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Seeking refuge in the familiar • BY MARY GRAVITT

Perhaps like me, Trayvon Martin never felt like an American. Even though I was born in Philadelphia and lived the better part of my life there, I have always felt like a voyeur. This feeling of anomie persists in spite of the fact that my maternal grandfather was born a slave on a South Carolina plantation.

In August 1999, it seemed impossible to shake off my alienation, so I took a job as an English instructor in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This trip revealed to me a reality that most American Negroes face when they leave the United States and place themselves in the hands of a remote alien culture: All that I am, and all that I can ever be, is an American. As a black person, and as a female, my trip to Riyadh was like a trip into an Octavia Butler science fiction novel: It took me back into American cultural history involving coextensive binary and parallel time frames. This doppelganger of anachronisms was New Orleans, La. from 1896, when Plessy vs. Ferguson codified racial segregation, to 1953, the year before Brown vs. the Board that struck it down, and 1999, the year I arrived in Riyadh.

Sentimental Journeying

Saudi Arabia hasn’t yet reached its metaphorical 1954—there they have segregation, but it’s sexual rather than racial. Women—much like American Negroes of 1953—no matter their class or social status, be it princess or housemaid, are still forced to enter public places through back entrances where they are seated in inferior, curtained-off areas that have blacked-out windows. At some fast food restaurants like Dunkin’ Donuts, women are allowed walk-up service only. I had faced de facto segregation in Philadelphia, but never de jure.

In Riyadh, the religious police, mutaween, accompanied by the municipal police, prowl the malls and restaurants monitoring women. They visit pharmacies—scribbling out faces on Clairol boxes. At private businesses and in public they intimidate, harass and humiliate Islamic women.

Witnessing this misogyny, I remained in a constant state of verisimilitude—free floating like the protagonist in H. G. Wells’ The Time Machine, my feet planted in two cultures, one Western and the other Middle Eastern—existing in and out of time, simultaneously in the 15th and 20th centuries in tandem with the Islamic anachronistic calendar still reading A.H. 1422. I will not belabor my lifestyle in Riyadh as a mature single woman who left America with Malcolm X eyes and returned blinded by the racism, sexism and discrimination I faced as a black person in the land of The Arabian Nights where Black is definitely not beautiful: Once more, my anomie was reinforced, and I sought refuge in the familiar.

Sojourning into Truth

Prior to leaving Iowa City (where I lived after earning my master’s degree) for Riyadh, I had always been a fan of National Public Radio (NPR), especially WSUI (Iowa City’s local affiliate) and the BBC. When I settled in Riyadh, I purchased a radio equipped with two short wave bands—standard in the Middle East. I received Public Radio International (PRI) via Armed Forces Radio, the BBC via the short wave and then I discovered Radio Riyadh (RR), the government-sponsored radio station. RR broadcasts in three languages—Arabic, English and French—using an American format, supplemented by BBC-type programming of plays and short stories, West Side Story and Tess of the d’Urbervilles being perennial favorites.

Even though RR is used mostly for propaganda purposes, the male and female talk shows hosts and DJs are quite entertaining in their sampling of American popular culture, with a broadcast music format that includes rap, blues, R&B, jazz and both American and Filipino pop-rock music. The most popular pop singers were the Backstreet Boys and Britney Spears. Even the “news” broadcasting—a linguistic feat in itself, with the announcer prefacing each person on his long list of Saudi royals with “his royal highness,” all within his allotted two minutes—is both breathtaking and entertaining.

RR jams for hours between the mandatory daily prayers, Koranic lessons (which constantly reinforces whiteness in preference to darkness) and the Friday broadcast from the mosque in Mecca in both Arabic and transliterated English. In short, radio became my...
lifeline between two cultures because most public entertainment, public libraries (with the exception of a few limited hours), open public forums and uncensored domestic news are unlawful spaces for females in Saudi Arabia.

From my sojourn into Saudi culture via limited access to media outlets and constraints on personal mobility, I found that things are seldom what they seem. In Riyadh, every business, regardless of its location, has at least two locks and a heavy-gauged chain with a Master padlock on its doors, and those located on street-level often have security gates as well. My apartment, which was located on the sixth floor, was the only one in the entire gated compound without two jailhouse locks on its front and balcony doors. I wondered: In a society where people pray five times a day, why are such stringent security measures necessary? I soon developed conflicting ideas, because even in my alienated state I felt physically safe there.

My mental condition was another story. I felt only fear, especially when I became unwittingly embroiled in a crime punishable by death (which I vowed never to discuss), and that I was only involved in as a result of my own American naivete. I learned that in Saudi Arabia, women disappear daily. Female indentured servants from poorer Muslim countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) who come to the country as contracted labor (similar to Antebellum females slaves in New Orleans) are often raped, and many are forced to work 24 hours, seven days a week—without a day off and for very little pay.

Still, not all was bad in the Desert Kingdom. I have never observed a society where children and motherhood are so valued: The spirit of Calvinistic social welfare systems in the United States seem to have killed this instinct in Americans. In Saudi Arabia, children rule the society, and it is through procreation that self-hood, manhood and womanhood are established.

Riyadh also offers quality if not quantity of social life. Shopping is one of the few lawful activities where the sexes can mingle freely without being arrested in Saudi Arabia, and, like the radio, it has its own take on American culture. American stores like J.C. Penny, Victoria’s Secret, Dunkin’ Donuts and Starbucks are located on every major thoroughfare, as well as in Western-style shopping malls in central Riyadh. There are Pizza Huts, McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken...
The July 13 verdict in the trial of George Zimmerman, which found him not guilty of murdering Trayvon Martin, evoked powerful reactions that exposed difficult and complicated truths about experiences of race throughout the country. While some people were outraged by the jury’s decision, others celebrated a victory for justice.

Social media helped to organize post-verdict responses including “Justice for Trayvon” marches. Here in Iowa City, Jamie Kearney attended a rally on the Ped Mall the day after the verdict to express her anger about the fact that Zimmerman was not “held accountable for his actions,” which were, in her eyes, stalking and killing a child. The somewhat spontaneous event was posted on Facebook and had about 60 responses from people who planned to attend. The event included speakers as well as chanting and drumming. “I felt angry,” said Kearny, who participated in the noise-making by bringing a drum. “I wanted to bang on something.” She wasn’t sure how to address what she saw as the injustice caused by a criminal justice system “rigged to work against people of color,” but felt she had to do something.

In a trial where sympathies and causal explanations often sharply divide along racial lines, Kearney felt that the rather homogenous racial makeup of the jury was reminiscent of other trials in U.S. history where all-white juries were unwilling to punish other white people who had committed violence toward blacks. She wanted to stand in solidarity with the families of children with brown and black skin.

Kearney said she thinks that Iowa City has relatively little racial tension; however, she felt that the systemic issues of racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system and the way that Stand Your Ground laws were used to frame the verdict’s logic in the Zimmerman trial resonated at a local level.

The Moment of Mourning organizers wanted to create a space where people could share their strong feelings about the verdict, and where people could express their grief collectively and together. With 50 percent of the organizers being people of color, the event became a place where people directly affected by racial profiling could share their experiences of how skin color impacts their lives in Iowa City.
Derrias Carter, co-editor of *The Iconic Obama, 2007-2009: Essays on Media Representations of the Candidate and New President* and a recent graduate from the University of Iowa's American Studies program, commented that he was skeptical that rallies could achieve the real change necessary to shift racial politics in Iowa City. He believes that the community needs to build more multicultural networks and exist in radically multiracial ways: Iowa City needs to have more diverse representation in its political decisionmaking, and it also needs to build a local collective consciousness that is aware of race—where acting and living across racial lines is integrated into daily lives, neighborhoods and intimate circles.

The Coalition for Racial Justice—formed in June 2010 in response to reports given by religious leaders about problems that African Americans face in Iowa City—held a press conference on July 23 that emphasized the need to engage in a process of deep systemic change that takes seriously the ways in which Iowa City is a tale of two cities: where access to opportunities and the ability to influence political policy are not equally available to all people. Coalition member and the University’s Director of Faculty Human Resources, Dianne Finnerty stated, “To turn the tide on racial justice, we need each other. We need to bring organized people and organized money to bear on this issue.”

LaTasha Massey, another member of the Coalition said, “The Trayvon Martin verdict may stand as the sign of national racial
inequity and social justice disparity writ large. After the verdict, I thought, ‘This could be my kid.’ I have a male teenager, so the verdict has really impacted by life. It troubles me that in 2013 we are still seeing things that we have been seeing since the beginning of time. Now that I’ve cried and I’ve mourned, I want to think about how we can use this as a vehicle to move forward and take action.”

In light of these collective responses, how can Iowa City bridge the diverse social, economic, political and cultural differences through these animated public expressions of mourning, fatigue, solidarity, sadness or celebration around the legacy of Trayvon Martin’s life as a young, black man in the United States and the violent nature of his death?

Raquel Baker is a PhD candidate in literary studies at the University of Iowa, working on a dissertation that examines representations of whiteness in postcolonial African literatures in English.

franchises located throughout the city. Items available for purchase include busts of Elvis, full-sized replicas of jukeboxes designed to look like 1950s originals and the latest American videos and CDs (rap and otherwise).

HOME AGAIN

When I returned to America in early August 2001, I continued my radio listening habits. The shows remained interesting if mundane on NPR and programming covering international news on the BBC continued to be intellectually stimulating. But things changed on Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001.

What Bush named the War on Terror involved the original Euro-centric colonizers—America, Britain, Spain and Italy, France absented itself—who wanted to precipitate a reshaping of the spheres of strategic influence (especially those containing large oil and gas reserves) in the Middle East and Central Asia, all in the name of ‘freedom and democracy’ and ‘peace and security.’

In response, NPR began programming like the BBC: Its intellectual content and devotion to international news and events broadened. This programming change continues today—reflected in the public discourse by middle-class American callers, the meta-ethical comments given and the questions asked by hosts to guests on NPR talk shows.

I, like many others, once lived in a dream world where I thought my life would be better some place else, Africa for instance. There in Riyadh, I discovered what Henry James also exposes in his novels: Americans are indeed innocents abroad, and that running away from home solves nothing.

Originally from Philadelphia, Mary Gravitt has lived in Iowa City since 1989. She loves politics and is interested in Civic Studies, a subject no longer taught in the public schools.
David Byrne seems to like Iowa. And I’m glad of that. I’m also glad that he had a chance to bike around and experience a Des Moines Fourth of July while he was here for the 80/35 music festival.

In three parts, Byrne wrote about his experience in the Hawkeye State on his blog. While Byrne’s comments focused mostly on Des Moines, breathless columnists were quick to exclaim over the musical luminary saying nice things about Iowa. Enthusiastic Iowans fell over his words about our home, and Facebookers furiously and gleefully posted that the lauded Scotsman was, indeed, making sense about the land where the tall corn grows.

I hesitate to join the chorus of those bowing down to Mr. Byrne in gratitude for his blessing. I am grateful that he found the bike paths around Des Moines “gorgeous,” and I like his notion that, while not “cool,” Iowa is maybe “beyond cool.” But Byrne himself says that since he is a “nomad,” his impressions are “brief and fleeting.”

I understand the impulse to capture the character of a community, state or region. I have lived in the Midwest all my life, and I’ve called Iowa City home now for a total of 19 years (across two stints that now span—gulp—four decades). I have spent much of my academic life studying Midwestern regionalism, and focused nearly all of my writing and most of my teaching on place and community, constantly trying (and failing) to answer the question, “What is the Midwest?” But, to be honest, the more I learn about the history and culture of our local community and region, and the more I live in this wonderful place, the more remote the answers to the perennial question “Who are we?” become. Being part of a community or knowing a place is a never-ending project: As your roots grow deeper, the diversity and complexity of where you are become only more apparent.

Iowa City’s civic squabbles usually center one way or another on “who and what we are.” But nowhere else have I seen the vitriol drip so profusely from the crossed swords of debates...
over school boundaries, east-west community divides, zoning changes, economic development and drinking ordinances. On the one hand, this is admirable community passion and democracy in action. On the other hand, it reveals the profound fissures among our community factions, each with proprietary claims to represent what this place is all about.

As each year goes by, I realize more and more that any single definition of “who and what we are” is at best partial and at worst shallow. Sure, Iowa City has a larger percentage of intellectuals, writers, artists and liberals than many other communities. But that hardly captures the broad canvas of who lives here. The more grounded you become in the community, the more you see the fine grains of the panorama of humans who call this place home. It shouldn’t take too long to figure out that Dolphin Lake Point under the Highway 6 bridge, Manville Heights, Johnson Street and F Street are worlds apart—and more often than not, the twain amongst them do not meet. And if we generalize out to the state, Iowa City is obviously not Des Moines is not Ottumwa is not Amana is not Storm Lake is not Sioux City.

So I’m a little skeptical when an admitted “nomad” analyzes who and what we are, whether in terms of one of our state’s communities or Iowa as a whole. What is one to make of a statement such as “Everyone is very nice, sincere, unaffected,” as Byrne claimed? Everyone? I’ve run across many, many rude, boorish, dishonest and affected people in my life here, as I’m sure you have, too. “Overall, it doesn’t seem a place in thrall to trends,” he says. Maybe somewhat true by comparison, but one walk through the overstuffed consumerist shelves at Coral Ridge or Jordan Creek Mall will hardly tell you that Iowans all want to wear overalls and sensible shoes.

On his one-day bicycle tour of Des Moines, even in a “black” neighborhood, Byrne does not see “signs of total poverty, boarded up houses or foreclosed homes being sold at auction.” He does not see a “serial methamphetamine alley all the way through,” as he saw in small Kansas towns. He saw “no visible homeless folks or folks twisted by drugs, drink or bad luck who couldn’t find a rung to get back up, or never got up in the first place.” Well, apparently he wasn’t riding down the right streets or he didn’t have his eyes open very wide.

I suspect the real point is that Byrne was viewing Des Moines and Iowa through a visitor’s eyes. There is value in visitors’ eyes, but they are inherently fleeting, as Byrne himself said. No matter how hard he might try, he still cannot help but fall back upon conjuring the image of a man and woman holding giant turkey leg drumsticks at the downtown Fourth celebration, “making them appear a little like some caveman couple.” This is skating on the smooth ice of stereotype, the facile surfaces of Midwest Living magazine.

Granted, Byrne acknowledges that the place he sees here is “imperfect.” Granted, he realizes that much of whatever good economic fortune Iowa currently enjoys is the result of the “unholy alliance of agribusiness and government.” But going so far as to suggest that “this is America as it’s supposed to be, or close to it”? Well, I’m not buying it. I don’t even know what America is “supposed to be,” and whatever it is, it exists as a singular phenomenon only in television commercials and morning in America fantasies.

I do believe there is something different and distinctive about Iowa, that’s why I chose to make it my home. Yet time, combined with close observation, have complicated my understanding rather than clarified, let alone crystallized, it. Living in a place requires a studied intimacy, which requires not only keen attention but sustained time. I might agree that Grant Wood’s American Gothic captures the Iowa spirit wonderfully. But it’s because the more familiar I become with that iconic painting, the more inscrutable those figures’ expressions are to me, and the more that I wonder what, indeed, is happening behind the curtained window of that beautiful house.

Thomas Dean would like to teach Iowa City to sing in perfect harmony.

<< DAVID BYRNE & ST. VINCENT
Performing this summer at 80/35 in Des Moines.
Photo by Zak Neumann
If we are what we eat, we have almost no choice but to be corn. It’s an ingredient in so much of what we consume, knowingly or not, but here in Iowa City, it’s a constant summer reminder of who we are and what we can do with what the oft-generous earth gives us.

CORN STANDS IN SHOPPING MALL PARKING LOTS

Something worth appreciating, oddly enough, is that blanket stereotype associating Iowa with corn. It’s something that this state really rests its livelihood on, and for good reason: Those funny wands that seem to grow next to any highway or street lining the state are big, big business. From genetic food modification to plastic to barbecue staple sides to ethanol gas, corn plays such an integral role in our lives that it’s absolutely staggering.

While the majority of corn grown in this state is field corn—corn used for things like feed or agri-science—sweet corn is the kind we enjoy chowing down on, and it absolutely explodes from the earth like lava from a volcano during the well-irrigated summer months. Corn is so abundant here that you can often find it in town not only at farmers’ markets and in colossal boxes outside of grocery stores, but at stands in Family Video’s parking lot on Highway 1 and Riverside or at lemonade-like stands heading out of town in any direction. Iowacorn.org, the website associated with the Iowa Corn Promotion Board and Iowa Corn Growers Association, prides Iowa on having “produced the largest corn crop of any state for almost two decades. In an average year, Iowa produces more corn than most countries.”

Corn in Iowa is truly bounty food, absurdly plentiful and insomuch that we base our lives around. Here in Iowa City, corn stands selling bags of ears for a song fit in masterfully with the both America’s hardscrabble Midwest values (those easily visible all across our mostly-rural homeland), DIY field-to-customer best hopes and dreams and our penchant for really overdoing it.
CORN MAZES

What’s more emblematic of human beings than using a staple food to create something nightmarish we literally become lost in? Corn mazes. If you think about it, corn mazes are a unique social experiment that test the limits of how tangibly far people are willing to veer off track. Crunching through bamboo-like stalks of tall corn, some-times tall enough to eclipse the horizon, may earn you some scratches, but before you can even get familiar with the hair-like wisps of split corn silk pouring over your face, you’re free. And yet it’s never about that—it’s about paying for and taking in the relaxed totality of loss. The largest one of these is 45 acres across and sits awaiting your doom in Dixon, California.

With nearby mazes in Wapello, Marengo and Atkins, and way, way more across the state, there’s no better way to spend hours (and hours and hours) having no idea where you are and splattering your navigational sense memory with the screams of terrified, awkward-should-I-get-involved unaccompanied children ambling around well-organized twists and turns.

CORN STANDS COMBINE MIDWEST VALUES, DIY FIELD-TO-CUSTOMER HOPES AND DREAMS, AND A PENDANT FOR REALLY OVERDOING IT.

CORN SODA

It is not enough to eat and breathe corn in the heartland of America; no, you must drink it also. Sweet corn soda, one the many bizarre sodas from Lester’s Fixins—a company that appears to use the face of an elderly gentleman who resembles Orville Redenbacher on steroids on its logo—“tastes like buttered popcorn,” says Tom Gilsenan, director of Uptown Bill’s Coffee House and an all around Iowa City niceguy. “It’s ideal for a party,” he continues. “You can all pass it around and everyone can try a little. Really strange stuff.” Despite even the best attempts of the summer heat, the idea of a party where everyone has a good time trying strange sodas is undoubtedly enough to melt even the most air conditioned of hearts.

BREW OF THE MONTH: ETHOS IPA

TALLGRASS BREWING COMPANY | MANHATTAN, KANSAS

While I was browsing the shelves in the beer cooler at John’s one Friday last month, Joe Hotek walked in and I asked him for a recommendation.

“You mean for August?” he asked.

I have often sought Hotek’s advice for my Little Village recommendations, but this time I was shopping for myself. “Nah, just for me,” I answered.

In half of a heartbeat he pointed to Ethos IPA, brewed by the Tallgrass Brewing Company of Manhattan, Kansas. “I love Tallgrass,” Hotek said—which was quite fitting and prophetic since after giving me his recommendation he later became Tallgrass’ representative for Iowa and Northern Illinois.

Hotek is a class act and first-rate beer guy, and I wish him the best with his new job. He is knowledgeable, friendly and always accommodating for interviews. He also never gave me a bad recommendation, and that includes Ethos IPA. In fact, after taking his advice that Friday, I decided to make Ethos IPA the beer of the month for August.

Serve Ethos IPA in a pint glass. For 16-ounce “pounders,” I prefer to use a nonic or imperial pint glass. The beer is golden, pale-amber in color and a couple fingers of dense, eggshell-colored foam will settle slowly and unevenly, leaving lacing stuck to the side of the glass.

Though not overpowering, the aroma offers all the usual aspects of the style: grapefruit, orange, tangerine and lemon. Cattiness dominates at first but will eventually fade into the background and allow the citrus to shine. Scents of caramel, pineapple and mango emerge later.

The taste is very tropical with lots of mango, tangerine and pineapple. Grapefruit and orange are noticeable also, as well as a solid malt foundation that lends tastes of caramel and lightly toasted grains that counterbalance the 110 International Bitterness Units (IBUs). Though the 110 IBU figure may seem high (which it is) for a scale that basically measures the bitter taste imparted by hops, keep in mind that the human taste threshold for bitterness is around 100 IBU. Even though a beer may have an IBU of 110, 120 or 150, humans can only taste up to 100. While the bitterness turns up a notch as the beer warms, it is never too aggressive.

SERVING TEMPERATURE: 45-50°F.

ALCOHOL CONTENT: 6.8 percent ABV.

FOOD PAIRINGS: spicy Indian, Thai or Mexican cuisine. Increase the heat and spice of the food if Ethos IPA proves to be too overpowering.

WHERE TO BUY: Ethos IPA (which replaces Tallgrass IPA as the brewery’s year-round IPA) is available at most local beer retailers.

PRICE: $8-9 per four-pack and $3 per single can.

<< ROWS OF CORN AT THE STATE FAIR (TOP), AND HARVESTED CORN FIELDS NEAR IOWA CITY

Try a new brew! The Liquor House

425 S. Gilbert St. - Parking next to Falbo’s

Always offering the Little Village Brew of the Month
THE POETIC TEENAGE DRAMEDY OF HY-VEE HUSKING

Your humble author has a day job: I teach college and high school AP English. And I cannot recount the number of essays I’ve read about detasseling, a sort of teenage rite of passage here in Iowa City. The majority of my students who write about this process have done it for HyVee, which seems to take a particular kind of traditional pride in providing teens with the opportunity to learn about the crispy sound of assembly-line monotony, one my students has recounted with a kind of romance and frustration again and again. “I made some of my closest friends standing there taking the damn husks and silk off those ears of corn,” another one of my students, a 19-year-old native Iowan from Williamsburg, told me. “But it was boring. So boring.” Here we observe corn working as a signifier for the prototypical, ancient bronze monument to the American teenage job: veneer of work ethic development and getting one’s hands dirty thinly draped over a tiresome drone of mind-numbing repetition and minimum wage. And that’s a really beautiful thing.

Russell Jaffe is an oft-man doing oft-things.
Mobile devices challenge the traditional video game console
BY PAT BROWN

There’s a good chance you haven’t yet noticed, but the next generation of gaming consoles is upon us: Nintendo’s Wii U, which many consumers don’t even recognize, is a brand-new console and not merely an extension of the Wii. It premiered last winter to—to put it mildly— muted fanfare. This winter, Sony and Microsoft will release their own new consoles, while Steam—the online PC gaming service and video game developer—is currently working on its first console, and there are persistent rumors that Apple is developing a video game controller for a revamped version of Apple TV.

Apple’s rumored efforts to unite computing, gaming and television reveal that the cornerstone of the next generation console will be its ability to consolidate many facets of our virtual lives, to combine as many of our electronic devices and online accounts as possible. Microsoft’s initial presentation of its new console, the Xbox One, was lampooned by gamers and gaming sites for its focus on non-gaming features, including split-screen capabilities (allowing you to watch television or chat over Skype while playing games) and the potential for games that interface with mobile apps.

The most notable misstep of the Wii U may have come from a similar impulse to move towards a mobile device, as the Wii U “GamePad” controller comes with its own screen, combining the institution that is the gaming controller with the distribution of gameplay across multiple networked devices. While Nintendo’s new console has been met with an overwhelming wave of disinterest and confusion, initial reactions to all the new consoles has been decidedly lukewarm. Back in May, Luke Plunkett of gaming website Kotaku wrote a piece taking note somewhat melodramatically of the “overbearing sense of melancholy. Maybe even ennui” he feels toward the new consoles, suggesting that casual gamers’ move towards mobile devices is beginning to make consoles irrelevant.

In this light, many of the new features of the Xbox, the Wii U and PlayStation’s Vita seem like an established console producer’s awkward attempt to respond to the increasing prominence—even encroaching dominance—of mobile gaming. Video game developer Rovio’s revelation, now two years old, that the world had spent an aggregate 200,000 years playing its Angry Birds seemed to suggest that the future of gaming lay in tapping into the mobile market, in giving people a game they never had to stop playing, even when away from their consoles.

For my part, I am less interested in the ability to continue playing a console game by way of mobile mini games, or whatever it is that Microsoft and Sony and their developers would have us do with our phones and tablets. I am interested, however, in the potential for mobile gaming both to create and to preserve types of gameplay not usually available on the major consoles. The touch interface, as some have noted, lends itself to (often rather addictive) games of broad concept and intuitive gameplay, and this has led to the popularity of games like Angry Birds. It seems mobile gaming is helping to usher in an era of renewed popularity for two-dimensional games structured by simple goals and point-based reward systems, games that have more in common with arcade games than they do with Halo.

The more “old school” forms and simple goal structures that typify mobile games don’t preclude complexity, however. For example, the medium seems particularly adaptable to strategy games, as anyone who plays the numerous puzzle games or Worms can tell you. This year’s Star Command, though disappointing in itself, showed the potential mobile gaming has for combining the already-common use of stylized, simplistic graphics and strategy elements with an extended, choose-your-own-adventure narrative.

The mobile game that has my attention this summer while I’m separated from my Xbox is Badland, an “atmospheric side-scrolling adventure game” for Apple’s iOS. Although the game does have a point and achievement-based reward system similar to something like Angry Birds, its priority is clearly to engross the player through atmosphere and (something like a) narrative, rather than through numeric achievement. While players can always double back and collect achievements by re-playing levels, Badland avoids textual interfaces in a first run-through of the game, giving users no explicit directions and only the occasional notification about achievements. The result is indeed a very atmospheric game, one that wordlessly engages the player in the fate of its main character(s).

The player’s avatar in the game is something identified by its menu and achievements.
A GUIDE TO THE BOB MOULD OEUVRÉ

Learning to stop worrying and love a legacy • BY KEMBREW MCLEOD

On Thursday, Aug. 15, the Bob Mould Band will totally rock the roof off the Englert in support of the singer-guitarist’s superb 2012 release, Silver Age. This is reason enough to be super-psyched, but wait, there’s more! Mould has been mining his deep back catalog—performing songs by Hüsker Dü and Sugar, his two previous bands, as well as tracks from his substantial solo discography. This breadth of material is intimidating even for a hardcore fan, so I submit to you, dear reader, a comprehensive career overview in just 1,000 words.

Phase One: Hüsker Dü

Bob Mould’s first band helped create the blueprint for what came to be known as “alternative rock.” Fuzzed-out guitars? Check. Howling vocals and caffeinated rhythms? Double check. Gorgeous melodies? Triple check. That combination of ingredients made this Minneapolis trio one of the most influential bands in the 1980s American post-punk scene. However, you wouldn’t necessarily know that from listening to Hüsker Dü’s first two releases: Land Speed Record, a live album from 1982, and their 1983 studio debut, Everything Falls Apart. With few exceptions, the group adheres to the loud-fast-short template of hardcore punk and breaks little new ground.

It wasn’t until Hüsker Dü’s transitional EP Metal Circus that they showed their first signs of greatness, particularly on Mould’s songs “Real World” and “First of the Last Calls.” Then came Zen Arcade, a 1984 double album that mixed short, catchy punk-infused songs with acoustic tracks and extended bouts of psychedelia. A 14-minute-long song, “Reoccurring Dreams,” closes this concept album—which was a radical move at a time when punk bands treated concept albums, and double albums, like kryptonite. Nearly three decades after its release, Zen Arcade still holds up as one of the best and most ambitious albums of that decade.

Hüsker Dü truly hit its stride when it released two landmark albums in 1985, New Day Rising and Flip Your Wig. Their perfect pop melodies sugarcoated Mould’s bitter lyrical angst and raging guitars. It doesn’t get much better than “I Apologize,” “Celebrated Summer,” “Flip Your Wig,” “Makes No Sense at All” and “Hate Paper Doll.” Their covers of the Byrds’ “Eight Miles High” and the Mary Tyler Moore Show theme song “Love Is All Around”—released around this time as singles—further expanded the group’s musical palate.

Hüsker Dü became the first notable American post-punk band to take the dive into major label waters after jumping ship from SST in 1986. By the next decade, former SST labelmates Sonic Youth, Soundgarden and Dinosaur, Jr. would take the plunge as well (for better and for worse). Their Warner debut Candy Apple Grey was a melancholy affair, and it featured a larger proportion of piano and/or acoustic guitar-driven tracks than previous releases. Nevertheless, blistering songs like “Crystal” hardly primed this album to become a smash hit, though it was the band’s first to crack the Billboard Top 200. Hüsker Dü broke up after releasing 1987’s Warehouse: Songs and Stories, just as they were on the cusp of breaking through to a larger audience.

Phase Two: The Early Solo Years

Bob Mould’s first two solo albums—1989’s Workbook and 1990’s Black Sheets of Rain—had many high points (for starters, check out the infectious single “See a Little Light”). But they were a bit uneven. The appropriately-titled Black Sheets of Rain is too dirge-y for my tastes, but the power-poppin’ “Out of Your Life” and “Disappointed” still never fail to satisfy. If these two albums had been edited down into one disc, the songs certainly would have yielded the first classic of his solo discography. This was not to be, but what came next was one hell of a consolation prize.

Phase Three: Sugar

I still remember seeing Sugar in a tiny club a few months before the band released their debut album, Copper Blue. Good god, they were loud. Having never heard any of Mould’s new material—this was pre-Internet, remember—I could barely make out a discernable song beneath the din, but the stick-to-the-roof-of-your-brain melodies still bubbled to the surface. With Sugar, Mould returned to the same rock trio format that made Hüsker Dü a creative success, with the added bonus of commercial success as well! They followed Copper Blue with the six track Beaster EP, a darker and more dissonant record (despite being recorded during the same sessions). File Under: Easy Listening beat the sophomore album slump, but the band nevertheless disbanded in 1995.

Phase Four: The Remaining Solo Years

I don’t mean to give the short shrift to the many albums Bob Mould released since Sugar called it quits, but my Little Village editors promised to torture me, mutilate my body and dump it in the Iowa River if I went over my 1,000 word limit. Although I loyally continued to buy his solo albums, Mould began to lose me starting in the late-1990s. In fact, he himself sounded bored with his own shit (1996’s Bob Mould featured the song “I Hate Alternative Rock,” and the title of his next album, The Last Dog and Pony Show, sounds more than a bit jaded). Many songs from those two albums were somewhat same-y, though in retrospect some worthy gems can be found if you dig hard enough.

Mould countered his boredom by embracing electronic dance music on one-off projects like Blowoff, regular DJ gigs and on 2002’s Modulate. This was a bit of a left turn, even for his most musically open-minded fans (including me … sorry Bob!). The three solo albums that followed—Body of Song, District Line and Life and Times—found him progressively working his way back into a more familiar songwriting formula. This arc culminated in last year’s Silver Age, which might as well be subtitled How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Legacy. On his best album in years, Mould rocks like a hurricane while making his guitar gently weep. IV

A teenaged Kembrew McLeod drew the accompanying charcoal picture of Bob Mould in 1989, from a long-forgotten magazine photo. Immediately afterwards, for no good reason, he quit drawing (until his son Alasdair recently inspired him to start again).

as a “clone,” which navigates a gloomy, industrial landscape whose foreground—the space of gameplay—is portrayed completely in silhouette. The clone is a small, round creature with no legs and small arms. By tapping the screen, the player can flap these arms and make the clone fly to the right; the goal is to survive the threatening, maze-like landscape of dangerous mechanisms with the help of powerups that can change the clone’s size, give it a spin with which to travel on the ground or even add additional clones for the user to control. Levels take place in a larger structure of “Days,” each of which consists of many levels that make up Dawn, Dusk and Night.

In addition to striking design and intuitive gameplay—to the extent that instructions are unnecessary—the game also constructs a sympathetic main character through effective principles of graphic design, overwhelming the tiny, defenseless and organic clone(s) with large mechanical-environmental obstacles. The story is built by the player’s navigation of this landscape and by his or her imagination. Where does the story take place? Why are these creatures “clones”? These questions may or may not be answered by specifics later in the game, “clones”? These questions may or may not be answered by specifics later in the game.

Every year, I dream up elaborate plans for my summer vegetable garden. And each year, at about this time, I start to lose steam. The constant weeding and watering are too much for me and I can never seem to battle the bugs and pests in an effective way. I tried to keep it in check this year and scale back a bit on planting. I selected things that we truly like and actually eat, and that also are relatively easy to care for. I planted, among numerous other vegetables, three tiny cucumber plants.

Now that Summer is in full swing, my modestly sized garden is full and lush and my cucumbers are giving me a serious run for my money. Every day, new blossoms bud into fruit and I can hardly keep up—I’ve got a store of cucumbers staring me down every time I open my refrigerator.

Canning and pickling have always intrigued me. And, while I have appreciated and admired others’ homemade pickles, I had never attempted to make them myself. When I came across a recipe for quick pickles that didn’t require any fancy gadgets, I was eager to see what could happen with a few ingredients and my excess of cucumbers. In 20 minutes, I was on my way to some delicious pickles!

This quick afternoon project will yield great results and can really lend a hand where CSA (community-supported agriculture) boxes and productive gardens are concerned. Once you’ve got the hang of it, adapt to other fresh produce—the possibilities are truly limitless! Pickled peppers, pickled green beans, even pickled blueberries?

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**PICKLING 101**

**BY FRANKIE SCHNECKLOTH**

**QUICK PICKLES**

Adapted from *Ad Hoc at Home* by Thomas Keller

**INGREDIENTS**

- 2 cups white vinegar
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup water
- Spices (I used a pickling blend, black peppercorns, celery seeds, an assortment of fresh and dried peppers, garlic cloves and fresh dill.)
- Cucumbers

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Wash and dry two standard size mason jars and their lids.
2. Scrub cucumbers and trim off stems and the blossom end. Cut into spears or slices and pack into jars.
3. Add spices. Spicy pickles are a favorite at our house, so we were a bit heavy-handed with our hot peppers and peppercorns.
4. Heat vinegar, sugar and water in a saucepan until dissolved, then pour over the cucumbers.
5. Once the liquid has reached room temperature, put on a tight-fitting lid. Pickles will be ready to eat within a day, the flavor will develop the longer they sit. Quick pickles should be eaten within a week or so.

Frankie Schneckloth needs a Bloody Mary for her pickles, please.

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**THE QUICK PICKLE PROCESS >>**

Photo by Frankie Schneckloth

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*Spoken Word Wednesdays*

Uptown Bill’s Coffee House
730 S. Dubuque St.

7:00 PM

facebook.com/groups/wednesdaysUB

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Pat Brown is a graduate student in Film Studies at the University of Iowa. No, that doesn’t mean he makes movies; he just likes them a lot.
Although most people know Mickey Hart as one member of the “Rhythm Devils” percussion section of the Grateful Dead (along with Bill Kreutzmann), he has had a notable solo music career with an astonishing 14 releases to his name. In addition to a prolific musical career, he has a passion for ethnomusicology which has led him to serve as a member of the board of directors at The Smithsonian’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, where he curates the Mickey Hart Collection, a cross-section of his music output as well as other recordings he includes in a 25-album series. His books Drumming at the Edge of Magic and its counterpart Planet Drum are a two-volume exposition of his journey exploring the world of percussion: They examine his personal history tied into the history and folklore of drumming, and are essential reading for those looking to understand what has brought him to his two recent releases as the Mickey Hart Band. Recently, Hart has been working with Dr. Adam Gazzaley at the University of California, San Francisco to explore the effects of rhythm on afflictions associated with aging. Part of the research involves monitoring the brain using an Electroencephalography cap, which Hart used to create sounds for his latest album.

LITTLE VILLAGE: You’re releasing your second album as the Mickey Hart Band in August—Superorganism. Can you tell us about the album and the band?

MICKEY HART: It’s kind of an extension from Mysterium Tremendum ... Mysterium Tremendum contains a theme of sonifying the universe—taking radiation from epic events, from the Big Bang 13.8 billion years ago to the planets, the stars, the sun, the moon, the earth—it was like a sonic timeline of the universe.

This project is the micro: the body. [Superorganism] contains sounds ... of brain waves, heart rhythms, stem cells, DNA ... So, it gives a kind of sonic timeline of what we are, where we are and who we are. It’s about the sonification of ... the brain, which is rhythm central: Everything goes through the brain. We know that music has a lot of power, but we don’t know how it works. We know we can dance to it, we know it makes us feel good, we know it’s great to make babies with, we know it does a lot of things. It gets us through the night. But we don’t know really how it works—we don’t know the science of it.

[Dr. Gazzaley and I] want to know what role music plays in medicine and diagnostics of Alzheimers, Parkinsons, dementia. How it reconnects the broken pathways and fires the synapses when these folks are exposed to music’s rhythmic stimuli. So, this is like a rhythmic DNA process that starts with the Big Bang and of course ends with right now--us! And, having fun with it, making music with it, dancing with it—we’ll be able to do this in real time. I’ll be wearing a cap that has eight sensors that records my brain wave function and puts it in my computer and I’m able to trigger the different parts of the brain. You’ll be able to see it on a screen as well ... So you’ll be able to see on the screen what part of the brain lights up and what part I’m playing and what it does. In real time!

So, this is really quite amazing. I’m working with neuroscientists who measure these stimuli and I turn it into sound. This is electrical stimuli and I make sound out of it--music! So, the job I have undertaken is to make music of it and let the band devour those ideas and come up with songs based around the inner workings of the body. It’s music--you dance to it you enjoy it--it’s not like a science experiment—it’s a performance. But, I use a healthy dose of science in the musical presentation.

LV: Is the band you are performing with the same band that is on the album, or is it a variation of it?

MH: It’s mostly the same band and it’s the same band that I’ve been touring with. These folks are really "on the bus" as it were, as far as exploring these unknown musical zones. It’s not, like, for everybody. When I conscripted these musicians I only went for the willing—only people who were interested in going on a trip. I said, "okay, man, what do you think about this?" and if they really lit up and if they were very skilled then they were on the short list. One by one, they were shanghaied! [laughs] They love it, we love each other, I love them, they love me. We’re just a really
happy musical caravan out there. I really get high from this music—it drives and it pulses. No kidding around, it's ferocious!

WE KNOW THAT MUSIC HAS A LOT OF POWER, BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT WORKS. WE KNOW WE CAN DANCE TO IT, WE KNOW IT MAKES US FEEL GOOD, WE KNOW IT'S GREAT TO MAKE BABIES WITH, WE KNOW IT DOES A LOT OF THINGS.

E. O. Wilson who won the Pulitzer for his work on—I believe it was called The Ants—wrote another book called [The Superorganism: The Beauty, Elegance, and Strangeness of Insect Societies] and in it he explains the concept of superorganism. A band is a superorganism, the mind is a superorganism, ants are superorganisms. There are a lot of different levels of superorganisms.

EAT SHOp PARTY READ
You know you're in downtown IC when you hit S. DUBUQUE ST.

You see, with the Grateful Dead we had six guys on stage out of their heads trying to make sense of it all—each one of them a complex organism in proximity to another superorganism: a human. To be able to entrain that into a group mind ... it takes superorganisms to do that. That's what the title of the record is all about. To take the brain waves, and the heart rhythms, stem cells, the DNA, we're able to make beautiful music around it. And then [former Grateful Dead lyricist] Robert Hunter [wrote] these marvelous songs that have to do with man and the universe. I guess that's the big theme I've been on for the last four or five years. It ties it together. Now that I think of it ... We rock and roll, we pulse, we throb. To be able put that all together and do it every night and have fun with it. [The challenge was] taking something this complex out to the people and having fun with it every night.

LV: Such an interesting cross-section of music and science!

MH: Yeah, and I'm having fun with it, too. It's not a science project strictly, but certainly I'm handshaking with science big time. I'm thrilled to be able to touch the things that created us—the things that created me. My DNA is mostly like your DNA, but there is a small part of it that identifies me as me. That makes me ME. But, we're very similar when you look at the DNA, but there is that little percent at the end that says, "Ah, you're Mickey Hart." So, that is very powerful stimuli to get up every morning to find out more. And also bring some people and enjoy it with them, and say, "Hey, man, check it out—this is who we really are—this is what we are dancing with."

LV: It has been an absolute honor talking to you and I can’t wait to see the show in Iowa City!

MH: Well, don't scare the children with "brains"—my brains are not going to fall out! [laughs] We'll have a great time—don't worry about my brains! lv

Michael Roeder is a self-proclaimed “music savant.” When he's not writing for little village he blogs at www.playbsides.com.
On the list of Stuff White People Like, film festivals come in at number three, beaten only by religions that their parents don’t belong to and coffee. It’s certainly true that film festivals are proliferating, and the talent pool is dispersing. Even Robert Redford, the Sundance Kid, has suggested that there may be too many. Plus, with independent films reaching viewers through new online routes, the excitement of seeing out-of-the-way stuff at festivals, though not absent, has been diminished.

Our two film fests, Hardacre in Tipton (Aug. 2 and 3) and Landlocked in Iowa City (Aug. 16 through 18), rise to the challenges in different ways. Hardacre tries simply to be very good. In a gorgeous old movie theater, you get to see a taut selection of features, documentaries and shorts. Landlocked opts for the cup-runneth-over experience. At multiple venues (including the Englert Theatre) you get to sample as much of a dizzying array of movies as you choose.

Either way, Hardacre and Landlocked rekindle the magic of moviegoing. It’s true: Film fests are damn near as good as coffee. Here’s Little Village’s guide to some highlights.

**THE ELDERS (HARDACRE)**

*The Elders* (Hardacre), a beautiful documentary by Nathaniel Hansen, opens with a quotation from Simone de Beauvoir: “By the way in which a society behaves toward its old people it uncovers the naked, and often carefully hidden, truth about its real principles and aims.” Immediately I imagined that the movie was going to explore how our society stuffs the elderly away and expends astronomical sums to keep them alive rather than spend time with them. But *The Elders* has a warmer intent. It shows the truths hidden away in the wrinkled faces around us.

The structuring idea of *The Elders*, like most brilliant ideas, is simple: Interview interesting old people. There’s one major interview with Louise—an aristocratic, eloquent, vibrant Texan—laced throughout the movie; otherwise, the documentary is a string of thematically organized interviews with a diverse group of people in their ‘80s and ‘90s: among others, an engineer who designed the ejector seat used in spaceships, a Japanese-American who spent part of her youth in an internment camp, a fiddler who made a living putting in sewer systems, a cowboy poet who was told by his high school English teacher that he had no talent for poetry and a charming married couple who argue about sex. It’s a testament to the supple editing how you immediately love all the subjects, and how the interviews efficiently evoke the subjects of loss, love and the importance of storytelling both to the teller and the listener.

I have my doubts that old people are wiser than other age groups. In my experience, they’re subject to the same hang-ups and confusions as everybody else: Lust and rage dance attendance upon the old as well as the young. That said, old people generally have a greater sense of perspective, which gives them an ability to state certain human truths with power and simplicity, as when Louise proclaims, “Everybody not only has a story, everybody is a story,” or, when Mike, a Vietnam vet who transcended his shell shock in his wood shop, says, “If you have a soul, you have a sorrow.” Mike also says that we’ve thrown away our elderly when we ought to be listening attentively to their stories. It’s the closest the documentary comes to indicting our society for its treatment of the old. *The Elders* listens...
attentively to their stories. I’m not terribly tearful at movies, but at some point in every interview I found myself in tears, the kind that well up when we’re close to the source.

—Scott Samuelson

FIELD WORK: A FAMILY FARM (LANDLOCKED)

If Walker Evans were working today, he would almost without doubt be photographing in Boone County, Iowa. The economic circumstances for small scale farmers here are constantly and insistently challenging, a fact not lost on John Helde in his short film Field Work: A Family Farm (Landlocked). Iowans traditionally have a hard time shuffling off the stereotype held by most other Americans: that it is strictly corn-belt, flyover country, and that it is the agrichemical-laden dustbowl and floodbowl that grows the raw materials which smarter parts of the country find necessary to produce scientifically miraculous sweeteners, emulsifiers and petroleum additives that guide us into the glittering future.

Helde’s film does nothing to correct any of those misconceptions about the Midwest and instead continues to wallow in the human suffering of the new farm crisis: the final death throes of the small-scale family farm—and in this case one that is run entirely on rented land. In this film we meet several generations of an Iowa family who sees traditional farming as both a tenuous way to make a living and an essential part of their family identity. Interviewed members of the older generation admit that they actually turned down the G.I. Bill’s opportunities for higher education because they couldn’t wait to get back to working the land. Sons in the family look to the future productivity of land that isn’t even theirs and hopefully suggest that “it’s our 401 (k).” Helde seems to recognize that this romance for farming may be misguided and uninformed in 2013, but he still traffics in the standard themes of farming’s nobility and heroism that Iowans have seen plenty of prior to this film.

"EVERYBODY NOT ONLY HAS A STORY, EVERYBODY IS A STORY"
—LOUISE, THE ELDERS (HARDACRE)

MY SISTER’S QUINCEANERA (LANDLOCKED)

A largely different approach to addressing the issues that inevitably inform small-town life is Aaron Douglas Johnston’s My Sister’s Quinceanera (Landlocked), set in Muscatine and revolving around the Garcia family, played mostly by themselves, as they prepare for the traditional Latin-American coming of age ceremony for their oldest daughter, as she turns 15. The film is really less about the sister than it is about the family as a whole, centered mainly on the experience of the brother Silas, as he prepares to finish high school, decides what is next in his life and how he is going to “get out” of his small town surroundings and whether he in fact truly wants to do so.

This film is shot in a shambling, highly personal style that does a tremendous job of capturing the unstructured lives of teenagers in a small Midwestern town: from playgrounds after dark to city parks, bowling alleys, new cars, living rooms, restaurants and unlocked houses—occupied and otherwise. Johnston at once shows us why the new generations of young adults may not wish to continue their small-town existences, yet why it is in many ways so appealing to do so.

—Warren Sprouse

THE LIFE AND CRIMES OF DORIS PAYNE (HARDACRE)

Every day since I was born, naked yet majestic in my own baby way, I have asked myself this question: What if Ocean’s Eleven really happened? Except instead of 11 mostly-white old dudes the master thief was one sexy black lady? Fortunately, I am no longer tormented by this burning curiosity for I have seen a documentary called The Life and Crimes of Doris Payne (Hardacre) which chronicles the notorious jewel-heisting adventures of one such a thief. This engaging documentary is structured around the criminal trial of 81-year-old Doris Payne, who stole $2 million worth of diamonds over about 60 years. These 60 years happened to include such decades as the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s, a.k.a. the years where people were just starting to realize that blacks and women were people, a fact which makes Doris Payne even more glamorous than does her full-length mink coat with matching mink hat and (I’m assuming) matching mink thong.

Payne commands the screen with sly confidence, her startling candor and affability allowing her to work her sleight of hand right under the noses of the intended victims of her charisma. She’s America’s most lovable moral degenerate. The cast of her documentary includes a menagerie of “experts” offering a variety of interpretations of Doris Payne as a national figure: A lawman condemns her, a professor contextualizes her within an African-American trickster trope, a screen-writer attempts to get into Payne’s head, family members and friends stoutly defend her. Doris Payne is a lady with many figurative faces, yet only one literal face that happened to be captured on that Macy’s security tape. Allegedly.

Some documentaries are all sizzle and no steak. Much more commonly documentaries are all stupid boring raw steak with nary a speck of sizzlin’ fun. The Life and Crimes of Doris Payne, however, strikes a tasty medium-rare balance of tender, chewy substance and that tangy smack of personality kids crave. It deftly and even wryly examines the most compelling facets of Doris Paynes’ life … and crimes. The film presents the stories of her scandalous past as sensationally as they deserve to be, but also skeptically explores the twinkling burglar’s charms, lies and motivations. In this extremely entertaining documentary, viewers young and old will be delighted by: courtroom drama, grannies swearing, jet-setting, world-class swindling, daring escapes, tasteful re-enactments, betrayal and lying. Fans of adroit storytelling and filmic structure (those rabid throngs) will leave satisfied.

—Kit Bryant

WILLIAM AND THE WINDMILL (HARDACRE)

William Kamkwamba is extraordinary. As a 14-year old in Malawi, William’s family can no longer afford to send him to school. But ever resourceful, William picks up a library book and teaches himself how to build an electricity-generating windmill from bottle caps, sticks and spare parts, rescuing his family from famine and poverty.

William and the Windmill (Hardacre) picks up in earnest five years later, when William speaks at a 2007 TED talk in neighboring Tanzania, stealing the show and turning the world on to his story. Tom Reilly, a TED organizer, offers to mentor William, which sets in motion a life-altering sequence of events. He is quickly transported from the dirt paths of his village, where his mother goes about her daily routine with bare feet to the skyscrapers of Manhattan and a new life with Tom, who has
a different pair of eyeglasses for every outfit.

William is an instant celebrity, writing and touring his autobiography, appearing on Good Morning America and coming face to face with his own windmill in a Chicago museum.

William Kamkwamba is ordinary. William’s worldwide book tour becomes a conflict with his acceptance at a high-level prep school in South Africa, where William arrives underprepared for the demanding coursework. The emotional and physical drain of his celebrity is matched by the difficulty of his math lessons and navigating an entirely different social scene.

Director Ben Nabors’ acknowledges William’s mind-boggling success without becoming precious, guiding William and the Windmill as an earnest and moving portrayal of the complexities of modern celebrity.

This approach is best illustrated by a sequence late in the film where William and his mentor Tom discuss Hollywood story rights and arrive for William’s first day of college at Dartmouth. What would likely be triumphant moments in a Hollywood story, become mundane and sobering exercises in contract negotiation and dorm room furniture shuffling.

Where the doc begins with William creating an engineering marvel from next to nothing, it ends with William himself as the project—his hometown, an Ivy league school and dozens of well-meaning Westerners invested in constructing his future.

Ultimately, William and the Windmill offers more questions than answers, but that may be all the more satisfying for a festival audience ready to be challenged.

—Andrew Sherburne

Kit Bryant lives in Iowa City with her valid alibi and several innocuous non-lethal pastimes. Outside the workplace, she enjoys

SHORTS

Short movies, how do I love thee? Let me count the ways. First, even if you’re bad, you’re over soon. Second, you’re usually not bad—in fact, you’re often pretty good. Third, you take risks. Fourth, you surprise me, because I’m never sure of the formula you’re following, or if you’re following a formula at all.

Nostos - War, as General Sherman is alleged to have told us, may be all hell, but—on the upside—if used properly it really does help your cinematography. The Italian short film, Nostos (Landlocked), from Alessandro d’Ambrosi and Santa de Santis, is not to be confused with the Jonathan Chekroune film of the same name, though its title—referring to the Homeric hero’s return home after an epic journey and combat—will necessarily invoke some of the same themes.

The film is ever gorgeous: sun bleached landscapes, mustachioed soldiers, straw-wrapped Chiantis, picnics in shaded countryside with giant blocks of cheese. All the Italian stereotypes are here in this hypnotic and ghostily story about a soldier’s return home after the armistice shocks him out of the brutal and war-torn world he had come to know. This film is mainly about a character re-becoming himself after duty has demanded that he become someone else. It is at times gauzy and overly sentimental, but in fairness, American audiences do not have the searing and epic experience of a world war on our own soil as a reference point for much of our contemporary existence; we might do well to pardon Italian independent film makers some indulgences here.

Fans of Terrance Malick will recognize much of the material in Nostos, since it is similar in feeling to Malick’s Thin Red Line. Whereas Malick’s film is part war movie and part nature film, this one is part war movie, part landscape painting. As the film’s producers will be pleased to show you in the opening credits, Nostos has already won a bunch of film fest awards and laurels for its look as well as its story. If nothing else, Nostos offers us a lovely 25-minute tour through the Italian countryside circa 1946. It also, at some basic level, asks us to consider what duty and patriotism truly are and if they are compatible with what we believe our country should be.
sarcasm, light spanking and fleeting moments of hope and levity. Her blog is popslashcorn.wordpress.com

Andrew Sherburne is a documentary filmmaker, whose latest film is Gold Fever (www.goldfevermovie.com). He is also co-founder of FilmScene (www.icfilmscene.org).

Scott Samuelson teaches philosophy at Kirkwood Community College and blogs about music with his son at billyanddad.wordpress.com.

Warren Sprouse teaches in Cedar Rapids. He is unsure why Ingmar was not considered more seriously as a name for the royal baby.

**Gun** - *Gun* (Hardacre), written and directed by University of Iowa graduate Spencer Gillis, is a good example of how surprising and suspenseful 15 minutes can be. A middle-aged couple wake in the night to the sound of an intruder. The husband eventually musters enough courage to open the bedroom door and yell (falsely), “I have a gun.” Though he scares off the burglar, he is vaguely traumatized and does indeed buy a gun.

The movie, which had its prestigious premiere at Sundance, follows his interactions with the gun and gently illuminates the desperate psychology of wielding the power of death. Gillis, who’s helped shoot movies like *Blue Valentine* and *Shame*, does a lovely, subtle job of evoking humiliation and terror with well-placed details and dream-like lighting. Even though you feel the pull of tragic possibilities on the protagonist, you don’t quite know how *Gun* is going to end, and you’re both surprised and eerily confirmed by how it does.

**Jonah** - Kyrill Modylavskiy’s *Jonah* (Landlocked) tells the story of isolated alienation within some of the seedier parts of modern Moscow. A drug dealer is faced with a series of violent deaths over which he comes to realize he has both complete and zero control. As the title suggests, this short film frames a process of rebirth or at least attempted rebirths, on a day by day basis, in an increasingly violent world. Modylavskiy is concerned with the ability of individuals to control circumstances and the influence of sublimated morality within even seemingly self-interested, nihilistic people.

**World Fair** - *World Fair* (Hardacre), directed by Amanda Murray, is a good example of not overstaying a welcome. I’m not sure that I’d love a full-length documentary about the 1939 World Fair, but a 20-minute version turns out to be quite lovable. “It was overwhelmingly beautiful,” we hear at the beginning, as overwhelmingly beautiful footage of the fair’s fireworks and fountains flickers on the screen—footage taken by one of the movie’s interviewees with his 16mm movie camera and recently purchased 400 feet of color film. Swim-capped divers domino-dive into giant pools. Sharply dressed men and women in rakish hats go on parachute rides. Depression-era boys gleefully crash their bumper cars. These vibrant images, combined with the musings of those who attended the ‘39 Fair as children and young adults, evoke a spirit of technological optimism and adventure that overwhelmed the gloom of the historical moment. Watching *World Fair* is a little like looking through a dusty box of slides with an old-fashioned stereoscope. You not only see a slightly different world but a slightly different way of seeing the world.

**Porcelain** - The Animation Workshop, a student-run center for animated features in Denmark, creates interesting short pieces (many of which are available on their website) including *Porcelain* (Landlocked), a film about faith, ritual, community leadership and fishing. On a remote island, somewhere in Scandinavia, Povl is a captain of an oar-driven fishing boat which encounters a terrible storm at sea that kills all of the crew except the captain himself. Povl washes ashore to a village of people who go to no lengths to disguise their feelings that it would have been better if the captain had gone down with his ship. To save his reputation, the captain maintains that his life was saved by a porcelain statue, collected by his (seemingly) late wife; the statue’s benefactions he offers to share with the other fishermen in the village, with somewhat contradictory results.

The animation here is quite lush and the movement, though austere and very slow, is quite beautiful. The setting and existing dialogue are appropriately spare and reduced to simplest forms: a few cottages, some boats, the assorted charms wielded by this small village against the ever-present backdrop of the indifferent sea. *Porcelain* is partly about human weakness, both in the face of nature and in the face of other humans, partly about the stereotypically rugged culture of the Scandinavian islanders, partly about faith and partly about community—a lot to consider in six minutes. —Scott Samuelson & Warren Sprouse
Micah Bloom’s *Codex* is set in Minot, N.D. after a flood. After the cleanup, after the rebuilding, Bloom was struck by a particular subset of the remaining debris—books that had been strewn through the landscape by the receding waters. *Codex* is a meditation on these remains.

The film and the photographs at the Cafe at Prairie Lights document the final resting places of the books. They have become embedded in the environment—sunk into the ground, hanging from trees, slowly decomposing underwater. They are sites of decay that support buggy ecosystems. Usually protected indoors, their pages ripple and curve out under constant exposure to the elements. The film and the photographs document the state of this decay in gorgeous detail. But this is not the end of the story—it was, for Bloom, the provocation for the project.

What is to be done with the books? They are beyond salvage, so *Codex* imagines an alternative to simply chucking them in the dumpster. The first explicitly human presence in the film is a hand clad in familiar hospital-blue sterile gloves, placing an identification number next to one of the specimens, photographing it and proceeding to carefully wrap it up for transportation to an off-site book morgue. The remainder of the film follows the books and their caretakers through the meticulous process of documenting, identifying and finally burying the remains as if they were human victims of a deadly event.

The film is moving. Its strengths are in long, ponderous shots of the decaying books. Its weakness is in a score too literally tied to the onscreen drama. But underneath the cinema-ography, the slow, quiet action and the poignant metaphors conjured by decaying human creations, the film obstinately makes an ontological claim—that a book is a special kind of object, that, like a human, it deserves a proper burial—and it is this position that I would like to address in this review.

I should qualify a bit, here: The film does not make a political case for a policy on book disposal, nor does it define a funeral form for codices. What it does is present an imagined world where books are treated with the same care and attention as humans. As with all such imagined worlds, the critical question is what bearing this imagined world has on the world we inhabit—what it shows us about our world and whether or not it distorts our world in a potentially damaging, and possibly seductive, way.

*Codex* latches onto the genuinely problematic ontological status of things like books—works of art that feel more significant than the common run of made things, but that we hesitate to accord the same dignity to which we do human persons. The film solves the problem by pushing books toward a more human ontological status. Watching the film, I can enter a reverie in which books are vessels for a spirit. I can imagine that works of art are living things and that the demands they place upon me can rightly rival those placed upon me by other people.

To a certain extent, this is true: I love books, and there are books that I love in ways that I love people. I delight in their being, and every time I confront the work I find some new trait or quirk that reveals something about them, or about the world, that is illuminating. And I take books seriously. I listen to what they say. I am willing to let them change me.

I spend a great deal of my time reading—I am sympathetic to a world in which books are sacred, where they stand apart from other things. But while there is no doubt something attractive about this cult of the book, I have not been able to shake the feeling that something is amiss. In this imagined world, it seems that books are being asked to be more than they actually are.

In the middle ages, it was common for people to gather worn-out sacramentals—scapulars, crucifixes, statues, icons, prayer-books, etc.—and burn them in a large bonfire on the eve of the feast of St. John the Baptist, a ritual that is still practiced in parts of Europe. This custom allows people to dispose of material items that have spiritual significance in a reverent and dignified way. Catholics are of course not the only ones to attend to such matters: Many religions have protocols for the burning or burial of spiritually significant artifacts.

On the other hand, *Codex* seems like a natural outgrowth of an ancient ritual and a fitting response to the evocative scene of books strewn about the landscape like so many corpses decaying in open view. Bury them or burn them:

Show them the respect due to objects that in some way carry the mark of the human spirit.

On the other hand, because this exercise is made secular and cast in an antiseptic, clinical costume, the protections afforded by a communal, religious ritual are dispersed: It lacks the appropriate reserve and a larger liturgical framework within which to situate itself.

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*Codex* latches onto the genuinely problematic ontological status of things like books—works of art that feel more significant than the common run of made things, but that we hesitate to accord the same dignity to which we do human persons.

If the requiem for lost books becomes over-wrought, it is because the books are treated with too much respect. Such an over-valuation can have the same effect as an under-valuation: It can obscure the book’s subtler and more complex existence. Ultimately, the film makes me uncomfortable because the ground it sits upon feels very slippery. Even standing on that slippery ground, though, Bloom has managed to create some stunningly beautiful, richly associative and powerfully moving (and still) images of lost books. [iv]

Brian Prugh is a graduate student studying painting at the University of Iowa. He also writes art criticism for the Iowa City Arts Review, found online at iowacityartsreview.com.
SANDBOX

DANA TELSROW
PS·Z Free Studio Resident
Through Sept. 30

LittleVillageMag.com is currently featuring the work of Dana Telsrow—an interdisciplinary artist with work ranging from music and video to drawing and performance—in the “Sandbox” area of its website. Telsrow is the first Free Studio Resident at ps·z (120 N. Dubuque St.) and will occupy the space through September.

The exciting thing about following an artist like Telsrow is the opportunity to peer in on a young artist experimenting with different media, jostling with the peculiar demands of art in our age and actively in the process of forming an identity. Telsrow is sensitive to the peculiar pressure that the Internet, with its streams of images, places on the artist—even as he uses "Sandbox" as a place to claim a small piece of the web. It will be interesting to see where he goes from here.
FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE GREENS YOU EAT.

Almost 95% of the Co-op’s ‘local’ produce comes from a distance of 60 miles or less.

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LIVE MUSIC PREVIEW

Pop and dance shows finish up another Iowa City summer
BY A.C. HAWLEY

There are few things more enjoyable in the summer than putting on a pop album, rolling the windows down and going for a cruise—even if you aren’t going anywhere. Here are some pop albums that rolled through my world this summer.

The first is the debut album from Bleached, Ride Your Heart, released earlier this year. Bleached is made up of Jessica and Jennifer Clavin of Mika Miko, one of the best bands to come from the new wave of Los Angeles underground music. The Clavin sisters took the frenetic energy of their first band and fit it into a ’60s girl-group format. The result: a lot of swagger, sister harmonies and coolness. Imagine the Shangri-Las if they had grown up with Siouxsie Sioux and Exene Cervenka instead of doo-wop.

Another album to listen to over a summer breeze is The Secret History’s Americans Singing in the Dark, released in June. The band picks right up from their strong 2010 debut album, The World That Never Was, a peerless collection of beautifully melancholic indie-pop songs influenced by the drama of both new wave and glam. The new album shows their further cohesion as a band, and defines a sound that can handle both ballads and uptempo rockers with great ease.

In addition to these great recent releases, there are some quality shows coming to town.

**So Many Dynamos // The Mill**
**Aug. 6 // 9 p.m. // $8, 19+**

Hailing from St. Louis, So Many Dynamos creates music that will make you dance. The band’s mashing of angular post-punk guitar riffs, heavy percussive elements, math-rock time changes and chilly, electro style has gained them a dedicated following since their formation in 2002. While their songs sometimes start off slow, they always pick up the speed and make people move. Fans of Mansions on the Moon, The Dismemberment Plan and The Juan MacLean will certainly find something they like here.

**FOR MORE EVENTS, VISIT LITTLEVILLAGEMAG.COM/CALENDAR**
**FESTIVALIOWA**

**FREE ADMISSION**

**Mint Condition**

Tony Brown

Buddy Guy

Funk Stop

Ayodele Drum and Dance

Soul Fusion

Carlos Johnson

Demetria Taylor

Mint Condition

**SUNDAY**

Jazz Morning with: Johnny Kilowatt

& Groove Theory

Gospel Afternoon with: Local Choirs, Hargrove Family Choir & Gerry Hargrove

**Includin/g.end**

Culinary Row • FUN Zone • Beverage Garden

FREE ADMISSION September 13-15 Downtown Iowa City

**C A L E N D A R**

[Calendar dates and events listed below]

**THEATRE**

**THU., AUG. 1**

Ongoing:

Rent Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, 7 pm on Aug. 2-3; 2 pm on Aug. 4. See citycircle.org for details.

Oma Tales Iowa Theatre Artists Company $5-$10, 2 pm Thurs/Fri/Saturdays thru Aug 17. See iowatheatreartists.org for details

Fiddler on the Roof Starlighters II Theatre (Anamosa) Aug. 2-11. See starlighters.org for details

Disney's Aladdin Jr. Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, 7 pm Aug. 16-17, 2 pm Aug 17-18

Tuesdays: Slices Performance & Pie

Uptown Bills
like full bands are playing, but there are only two musicians. It is truly impressive to see them play their high-speed, fun, instrumental rock live. I remember this show because, like their music, it was really, really fun and had everyone in the room dancing.

**Alex Bleeker and the FreAks w/ Sleepy Kitty, The Lonelyhearts & Dewi Sant // The Mill // Aug. 3 // 9 p.m. // $8, 19+**

Those familiar with the New Jersey band Real Estate should know that the members are extremely productive. Alex Bleeker, the bassist, has his own side project called Alex Bleeker and the FreAks. With the help of friends like Julian Lynch and Matt Mondanile, Bleeker turns out songs that share the pop elements of Real Estate but that integrate country and psychedelic rock to make them more free-form and ranging.

Rather than having immediate impact, Bleeker’s material is measured, making the listener wait for its release. The various inspirations lead his music to take a psychedelic spin on Americana, much like Mount Eerie and Neil Young. The result is somewhere between Crazy Horse-era Neil Young with a couple of slow, hypnotic Mazzy Star ballads. This is not a bad place to land.

**Bleeding Rainbow w/ Heavy Times & Huge Lewis // The Mill // Aug. 30 // 9 p.m. // $8, 19+**

It’s always hard for a band to step their name game up, but Philadelphia’s Reading Rainbow did that. There is little question that Bleeding Rainbow is a better name, but I digress: It is the music that makes the band, and theirs is stripped down, noisy indie pop. Their songs are full of effects-laden guitars, simple rhythms and sweet boy-girl vocals. Their 2010 album Prism Eyes has been a personal favorite of mine for a while now—I love it because it is very cheery. The duo, Rob Garcia and Sarah Everton, sound upbeat and sincere on every song.

Their 2013 album Yeah Right took a darker turn. The guitars are heavier and the songs are creepier than in their prior form. While this would not work for all bands, it suits Bleeding Rainbow. They make it work to their benefit and created another album that helps them stand out from the rest in an increasingly crowded indie pop field. I think that this band has a great future, so check out Bleeding Rainbow while they are still young.

A.C. Hawley’s five favorite underappreciated bands are The Vulgar Boatmen, The Go-Betweens, Pylon, Eleventh Dream Day and My Favorite. When it isn’t summer, A.C. runs The Chrysanthemum Sound System on KRUI, Thursdays from 10 p.m. to midnight.

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**ART/EXHIBITION**

**ONGOING:**

- Bill Voxman: Photo Portraits of Nepal
  Iowa Artisans Gallery
- David Plowden’s Iowa
  Old Capitol Museum
- The Art of Brian Selznick
  Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art
- Bertha Jaques: Eye on the World
  Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, 12 pm
- Western Africa Exhibit
  African American Museum of Iowa
- Endless Possibilities Exhibit
  African American Museum of Iowa
- Iowa’s Giant Short-Faced Bear Exhibit
  University of Iowa Museum of Natural History
- Captured: Hot Glass, Cold Iron (Aug 2-Sept. 3)
  Douglas & Linda Paul Gallery, Engler Theatre,
  Thursdays: Artvaark Uptown Bills, 6 pm

**FRI., AUG. 2**
Reception: Captured: Hot Glass, Cold Iron
Douglas & Linda Paul Gallery, Englert, 5-7 pm

**SAT., AUG. 10**
Amana Festival of the Arts
Middle Amana Community Park Free, 10 am

For full listings go to littlevillagemag.com/calendar.

**COMEDY**

**ONGOING:**

- Mondays: Catacombs of Comedy
  Iowa City Yacht Club $3, 9 pm

**AUG. 2-3**
Don Reese Penguin’s Comedy Club at The Vault
$12.50, 7 pm

**SAT. AUG. 3**
Comedians of Gabriel Iglesias
First Avenue Club $15, 8 pm

**AUG. 9-10**
Christine “Chris” Stedman
Penguin’s Comedy Club at The Vault, 7 pm

**AUG. 16-17**
Steve Lott Penguin’s Comedy Club at The Vault
$12.50, 7 pm

**LITERATURE**

**WED. JULY 31**
Mystery and Thriller Sale
The Haunted Bookstore

**MON., AUG. 19**
Greg Borzo Prairie Lights, 7 pm

**KIDS**

**ONGOING:**

- A Home on the Farm
  Johnson County Historical Society
- They Walked to Zion
  Johnson County Historical Society
Western Africa Exhibit
African American Museum of Iowa
Endless Possibilities Exhibit
African American Museum of Iowa
Iowa’s Giant Short-Faced Bear Exhibit
University of Iowa Museum of Natural History
Mondays: Toddler Storytime
Iowa City Public Library, 10 am
Tuesdays: Toddler Storytime
Iowa City Public Library, 10 am
Disney’s Aladdin Jr.
Coralville Center for the Performing Arts, 7 pm
Aug. 16-17; 2 pm Aug 17-18

FRI., JULY 31
Finding Nemo Movie
Coralville Public Library, 2 pm

FRI., AUG. 2
Hoover’s Hometown Days
Herbert Hoover National Historic Site Free, 9 am
SAT., AUG. 3
Once Upon a Saturday! Celebration
Iowa Children’s Museum, 10 am
Celebrate Washington
Central Park (Washington), All Day

SAT., AUG. 10
Amana Festival of the Arts
Middle Amana Community Park Free+, 10 am

FRI., AUG. 16
Den Detí - Children’s Day
National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library., 10 am

To view full listings, add events or suggest edits, visit littlevillagemag.com/calendar.

FOODIE

WED., AUG. 7
ICSoS Benefit Dinner
Trumpet Blossom Cafe, 5 pm

SUN., AUG. 11
Music in the Vineyards with Scott and Michelle Dalziel
Tabor Home Vineyards and Winery Free, 3 pm

SUN., AUG. 4
The Dam Duathlon Coralville Dam $50-$70, 8 am
Cedar Rapids Kernels vs. BEL
Veterans Memorial Stadium, Cedar Rapids, 2 pm

AUG. 5-6
Cedar Rapids Kernels vs. QC
Veterans Memorial Stadium, Cedar Rapids, 6 pm

FRI., AUG. 9
Double Elimination Pool Tournament
Blue Moose Tap House $5-$10, 6 pm

SAT., AUG. 10
Old Capitol City Roller Girls vs. Twin City Derby Girls
Coralville Marriott Center $10-$13, 6 pm

AUG. 14-15
Cedar Rapids Kernels vs. BEL
Veterans Memorial Stadium, Cedar Rapids, 6 pm

FRI., AUG. 16
Cedar Rapids Kernels vs. BEL
Veterans Memorial Stadium, Cedar Rapids, 6 pm

SAT., AUG. 17
Iowa vs Milwaukee
Iowa Soccer Complex Free, 12 pm

COMMUNITY

FRI, AUG 2
Hoover’s Hometown Days Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

SAT., AUG 3
Once Upon a Saturday! Celebration Iowa Children’s Museum
Celebrate Washington Central Park

WED, AUG 7, 2013
ICSoS Benefit Dinner Trumpet Blossom Cafe

SAT., AUG 10, 2013
Amana Festival of the Arts Middle Amana Community Park

EDUCATIONAL

ONGOING:
David Plowden’s Iowa
Old Capitol Museum, 10 am
A Home on the Farm

JOHN:
Johnson County Historical Society, 10 am
They Walked to Zion
Johnson County Historical Society, 10 am
Bertha Jaques: Eye on the World
Cedar Rapids Museum Of Art, 12 pm
Tuesdays: Toddler Storytime
Iowa City Public Library, 10 am

FRI., AUG. 2
A Night with Dr. Joan DeVee Dixon and Alice Fiedlerova National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library $12-$15, 7 pm

SAT., AUG. 3
Make Glass Beads Beadology $90, 10 am

TUES., AUG. 6, 20
Forging the Future of Science
University of Iowa Museum of Natural History, 7 pm

WED., AUG. 7
Making a Statement with Pins
National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library $15-$17, 2 pm
Make Glass Beads
Beadology $90, 5 pm

SAT. AUG. 10
Four Corners Earrings Beadology $54-$60, 10 am

WED., AUG. 14
Walking Tour of Czech Village
National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library $6-$7, 6 pm

SAT., AUG. 17
Introduction to Stringing Beadology $55, 10 am
Introduction to Wirework Beadology $55, 1 pm

SUN. AUG. 18
Encaustic: Working with Wax on Paper
The Paper Nest, 1 pm

MON., AUG. 19
Next Step in Making Glass Beads
Beadology $90, 5 pm

To view full listings, add events or suggest an edit, visit littlevillagemag.com/calendar.
IOWA PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PRESENTS:
NUCLEAR NEIGHBORHOODS

EXHIBITIONS:
HARDIN MEDICAL LIBRARY (UNIV. OF IOWA)
IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY
SOLON PUBLIC LIBRARY
IOWA MEMORIAL UNION (IMU, UNIV. OF IOWA)

RECEPTION:
THURS., AUG 1 | 6:30 P.M.
IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING ROOM A

DID YOU KNOW? There are over 17,000 nuclear weapons in the global arsenal and the U.S. owns almost 50% of them? That over 2,000 of these nuclear weapons are on Launch-Ready Status? That over 1,000 United States locations, including both operational and abandoned sites, are contaminated with radiation? That the US funded thousands of studies in which uninformed people were deliberately exposed to radiation? That the US will spend $650 billion on maintaining the nuclear arsenal over the next 10 years?*

This month, an exhibition series organized by Iowa Physicians for Social Responsibility (I-PSR) will draw attention to these issues, as well a number of deadly serious accidents and cover-ups that have happened in the nuclear industry for the past 65 years.

"This exhibit is about the legacy that most citizens of nuclear powers do not know and have yet too face," said I-PSR coordinator and exhibition curator Maureen McCue.

Featuring research and artwork from UI students and staff, as well as some pieces from area elementary-school students, the exhibition series will span August and September, and include many special events. Visit www.psriowa.org for schedule updates.

*Source: Physicians for Social Responsibility
HAS ANYONE GOTTEN HURT OR KILLED FOLLOWING BAD GPS DIRECTIONS?

Are there any figures for people seriously injured or even killed by bad GPS directions? I’m not talking about distracted drivers, but rather schlubs that followed GPS instructions off a cliff or something. —Jason, Sacramento

No figures, but we’ve got plenty of reports of GPS bum steers that sent users into harm’s way. You can look at that in one of two ways. The glass-half-empty version is that GPS navigation has turned us into a nation of lemmings, blindly allowing our faith in technology to override common sense. The half-full version is that each day miraculous technology combines signals from satellites 11,000 miles overhead with detailed knowledge of the globe’s 63 million miles of road to give countless travelers simultaneous turn-by-turn guidance in navigating busy, unfamiliar streets, often at high speed. And hardly any of them get killed!

You can guess which side I line up on. But judge for yourself based on the following data points, starting with personal encounters and working up:

• “Let me tell you about a party I threw last year,” my assistant Una said. “My house is in the 9000 block, but Google Maps for some reason thinks it’s in the 10300 block. Despite my explicit warnings to my intelligent, motivated guests that online and GPS maps weren’t to be trusted, more than half of them listened to the computer anyway and couldn’t find the place, in some cases driving right past it.” My comment to Una: Not saying you don’t throw a great party, but you sure we can blame this on GPS?

• My assistant Dex reports that his GPS routinely advises him to make a 145-degree right turn off a four-lane overpass near his house and drive the wrong way down the one-way on-ramp.

• Then there’s me. Lacking a decent map in pre-smartphone days, I was lulled by my rental-car GPS system’s success in steering me out of lower Manhattan into a state of sheep-like compliance as it led me to Philadelphia by way of fricking Wilmington, Delaware, an hour and a half out of the way. And let’s not forget that U-turn across four lanes on the West Side Highway during New York rush hour, which can’t possibly have been legal but was, I have to admit, a pretty good shortcut.

Now for the news reports:

• A woman followed her GPS past a “Do Not Enter” sign and down the wrong way on a divided highway near Scranton, Pennsylvania, causing a head-on collision.

• A Marlboro, New Jersey teenager, told to “turn left” by his GPS, made an illegal 90-degree left turn into the path of oncoming traffic, instead of the left-turn-via-270-degree-right-loop the road was designed for, and caused a four-car accident.

• Several tourists get badly lost in Death Valley each year after being directed onto defunct or nonexistent roads by their GPS. In one incident a mother and son on a camping trip wound up stuck on an abandoned mining road for five days. The son didn’t survive.

• Numerous motorists following bad GPS directions have driven their vehicles into bodies of water. Three Japanese tourists in Australia were persuaded by their GPS that they could drive to North Stradbroke Island at low tide (it’s actually accessible to cars only by ferry) and got stuck in the mud flats of Moreton Bay. They abandoned the car before the returning tide submerged it.

• A Senegalese man driving through Spain wasn’t so lucky. He was following GPS directions at night when the road just ended, his passenger said later. He drove into a lake and drowned.

• A 67-year-old Belgian woman traveling to Brussels—38 miles from her home—trustingly followed incorrect GPS directions on a detour of more than 800 miles, arriving two days later in Zagreb, Croatia.

Were the drivers involved in these cases, to one degree or another, knuckleheads? Absolutely. (I include myself.) However, the world is full of knuckleheads, and if fixing mistaken directions can save them from themselves, it seems incumbent on the navigation companies to fix them.

I admit they try. The other day I beefed to Google that their transit directions from O’Hare airport to Chicago’s near north side had you changing trains at stations that weren’t free-transfer points, meaning you had to pay a double fare. Google said they’d get right on it. Apparently they did: now they’ve got you changing at a free-transfer point, but it’s the wrong one, taking you several stops out of the way. As a result the supposedly fastest transit route has you getting off the train and taking a neighborhood bus, which no one with a clue would actually do. But at least it’s not a cliff.

—as Cecil Adams

Send questions to Cecil via straightdope.com or write him c/o Chicago Reader, 350 N. Orleans, Chicago 60654.
Curses, Foiled Again
- Three masked men failed to break through the roof of the Gator Guns & Pawn shop in West Palm Beach, Fla., with a pickaxe, so they returned the next night with a sledgehammer. The store’s surveillance video had recorded their first attempt, however, and sheriff’s deputies were waiting when the trio returned. They arrested Gabriel Crowe, 20, Marcello Jeter, 19, and a juvenile accomplice. (South Florida’s Sun Sentinel)
- When Derrick Mosley, 22, brandished a baseball bat while trying to rob Discount Gun Sales in Beaverton, Ore., the store manager pulled out his personal firearm and ordered Mosley to drop the bat. He held the suspect at gunpoint until sheriff’s deputies arrived. (Portland’s KATU-TV)

How Government Works
- Contracting and budget officers at the Defense Department’s Defense Information Systems Agency urged their colleagues to set an aggressive spending timetable to use up all of the DISA’s $2 billion budget before the end of the fiscal year. “It is critical in our efforts to [spend] 100% of our available resources this fiscal year,” budget officer Sannadean Sims and procurement officer Kathleen Miller said in an email to their colleagues. (The Washington Post)
- Contractors for the Environmental Protection Agency maintained a warehouse containing secret man caves, according to an audit by the EPA’s inspector general. Contractors used partitions, screens and piled-up boxes to hide the rooms from security cameras in the 70,000-square-foot building in Landover, Md. “The warehouse contained multiple unauthorized and hidden personal spaces created by and for the workers that included televisions, refrigerators, radios, microwaves, chairs and couches,” the report said. “These spaces contained personal items, including photos, pin ups, calendars, clothing, books, magazines and videos.” The responsible contractor, Apex Logistics, has received $5.3 million while operating under the contract. (Washington’s Government Executive)

Smoking Hazard
A jogger told police in Bowling Green, Ky., that two men robbed him while he stopped for a cigarette break on his evening run. The assailants took $7 and the jogger’s remaining cigarettes. (Bowling Green Daily News)

Hidden Costs
- U.S. military services have spent more than $12 million to design 10 new camouflage patterns for their uniforms, and millions more to buy, stock and ship them, according to the General Accountability Office. Eleven years ago, the military had two camouflage patterns: a green one for woods and a brown one for the desert. Then the Marine Corps implemented two new patterns, followed by the Army, Air Force and eventually even the Navy, which developed water-colored uniforms that some sailors objected to because it made them hard to spot if they fell in the water. The Air Force eventually ordered its personnel in Afghanistan to switch to the Army camouflage because it worked better in battle conditions. (The Washington Post)
- After tests by the Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility determined that the camouflage working uniforms most sailors wear at sea are flammable and would “burn robustly,” fleet commanders announced that all sailors afloat would be issued fire-retardant clothing. Submarine crews will continue to wear the flammable polyester and cotton coveralls because of low-lint requirements. (Navy Times)

Forbidden Fruit
- When a KFC franchise opened in El Arish, Egypt, Khalil Efrangi, 31, organized a delivery service to smuggle meals into Gaza, where the entry and exit of goods and people are restricted. Efrangi, who operates a legitimate delivery service called Yamama in Gaza City, waits until he gets enough orders to make the venture profitable — usually 30 — and then phones the KFC in El Arish and wires payment. Using two taxis and one of the scores of tunnels connecting Gaza and Egypt, Efrangi collects the contraband and delivers it to his Palestinian customers by motorcycle. The entire journey takes about four hours. “It’s our right to enjoy that taste the other people all over the world enjoy,” said Efrangi, who nets about $6 profit per meal. (The New York Times)
- Seattle butcher William von Schneidau teamed up with a medical marijuana grower to feed the remnants of pot plants to his pigs. Von Schneidau, who operates BB Ranch Meats in Pike Place Market, said the meat, including pot-infused bacon, “tasted savory.” (Seattle’s KOMO-TV)

Second-Amendment Follies
- Steve Faler, the president of American Legacy Firearms, defended the inclusion of the Kennedy Memorial on his company’s “Dallas Heritage Rifle.” Calling John F. Kennedy’s assassination one of the city’s most significant events, along with the Dallas Cowboys, he explained, “I do things that are historically … things that happened … and they’re not always good.” He pointed out he has produced commemorative guns for more than 130 cities and even sold one after Sept. 11, 2001, that featured the Pentagon and the still-standing twin towers. Ads for his Denver rifle appeared within days of the deadly theater shooting in Aurora, Colo. (Dallas WFAA-TV)
- A 5-year-old boy shot and killed his 2-year-old sister at their home in Cumberland County, Ky., while playing with a .22-caliber rifle he’d been given last year. “It’s a Crickett,” coroner Gary White said. “It’s a little rifle for a kid.” The maker, Keystone Sporting Arms, describes the weapon as “My First Rifle,” intended to “instill safety in the minds of youth shooters.” White said the gun was kept in a corner of the family’s mobile home, but nobody realized it was loaded. (Dayton’s WHIO-TV)

Alien Sex
- Pakistan leads the world in homophobia, according to a report by the American Pew Research Center, and, according to Google, search requests for same-sex pornography. (International Business Times)
- An Indian court ruled that adult couples who have slept together should be considered legally married. The verdict in Tamil Nadu state involved a woman who sued a man for alimony after living with him for five years and bearing two children; he countered that they weren’t legally married. “If any couple choose to consummate their sexual cravings, then the act becomes a total commitment with adherence to all consequences that may follow,” Justice C.S. Karnan said. The news portal Firstpost.com called the ruling “groundbreaking,” observing, “It’s not often that a High Court judgment can be used as both a punch line and a pickup line.” (The Washington Post)

Compiled from mainstream news sources by Roland Sweet. Authentication on demand.
**LOCAL ALBUMS**

**DUSTIN BUSCH**

_Down Home_
dustinbusch.bandcamp.com

*Down Home* is Dustin Busch’s first solo album in a long time (he was 15-years-old when he made his first), and showcases his slide guitar and country blues. In most people’s hands—at least people who weren’t born 100 years ago, poor and black in Mississippi—this is a recipe for embarrassing tedium. Yet Busch combines a complete mastery of the technique and style of blues, as well as a relaxed, nothing-to-prove attitude to make serious music that never takes itself too seriously.

On “Quail Is A Pretty Bird” he strays from blues into the acoustic, primitive territory pioneered by John Fahey and Sandy Bull. The relationship to the original (popularized by John Hartford) is tangential; Busch takes it apart and puts the pieces back together into something new and mysterious. The slide playing is liquid and graceful, outlining a subtle melody with bends and swoops not far from the South Indian carnatic style. To borrow from a Ry Cooder album title, this is chicken skin music.

The lo-fi production adds atmosphere rather than obscuring the music. These songs often sound like they’re playing on an old tractor’s AM radio. Especially effective is the distorted harmonica, which has enough dirt and grease in its sound that you wonder if it’s been changing the oil in an old pickup truck. _Down Home_ succeeds by good-naturedly embracing a paradox: It’s music that is captivating and exciting precisely because it doesn’t make demands or get worked up about itself.

**THE BLENDOURS**

_Drama Queen EP_
theblendours.bandcamp.com

The Blendours’ Trevor Treiber is a contemporary and West High classmate of Lipstick Homicide, and the one time I met him he was hanging with Rachel and Kate at Gabe’s. So, it’s no surprise that there’s a strong affinity between The Blendours and Lipstick Homicide when it comes to songwriting: They both write songs that are short, sweet and infectious. The Blendours songs on this EP are performed simply with acoustic instruments. Still, there’s a lot of pure punk rock energy even with a single guitar and no band.

They start out with “Ignore Everything” which crackles with energy, even if the message—“I’d just rather turn off my brain and ignore everything”—implies otherwise. Trevor’s voice on this song reminds me a bit of Weird Al Yankovic, which I mean as a compliment—like Weird Al, Trevor’s voice has a bit of nasal edge, but with crisp diction and timing. It’s a plain voice, but it commands attention. Given the Blendours acoustic style, a more direct influence might be the Violent Femmes: Neither band needs amplification to give their songs energy.

“Better off with him” showcases the Blendour’s talent for close harmony. This is a guy with serious vocal talent, and I think some serious training. You know how all the singers on “Glee” sound inhumanly perfect? Trevor has that, but it’s just him in his living room.
The stand-out track “If you wanna hold me” has everything: pre-“Rubber Soul” Beatles songwriting, Everly Brothers harmonies and novel chord modulation.

“Donutland” is a Beach Boys homage in the style of their songs before Brian Wilson became a stoned auteur. “More than a game” recalls Buddy Holly by way of Nick Lowe: The way he sings “Pay-ay-ain” and “Gay-ay-ame” absolutely slays me. The Blendours’ always have a humorous shade to every song they do, but it’s no laughing matter how deeply good they are. —Kent Williams

THE ILLS
Get It!
theillsrock.bandcamp.com

I will admit that I’m not the most informed when it comes to post-’80s punk rock. So, when the Iowa City punk band The ILLS say that they are most influenced by ’90s San Francisco punk label Rip Off Records, I have to take them at their word. Self-described as ‘garage punk,’ that is certainly what they give us with their newest 7” Get It!

I’m a sucker for punk bands fronted by aggressive women—it started with the soundtracks of ’80s teen movies peppered with songs by the likes of The Waitresses, Josie Cotton and Romeo Void, or the seminal documentary The Decline of Western Civilization where I was introduced to the music of Exene Cervenka in the L.A. band X, which The ILLS lead singer Erika E. Bola sites as an influence.

The ILLS have been around formally since 2011, and their wonderful slab of purple marbled vinyl is the band’s second release. With all six songs clocking in at under a minute—and with titles like “Total Dick” and “Yr Ugly Face”—these are obviously not sprawling epics that abuse the 7” format. These are sneering, rapid-fire songs of retribution delivered like a grape slushie to the face.

There is a certain satisfaction in experiencing a band that understands the genre in which they work. That, coupled with the fact that punk rock often lacks the voices and perspective of women, makes Get It! a rare and unique record and one that occupies a well-earned repeat spin on my turntable.

Michael Roeder is a self-proclaimed “music savant.” When he’s not writing for little village he blogs at www.playbsides.com.
LEO (July 22 - Aug. 21) Every area of Leo’s life is at least a little chaotic. The inner commotion more than matches the outer disarray. You aren’t lacking for resources and we’re not talking about disaster, here. It’s more a question of making the financial and professional pieces fit together better. Outdated expectations and irrelevant ideas about yourself could be blocking a solution. Take advantage of supportive astrological conditions to figure it out. You’ll have the time you need. You don’t need to get it right the first time.

VIRGO (Aug. 22 - Sept. 21) Nothing is what it once was. Loyalties are shifting. Important relationships are growing tenuous. A rapidly evolving situation keeps shifting the financial goalposts. The future won’t come into focus. Don’t overestimate the risk. The underlying vibes are supportive. Keep your goals and your strategy flexible. This isn’t the best time for Virgo to make commitments. It’s OK to ride the currents for a while until things clarify. Don’t let flirtations distract you or interfere with important relationships. Take steps to keep relationship issues simple.

LIBRA (Sept. 22 - Oct. 21) All the irresistible forces that rearranged your life are becoming constructive and manageable. Though right now, they’re keeping things a little too fluid. It will be a while before things settle into new and stable patterns and that’s a good thing. Developments at home and at work could preoccupy you. Tight finances will keep you from making any bold moves for the foreseeable future anyway. The planets will have you thinking around in circles if you let them. Keep the issues clear and simple.

ARIES (March 20 - April 18) Aries has been working hard, often single-handedly, to strike a more agreeable balance between work and home responsibilities. Your emotional well-being is a driving issue. You’ve had to make decisions and take action unilaterally. In recent weeks, a new, benevolent influence has made itself felt, softening the conflicts between work and family responsibilities and bringing you much needed psychological support. It’s time to go back and make sure any unilateral decisions and actions square with the legitimate needs and expectations of family and friends.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 19 - Feb. 17) Reinforcing your financial base and your support network, and participating more in your community means reaching out. Everything is done by loosely organized networks, now. Your goals could require endless negotiations. Don’t let financial arrangements get too complicated. Keep the bottom line uppermost in your mind. Aquarians will have an edge. All the issues revolve around things that come naturally to you. A beneficial influence is presently affecting your work situation; your well-being will depend increasingly on the alliances you are now forming.

PISCES (Feb. 18 - March 19) Pisceans are immersed in a vortex of change, working to make a complex series of changes add up to a better lifestyle. Despite the occasional hitch, the financial issues are working out well. Despite endless adjustments, your life goals are still on track. However, in recent years, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being have emerged as top priorities. Pay special attention this month to ensure that these priorities are respected. For the foreseeable future, Pisceans must take care to remain grounded and on task.

LEO (July 22 - Aug. 21) Every area of Leo’s life is at least a little chaotic. The inner commotion more than matches the outer disarray. You aren’t lacking for resources and we’re not talking about disaster, here. It’s more a question of making the financial and professional pieces fit together better. Outdated expectations and irrelevant ideas about yourself could be blocking a solution. Take advantage of supportive astrological conditions to figure it out. You’ll have the time you need. You don’t need to get it right the first time.
FOR EVERYONE: The planets are supporting our efforts to build a new way of life. They will allow us lots of time and margin for error. This month, though, we need to strike a complicated balance. We feel driven to achieve certain goals. We are obsessed with certain ideals. Certain personal and moral obligations weigh on our conscience. Finally, we do need to be realistic. It’s worth taking the time to establish

SCORPIO (Oct. 22 - Nov. 20) Scorpios are feeling subdued. Lowered energy levels mean they need to pick their battles carefully. They also need to let some old, burdensome commitments fall away. Issues at home and in the community are weighing on you, too. But your moral authority has seldom been higher. You enjoy greater leverage over important situations. And economic pressures have eased noticeably. Idealistic, well-meaning people are pressuring you to take their side on important community issues; however, these are matters you need to decide for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 21 - Dec. 20) Sagittarians are strongly independent thinkers. They rely heavily on reason but usually do take public opinion and intuition into account. Presently, despite reservations, you find yourself siding with public opinion on many issues, and intuitive insights tend the same way. Also, the level of excitement surrounding these issues makes it hard not to conform. A lot of people are feeling the same pressures. All the more reason for Sagittarius to listen to their conscience and heed the quiet of reason. Long-term finances are improving.

TAURUS (April 19 - May 19) Taurians are feeling concern about how rough and unpredictable the process of change is becoming. It’s hard to know how, or if, your own hopes and dreams will fit into the future. On the upside, a new expanded network of family, neighbors and others in distant places is taking shape around you. For every pressure you feel, there is a countervailing, supportive force working on your behalf. Increasingly, your home will become a communications center from which you can communicate with your far-flung support system.

GEMINI (May 20 - June 19) Generally speaking, Geminis are making the kind of complicated but wholesome financial changes that create a more sound economic foundation. Many of the needed adjustments will fall into place quite naturally or with only a little coaxing from yourself. You might have to stand up for those in your community, though. Their interests are being threatened and your good standing in the community is being undermined by the actions of those in authority. You’ll be happily surprised at how far a little ‘polite’ negotiation will get you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 21 - Jan. 18) It might seem that your influence—your ability to shake things up—has waned. People don’t resist outright, they just kind of flow around you, going their own way. People do accommodate your expectations, but in ways they don’t bother to share with you. This has been going on for a while. But things have changed. Beyond this point, and for several years to come, your success will depend on your ability to work with this new ‘system.’ Keep relationships in the community simple.

CANCER (June 20 - July 21) Cancerians often see through facades. They usually don’t talk about what they see for fear of offending or upsetting others. A newfound inclination to share with others what they need to hear, though, will work in your favor. For every person who gets defensive, a half-dozen more will welcome what you say. They will appreciate your new tough-love policy. At work, in business or in your social life, many people will soon realize that your unexpected insights improve their well-being and reward you.
Vintage is sexy.