same aisle as hers, and her key opened its trunk. “I screamed, ‘Don’t tell me I put them in the wrong car,’” she said, “It’s my kids’ Christmas.” (Detroit’s WXYZ-TV)
• The day after the newspaper printed a story about Gail Larkin’s car being stolen from the parking lot of a shopping mall where Larkin was appearing as Mrs. Claus, she said the mall’s general manager told her she was fired for “negative publicity.” A spokesperson for Mesilla Valley Mall in Las Cruces, N.M., clarified that Larkin “couldn’t be fired because she was a volunteer,” so, “she was asked not to return” to the mall. “It’s not my fault my car was stolen,” she said, adding it’s “the kids” who suffer by her dismissal, “not me.” (Las Cruces Sun-News)

Media Bias
Upset that the news media were devoting too much coverage to crime, Mayor Mike Winder of West Valley City, Utah, began writing up beat articles using an alias. His stories appeared in several outlets, among them Salt Lake City’s Desert News, which had begun accepting articles from contributors after cutting its newsroom staff. Submitting articles as Richard Burwash, Winder said all he had to do to get stories published was set up a Gmail account and a Facebook page. He communicated with editors by email and phone. As an unpaid writer for several months, Burwash even quoted himself as mayor, noting after revealing his true identity, “I was an easy source.” (Associated Press)

The Great Train Robbery
Police in Brazil’s Sao Paulo state reported that thieves stole 55 tons of corn from a moving train by greasing the tracks to make the wheels of the locomotive hauling the 54 cars skid and slow down. Then they pulled alongside in a tow truck and used a hook to remove the corn-filled containers. (Associated Press)

Hard Time
The visitor rooms at Miami’s maximum-security Federal Detention Center have been taken over by South American pole dancers posing as paralegals for incarcerated drug lords, according to attorneys who complained that if they don’t provide strippers, they risk losing clients to colleagues who do. “The majority of these young, very attractive women are non-citizens brought in exclusively for the purposes of visiting the FDC,” veteran defense attorney Hugo Rodriguez said. “Any lawyer can sign a form and designate a legal assistant. There is no way of verifying it. The process is being abused.” He added, “They take off their tops and let the guys touch them.” (Miami New Times)

Unlucky Charm
Diane Bozzi reported that someone targeting unlocked cars stole her mother’s ashes from her van, which was parked in Rochester, N.H. Bozzi explained she had the ashes in an urn in a bag to bring to her weekly bingo game for good luck. (Associated Press)

Icing Terrorism
Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Homeland Security Program, 13 counties received Arctic Blast Sno-Cone machines costing a total of $11,700. Explaining that the machines can be used to make ice to prevent heat-related illnesses during emergencies, treat injuries and provide snow cones as an outreach at promotional events, Sandeep Dey, executive director of the regional agency responsible for overseeing homeland security in the counties, said requests for the machines would not have been granted by themselves but were approved because they were included with other homeland security equipment. Dey pointed out one county had requested a popcorn machine, but that request was denied. (Greenville’s The Daily News)

Declaring Independence From Foreign Oil
Fritz Grobe and Stephen Voltz of Buckfield, Maine, set a distance record for a car that runs on candy and soda. During its test run, the Mark II single-seat rocket car, which uses a simple piston-and-cylinder mechanism to get it moving, traveled 239 feet, fueled by 54 bottles of Coke Zero and 324 Mentos. The previous record was 220 feet. (Associated Press)

Don’t Steal the Charmin’
• Three men walked into Burgers, Dogs and Wings in Albuquerque, N.M., immediately headed for the bathroom and walked out with about a dozen rolls of toilet paper. Noting the men appeared “messsed up,” employee Josh Flannery-Stewart said, “They got in their car, and all of a sudden APD (Albuquerque Police Department) was surrounding them.” Police already had the men under surveillance as suspected drug dealers. (Albuquerque’s KOAT-TV)
• Upset after checking into a motel in Charlotte, N.C., and finding his room had no toilet paper, an unidentified man walked upstairs to a vacant room that was being renovated and stuffed enough paper into the toilet to clog it, causing it to overflow and damage the carpet, as well as the ceiling of the room below. He also broke a blow dryer and several lights before returning to his own room and damaging more property. (Charlotte’s WBTW-TV)

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**Calendar**

**ART/EXHIBITIONS**

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<th>Venue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Akar</td>
<td>257 East Iowa Ave., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.akardesign.com">www.akardesign.com</a></td>
<td>January events TBA at time of publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amana Heritage Museum</td>
<td>705 44th Ave, Village of Amana</td>
<td><a href="http://www.amanaheritage.org/">www.amanaheritage.org/</a></td>
<td>See website for times and locations.</td>
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<td>Cedar Rapids Museum of Art</td>
<td>410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids</td>
<td><a href="http://www.crm.org">www.crm.org</a></td>
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<td>Figge Art Museum</td>
<td>225 West Second St., Davenport</td>
<td><a href="http://www.figgeart.org">www.figgeart.org</a></td>
<td>&quot;Thursdays at the Figge,&quot; Thursdays at 5pm * Young Artists at the Figge Exhibition, Jan. 14 through May 27 * Fins and Feathers: Children's Book Illustrations from The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Jan. 21 through April 22</td>
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<td>Legion Arts/CSPS</td>
<td>1103 3rd Street SE, Cedar Rapids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Space One</td>
<td>129 E. Washington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.publicspaceone.com">www.publicspaceone.com</a></td>
<td>See website for January gallery events TBA</td>
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**MUSIC**

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<td>Blue Moose Tap House</td>
<td>211 Iowa Ave, Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bluemooseic.com">www.bluemooseic.com</a></td>
<td>The Wailers, Jan. 4 * Micawber with Reaping Asmodeia, Celestial Derelicts, Jan. 6 * The Cab with Summer Set, Jan. 25</td>
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<td>Gabe's</td>
<td>330 E. Washington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iowacitygabes.com">www.iowacitygabes.com</a></td>
<td>Radio Moscow with brutus and the Psychedelic Explosions, Johnny Scum, Jan. 6, 9:00pm * 15th Annual Elvis Tribute and Benefit, Jan. 7, 9:00pm * Friday the 13th Insane Blood-Filled Dance Party with Coolzey, Jan. 13, 10:00pm * Mad Monks, The Maw, Oculus, Jan. 14, 9:00pm * Free Soul Dance Party, Jan. 19, 9:00pm * Dubstep for Dummies, Jan. 20, 10:00pm * Miles Nielson, Jan. 27, 9:00pm</td>
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**Theatre**

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<td><a href="http://www.hancher.uiowa.edu">www.hancher.uiowa.edu</a></td>
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**Red Cedar Chamber Music**

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**Performing Arts at Iowa**

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<tr>
<td>Performing Arts at Iowa</td>
<td><a href="http://www.performingarts.uiowa.edu">www.performingarts.uiowa.edu</a></td>
<td>See theatre section for January events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Space One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Events</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Space One</td>
<td>129 E. Washington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.publicspaceone.com">www.publicspaceone.com</a></td>
<td>See website for January gallery events TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figge Art Museum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figge Art Museum</td>
<td>225 West Second St., Davenport</td>
<td><a href="http://www.figgeart.org">www.figgeart.org</a></td>
<td>&quot;Thursdays at the Figge,&quot; Thursdays at 5pm * Young Artists at the Figge Exhibition, Jan. 14 through May 27 * Fins and Feathers: Children's Book Illustrations from The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Jan. 21 through April 22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Old Capitol Museum**

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Capitol Museum</td>
<td>Pentacrest, Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap">www.uiowa.edu/~oldcap</a></td>
<td>See website for locations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Red Cedar Chamber Music**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Cedar Chamber Music</td>
<td>129 E. Washington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.redcedar.org">www.redcedar.org</a></td>
<td>See website for January events TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**University of Iowa Museum of Natural History**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Iowa Museum of Natural History</td>
<td>10 Macbride Hall, Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uiowa.edu/~nathist">www.uiowa.edu/~nathist</a></td>
<td>January events TBA at time of publication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Little Village Live at PSOne**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Village Live at PSOne</td>
<td>129 E. Washington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.publicspaceone.com">www.publicspaceone.com</a></td>
<td>The Peace Music, Jan. 4, 5:00pm * Slut River, Jan. 11, 5:00pm * Kodiak Flats, Jan. 18, 5:00pm * PS1 Fundraising Extravaganza, Jan. 25, 5:00pm</td>
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**The Mill**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mill</td>
<td>120 E. Burlington St., Iowa City</td>
<td><a href="http://www.icmill.com">www.icmill.com</a></td>
<td>Study Hall, the game, Sundays, 9pm-Midnight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Free Lecture Series
Washington St. Wellness

A series of free, health and wellness lectures will be held at Robin’s Nest Yoga Studio this month, which is at Washington Street Wellness, formerly the Bradley Center (505 E. Washington). As the town prepares for redevelopment on this block, ramped-up community programming in this building reminds us of the charming character and potential that lies in this part of downtown.

(All events start at 6:30 p.m.)
Jan. 5: Dr. Jason Bradley kicks off the month’s events with a lecture on his safe detox program. Dr. Bradley and his staff explain how his seven day program works and why it is so important for the body.

Jan. 12: Follow-up gathering for those working on detoxing. Attendees will enjoy a “healthy potluck” this evening as well.

Jan. 19: Pamela Evans, owner/operator of Iowa organic dairy Kalona Supernatural, stops by to give a lecture, asking “Are You really lactose Intolerant?” She’ll walk guests through the different ways in which milk is processed and how each of these methods can impact your health.

Jan. 26: To close out January’s lectures, chiropractic physician Dr. Kyle Deden explains “Food Sensitivities”—what they are and what effects they can have on your health.

Keep this free lecture series in mind as you make promises to yourself about staying healthy in the new year, and sign up for a yoga class while you’re at it!

Riverside Casino
3184 Highway 22, Riverside
www.riversidecasinoandresort.com
Night Ranger, Jan. 28, 8:00pm

Uptown Bill’s
730 S. Dubuque St.
www.uptownbills.org
Art and Music Night, Thursdays at 6:00pm
Open Mic, Thursdays at 7:00pm

Yacht Club
13 S. Linn St., Iowa City
www.iowacityyachtclub.org
Open Mic every Monday
Dance Party every Tuesday
Jam Session every Wednesday
Organic Underground, Jan. 6, 9:00pm * Dr. Z’s Experiment, Jan. 13, 9:00pm * Phantom Vibrations, Attic Party, Jan. 19, 9:00pm * Jet Edison, Organic Underground, Jan. 20, 9:00pm * Yacht Club 9th Anniversary Party (The Big Wu, OSG, Aaron Kamm & the One Drops, Whistle Pigs, Tallgrass, Limbs, Dream Thieves, Gone South, The Enz), Jan. 21, 4:00pm * Henhouse Prowlers, Jan. 27, 9:00pm

THEATER/DANCE/PERFORMANCE

City Circle Acting Company
www.citycircle.org
See website for times and locations
Upcoming event information not available at time of publication

Englert
221 E. Washington St., Iowa City
www.englert.org
See website for showtimes
Turn of the Screw, Jan. 27-29

Hancher Auditorium
www.hancher.uiowa.edu
See website for event locations
John Oliver, Jan. 28, 7:30pm

Penguin’s Comedy Club
Clarion Hotel, 525 33rd Ave. SW, Cedar Rapids
www.penguinscomedyclub.com
Check website for showtimes
Mike Green, Jan. 6-7 * Pete George, Jan. 13-14 * JR Brow, Jan. 20-21 * April Macie, Jan. 27-28

Performing Arts at Iowa
performingarts.uiowa.edu
See website for times and locations.
Turn of the Screw, Jan. 27-29 * Lord of the Underworld’s Home for Unwed Mothers, Jan. 27-29

Riverside Theatre
www.riversidetheatre.org/
See website for showtimes and locations
Guys on Ice: An Ice Fishing Musical Comedy, Jan. 20-21, 22, 26-29

Theatre Cedar Rapids
4444 1st Ave NE, Cedar Rapids
www.theatrecr.org
See website for showtimes
The Importance of Being Earnest, Jan. 27 through Feb. 18

CINEMA

Bijou Theatre
IMU, UI Campus, Iowa City
http://bijou.uiowa.edu
January events unavailable at time of publication

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site
110 Parkside Drive, West Branch
http://www.nps.gov/heho
See website for volunteer details
Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern, Saturdays and Sundays through April 1, 1:00pm
LITERATURE

The Haunted Bookshop
203 N. Linn St., Iowa City
thehauntedbookshop.com
Readings by speculative fiction authors E. J. Fischer and An Owomoyela, Jan. 20, 7:00pm

Uptown Bill's
730 S. Dubuque St.
www.uptownbills.org
Readers and Writers Group, Wednesdays at 6:00pm
Spoken Word Open Mic, Wednesdays at 7:00pm

KIDS

Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
410 Third Ave. SE, Cedar Rapids
www.crma.org
Doodlebugs Preschool Program at the Cedar Rapids Public Library: Sherlock Holmes’ Birthday!, Jan. 6, 10:30am * Junior Docent Training for Middle and High School Students: Mauricio Lasansky, Jan. 16, 1:00pm * Doodlebugs Preschool Program at the Hiawatha Public Library: Frank Miller’s Birthday!, Jan. 27, 10:30am

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site
110 Parkside Drive, West Branch
www.nps.gov/heho
See website for volunteer details
Pajama Storytime, Jan. 3, 7:00pm

Iowa City Public Library
123 South Linn St. Iowa City
www.icpl.org
Storytime at 10:30 Monday - Saturday, 2pm Sundays

Red Cedar Chamber Music
www.redcedar.org
See website for event times and locations
Music for Kids, Jan. 9-12 * Music for Kids, Jan. 18

MISC

Old Capitol City Roller Girls
www.oldcapitolicityrollergirls.com
See website for event times and locations
Open Scrimmage, Jan. 21

Johnson County Local Food Alliance
www.jclfa.org
See website for more information
Beginning Farmer Workshop, Jan. 21, 1:00pm
**ASTROLOGY FORECAST FOR JANUARY 2012**

**FOR EVERYONE**—New Year, indeed. This isn’t the world you lived in last year. Social and economic trends are finding a new groove. Opportunities are opening up. But the unexpected, even the wildly unexpected, will become the norm. So don’t stand too close to the fire.

**CAPRICORN**—Extreme diplomacy. It’s true that Capricorns are especially influential right now. Despite that, being understood and getting the right results has probably never been more challenging. Cross-currents, cross-purposes and miscommunication are the norm. Despite all the static, important plans can move forward. Real progress is still possible. You will encounter an unusually messy political situation in your locale. Don’t assume you are getting the whole story there. Your financial affairs will soon be free of an influence that increased chances of waste and loss.

**PILES**—Synergies. Depending on how Pisces plays these vibes, they could be either at the leading edge or at the edge of a slippery slope. The planets are getting you in on the ground floor of revolutionary economic developments and burgeoning social trends. But, being honest, these vibes are seductive and deceptive, too. The planets say that you should let yourself be guided by knowledgeable, trusted authority figures. Don’t stay home and daydream, immersed in personal concerns. Follow constructive suggestions from those in the know.

**ARIES**—Mine field. The pressure to act a certain way is immense. Even if you wanted to cave in, the pressures conflict. Some are flatly contradictory. And none of it adds up to good advice. Power plays and reckless behavior further complicate the situation. Things could get out of hand. How you finally proceed is completely up to you. And you’re responsible for the outcome. Be careful not to let financial or work issues spark hurtful exchanges between yourself and those you love. Thoughtful speakers or writers can provide helpful guidance.

**TAURUS**—Rough Seas. The cross-currents are strong and intense. Wills are clashing, personalities are colliding. But somehow it all seems to be going your way, supporting your needs. Right now, many people are struggling to find a way forward. The planets are empowering you to help them. The healing and reconciliation so many situations call for come very easy to you. You will be especially helpful to women friends who might be in need of healing. The financial situation is ‘fluid’ but it holds promise.

**GEMINI**—More serious than it looks. January is a big booby trap. People are saying provocative things. Nobody’s talking compromise. Arguments are sprouting up like dandelions in spring. Nearly anything you say could upset someone. It’s up to Gemini to find the one or two perfect, magical words that transform confrontation into consensus. Romantic or intimate situations can too easily veer off in the wrong direction. My advice? Keep it light. Keep it uplifting. Abstinence is advised, for now. Choose healing over self-indulgence.

**CANCER**—Standby. January is about waiting for someone to reach out and guard against unhelpful or flat out crazy maneuvers. The ball is everywhere else; you’ll wonder if you will ever get to make a move. It might feel like you’re doing little and accomplishing less. But the moves you can make will be important. When the ball reaches you, it will be because of serious need and extreme effort on the part of many others. Your choices will have far-reaching effects and benefit many.

**LEO**—Multiplying snafus. Confusion and drama combine in chaotic ways. In the end, it could be hard to tell your feelings from everybody else’s, to tell good intentions from bad, or to prove who said (or did) what. This could all affect finances unpredictably, uncontrollably and unfortunately. It’s easier to mess things up more than to fix them. Issues won’t be sorted out quickly. Detachment, firm boundaries and caution are the order of the day. As for romance, it could get complicated.

**VIRGO**—Freaky chain reactions. You’ve enjoyed influence over events; outcomes tend to validate your opinion. That remains true, sort of. But now, small actions, or even a few words, can have big, wildly unpredictable effects. It will be especially hard to make yourself understood properly. Things could spin quickly, freakily out of control. Impulsive financial moves especially could have unforeseen consequences, for yourself and others. You will have to pay especially careful attention to detail to avoid mishap. The margin for error is surprisingly small.

**LIBRA**—Balance and boundaries. Folks at home are feeling needy. Job commitments seem to expand indefinitely. Interpersonal boundaries are blurring, even disappearing, especially on the job. Inappropriate infatuations and over-dependencies are risk factors at work, now, too. That makes it really hard to maintain a proper work/life balance. Keep your job commitments simple, straightforward and reasonable going forward. Money remains tight and personal energy is still low. However, financial assets and other valuable resources, including social capital, are quietly accumulating. This is gradually insulating you from life’s many uncertainties.

**SCORPIO**—Delay changes. The urge to make big changes in keeping with long held dreams is strong. But big new initiatives aren’t supported. Circumstances are more complicated than they look and will get more so. Also, you are entering a wealth-consolidation phase. Near term, gains will be more in the way of social capital than hard cash. It would be much safer to consolidate your present position. Cement important alliances. Friendship, romance and relations with the young are favored, but expect the unexpected even there.

**SAGITTARIUS**—Simplicity squared. A confusing influence is settling over your home life for a lengthy stay. You’ll be misunderstood more often than not. You’ll also become increasingly dependent on partnerships with others for support and advancement. Keep things simple and straightforward. Decide what your priorities are and who is most important to you and hold on to that. This advice will be especially helpful in dealing with a complicated, potentially upsetting situation on the home front in January. Finances are under generally favorable influences now.
DEAR BACK COVER READER, THIS IS AN AD FOR PUBLIC SPACE ONE. WE ARE WRITING TO TELL YOU ABOUT OUR ANNUAL ART AUCTION, JANUARY 20–27, A FUNDRAISER THAT WILL HELP US SUSTAIN PROJECTS LIKE M|F ART SCHOOL AND KINETIC AND IC CSA. WE ALSO WANTED TO THANK ALL THE GREAT LOCAL BUSINESSES LIKE NEW PIONEER FOOD CO-OP, LEAF KITCHEN, AND LA REYNA WHO SUPPORTED US THIS YEAR, AS WELL AS THE GROUPS WHO PUT ON EVENTS WITH US: CAB, SWING DANCE CLUB, AND . WE SHOULD ALSO MENTION OUR SUPER PARENT ORGANIZATION: THE JAMES GANG WHICH ALSO SPONSORS AND . DID WE MENTION OR OR ? THEY’VE HELPED US OUT TOO, AND ARE IN FOR JANUARY’S FUNDRAISING FUN, WHICH NOW, THANKS TO ALL THIS THANKS (YES! AND TOO), NO LONGER HAS ROOM TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT, EXCEPT: !