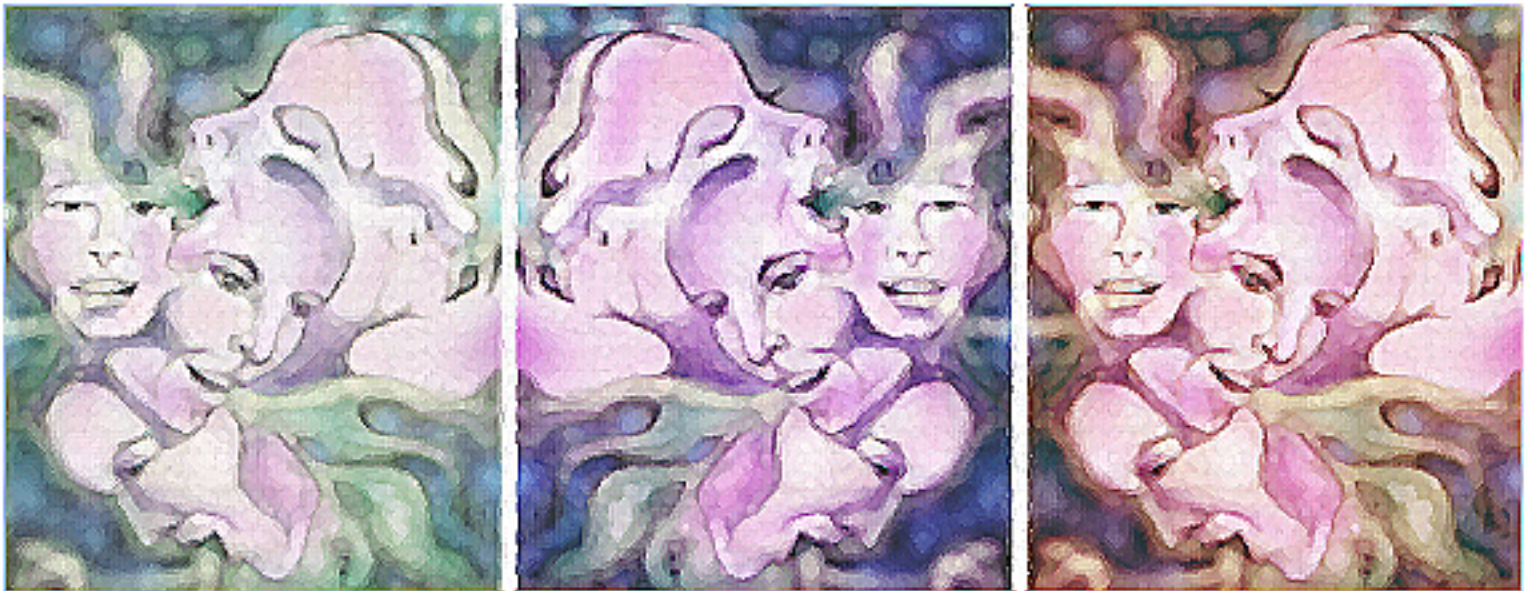


THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 15 Issue 28
July 27, 2007



Sun Signs

Mighty Leo's in the Spotlights

Food Chain

Conservation Versus Survival

Thinking Fast

Common Sense Not So Common

Plus:
The Good Life
Lost & Found
Music To Eat Lunch To
Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

and much more...

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from the readers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLASSIFIEDS



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and
comments to voice@ausu.org,
and please indicate if we may
publish your letter.

Re: "Concert Special: Vans Warped Tour 2007" by Mandy Gardner,
v15 i26 (2007-07-13)

That was the absolute BEST review! Felt like I myself was back there
after my own long absence (3 years). Punk on, Mandy Gardner!

Joe N.

Re: "We Are Dying" by Pam Pelmous, v15 i27 (2007-07-20)

I wish to comment on the above article posted by Mrs. Pelmous. I agree
with every point she makes in her article, yet I find myself disheartened
by a lack of suggestions with which to strengthen the fabric of
communities in Canada. Many successful alternatives to the current
state of our 'suburban' lifestyle come to mind - here are a few -

Start a community garden. Many cities are very condensed and have few
places for individuals to gather with one another and work
together/play together. We each have our own gardens and rarely help
others with theirs. There was a time when community members helped
out each other at harvest. If a vacant public lot exists in your
community, think about planting a garden there. If someone complains,
ask them instead for their help and post information about it. One
successful example of this exists in High Park in Toronto. Community
gardens exist in the park and various community members grow their
own food. The community of High Park is also densely populated, but
community members are friendly and welcoming of one another.

Another idea is to get involved in cohousing. Cohousing communities are
deliberate or intentional communities. They're based on reducing our
environmental footprint by creating dense communities and housing
that is generally self sustainable through the use of alternative
energies, ride shares, community greenhouses etc. They also promote a
diverse community by ensuring that community members represent all
social and economic strata of our society. Further, a communal area is
used once a week for potluck dinners where neighbours get together
and socialize with one another. One other way that sharing is promoted

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is that each member of the community is expected to share in the management and chores of the community.

Specialists also help other community members if they have specific skills in order to keep the costs down for all community members. Imagine how much of a difference this can make for a family of four living in a city like Vancouver or Calgary? We're so conditioned to paying our condo fees and forget about it, what if, in order to remain in a community, one of the conditions was to actually contribute and participate in it? This template can be used in any neighbourhood (one example is the prairiesky community in Calgary).

Finally, promote a diverse and vibrant neighbourhood in your own community. Insist that developers create mixed use communities where members can work, play, live and gather. Make sure that this insistence is legislated.

These are just a few ideas...there are many more (consider car free zones in areas, block parties, it goes on and on...). You're not the only one that feels the way you do, but there are things you can do about it! So come on, get moving! You have a lot of work to do!

Regards, Ryan Nabozniak

Thanks so much for your reply to this article, and all of your great suggestions. These are very valuable and some wonderful ideas. It goes to show that with effort and creativity, we can always find ways to build our communities.

*Tamra Ross
Editor-In-Chief*

VOICE VACATION



It's time for summer vacation! *The Voice* will be taking one week off, from July 30 to August 3.

We're going to recharge, re-energize, and be back with more great stuff (including, of course, all your favourite regular columnists!) on Friday, August 10.

Even though we'll be enjoying a little R 'n' R, we won't be able to help sneaking a peek at our email, so keep sending in your comments and letters. We'll be sure to read them in time for the next issue.

See you on August 10!



Dumb and Dumber

In the interest of all things summer-like and relaxed, my editorial radar seems to have sprouted a pair of Texas, poured itself a cold drink, and wandered off in search of some shade. There are serious news stories galore, but the only things that seem to be catching its indolent eye are the columns of odd events that all the major news outlets run.

And the trend I've been noticing has got me thinking. Are we really getting dumber? Have the predictions of a pop-media saturated, non-literate, synapse-challenged civilization finally come true? I'm leaning heavily toward the yes side, because if the people in these news stories are any indication, our brains are turning to mush.

We're not talking about education here. Whether you graduated from grade 8 or spent 8 years in med school, there's still the factor of common sense; of the average adult having (somewhere along the line) picked up the basic ability to evaluate a situation and make a rational decision. And that's the skill that seems to be so sadly lacking these days.

Take this trio in Gainesville, Georgia. They decided to steal some copper pipes and wiring—presumably to sell the metal and get some cash. Now, people may have a lot of reasons to attempt a robbery, but how dumb do you have to be to try stealing from a police K-9 training facility? Signs on the building made it clear: "Caution!!! Gainesville Police Department K-9 training facility - Keep Out."¹ Even assuming that this bunch had received only the most basic public-school education, it doesn't take much to figure out the words "K-9" and "Police."

They inched even closer to a Darwin award when they reacted to the arrival of a group of K-9 officers and their pooches: they tried to outrun the dogs. As one Hall County sheriff's sergeant put it, "For anyone to try to run from a whole unit of canines, it's just a no-win situation." No kidding.

Another crisis in common sense happened when a man initiated a fight with three other men—all because he assumed that the sign language gestures of one of them were an insult.²

For the moment, let's assume that the man who started the fight, an Alaska resident, had absolutely no idea what sign language is. That he had, in his 26 years of living, never once seen it used on TV, heard anyone mention it, or seen one of the estimated half a million Americans who regularly use it. He has, in the year 2007, with as many as 4 out of every 1,000 people in the United States being functionally deaf, absolutely no clue what sign language is.

It still makes one wonder: if you're driving alone in your car, and you assume that someone has made an insulting gesture at you, why oh why would you cut off that vehicle and challenge the three men in it to a fight? When police arrived, they found the man injured and bleeding heavily. Uh-huh.

The story gets even more bizarre, but the question remains: what has happened to plain old common sense?

It's generally assumed that modern humans are an awful lot brighter than, say, our Neolithic ancestors were. But I think common sense—our basic smarts—are closely tied to the instinct for survival, and it's a little worrisome to think that a Neolithic man would probably come out the winner in this contest. After all, if a prehistoric fellow was out alone and spotted three other males that he perceived as a threat, I somehow

can't imagine that he'd run up to them, toss a couple of pre-modern insults their way, and challenge them to a dust-up.

This last one has so many variations that happen so often, it's almost become a cliché. At a Walgreens in Niagara Falls, a young man decided to steal a carton of cigarettes. Before running away with the goods, though, he handed the cashier his driver's licence as proof of age. All well and good—but then, just in case she didn't catch the name on the licence as she typed his birth date into the computer, he left his ID behind. At last report, the police hadn't found him at home; I'm betting they'll pay another visit.

So is this phenomenon limited to witless criminals and hot-headed pickup truck drivers in Alaska? I say no.

Take a drive on any major highway in Canada (Ontario's 400-series springs to mind). Anybody with a few years' driving experience has seen mangled wreckage and the attendant ambulance crews at work. It doesn't take a great leap of logic to figure out that the faster you go and the closer you are to another hunk of speeding metal, the greater your chances for death or injury. Yet in the past two weeks, there has been a mounting body count on the 400 highway alone. Excessive speed, street racing, unsafe lane changes—and every day, the wreckage is cleared and thousand of careless drivers do the same things all over again.

Instinct for survival? Common sense? All sadly absent (at one recent fatal crash, people got tired of sitting in traffic and made the brilliant decision to exit by driving the wrong way down a curving highway on-ramp). Never again will I wonder why racoons haven't evolved to the point of learning to be careful in traffic—apparently, humans can't manage it either.

In the face of these and countless other examples, I'm convinced that the average person has lost the ability to use plain old common sense. We wouldn't have a hope of surviving in a more primitive time.

Don't believe me? Then ponder this: we've come to consider it normal that almost every product we buy carries a label warning us not to do something stupid with it.

Grabbing a coffee to go? Careful—that drink that was made with near-boiling water may be hot. Slipping a pastry into the toaster? Better read the directions—your strudel will be hot after heating. New curling iron? At least one manufacturer feels compelled to remind you that (I kid you not) its product is for external use only.

Yes, these please-don't-be-stupid labels are partly a reaction to frivolous law suits. But that may be the most telling sign of all: we live in a society where it's even *possible* to sue a company for not warning you that you shouldn't ride your bicycle into oncoming traffic. Doesn't that display an alarming lack of any expectation that people are essentially rational, sentient beings?

Who knows, maybe this is all just the next step in human evolution. Maybe our capacity for logical thought is slowly leaking away in preparation for the day the computers take over—you know, sort of a Borg-like collective where we all just wait for the next simple instruction.

I can see it now: "Caution—this bottle contains water. Product may be wet." And you can bet that somebody, somewhere, will do something stupid with it.

¹ CBC News, 2007. "Dogs chase down suspects in break-in at Georgia K-9 training facility." Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/cp/Oddities/070720/K072017AU.html>

² Townhall.com, 2007. "Misunderstood Hand Signs Trigger Brawl." Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://www.townhall.com/News/NewsArticle.aspx?contentGUID=aa9df39f-c368-464c-9fc0-76a2e86ff1dd>



Leo

July 23 - August 22

The glyph for Leo represents the mane of the lion. The glyph's two incomplete circles can also be seen as the sun being joined by the moon. In mythology, Leo is frequently associated with Nemean the Lion, who was killed by Hercules and then sent into the sky.



Leo is the fifth sign of the zodiac and is a masculine fire sign. Leo is a fixed sign as are Aquarius and Scorpio, which is indicative of a stubborn, immovable nature. A dominant sign, Leos are always looking for ways to benefit from a situation. They are hard-working and ambitious for the most part. Leo loves to be the centre of attention. They easily use their charm to persuade others to join their cause. Leos' stubborn nature causes them to be resistant to change. They are open, honest, and idealistic.

There is no mistaking it: the Lion truly enjoys the finer things in life. Nothing but the best for a Leo. Akin to the noble lion, Leo's pride often causes him or her to appear conceited, snobbish, and somewhat overbearing. On the other hand, people gravitate to Leo's gregarious, flamboyant nature.

Leos marry forever. If their marriage fails, it will take years for the Lion to move on. They love children and want to take their children everywhere with them. They are romantic, which may lead to a wandering eye. The best way to win a Leo is by offering unending admiration. If you want to lose a Leo, be a tightwad. Remember, they like the best of everything, so splurge on them.

When in love, Leos are supportive and loyal, although at times this is only evident to others, not their partner. Leos can be very passionate and expressive lovers. At times, their passion may lead them to take great risks resulting in pain and loss. They desire a partner with whom they will be proud. In relationships, the Lion may miss clues that their partner is unhappy and subsequently be devastated when the relationship ends. A partner of a Leo needs to be prepared to play second fiddle to their magnificent Lion.

Physically, the sign of Leo is ruled by the lower back and the heart. Their backs tend to become narrow at the lower spine, which leads to weakness and possibly sway-back. All Lions possess beautiful eyes. Their hair, unlike the mane of their namesake, tends to be thin and light, although usually remarkable in some way. The nose is generally straight, but may have a slight hook. Lions have a tendency to put on weight, as they enjoy rich, creamy sauces and desserts.

Leos will excel in many careers as they have the ability to get along with those in positions of authority. They are team players, although they prefer to be in a position of authority. Lions are creative, dynamic employees. Some career choices may be actor, musician, interior decorator, lawyer, executive, banker, and any kind of work with children.

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Positive Qualities: generous, honest, warm-hearted, loving, proud, creative

Negative Qualities: intolerant, conceited, power-hungry, bossy

Lucky Day: Sunday

Birthstone: Amber

Most compatible marriage sign: Aries, Sagittarius

Famous Leos: Madonna, Mick Jagger, Woody Harrelson, Jennifer Lopez, Bill Clinton, Tony Bennett



My Best Friends Are All Subversives

They don't like the sound of gunfire in the streets, the staccato echoes of shattering glass. Their faces are not bright with triumph in the light from burning buildings. They own no megaphones, and keep no prisoners in windowless basements. But none of this makes them any less dangerous.

The upheaval these people instigate comes on small, soft feet. It is quiet as a dream of rain falling from a bamboo roof, the yawning of a cat on a stretch of sunlit carpet. When the new regime they work for finally arrives, it will be announced by mimes wearing fluffy slippers, by mermaids playing underwater cellos.

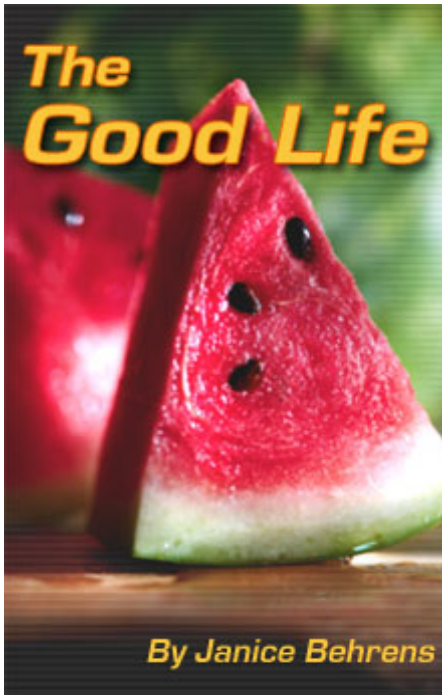
Like any good change in the status quo, the insurrection will begin with a conspiracy. Already, you can sense the secrets being passed back and forth—a cryptic, shared smile between two old lovers; a scrap of unfinished, handwritten verse left between the pages of a crumbling library book; a few notes of a half-remembered love song heard on the

radio of a passing car.

My trouble-making friends, my daydreaming insurrectionists, are gathering in nurseries and greenhouses. They are congregating in art galleries and church basements. They are coming together at the bedsides of friends and family who need to feel the touch of their hands.

These desperate revolutionaries, these friends of mine, have disguised their combat fatigues as blue jeans and co-op radio T-shirts, nurses' uniforms and flower-print dresses. They are putting their demands in the form of lullabies and sonnets and hymns. They are writing subversive haikus and creating origami manifestos. In preparation for the coming siege, they are stocking up on canned peaches and hoarding gardening almanacs. They are collecting rainwater in barrels, and memorizing romantic poetry to help them through the long, dark nights of the reconstruction.

Many of them are not especially good in a crisis. They have no fake passports, no cache of weapons. They don't know how to wire a suicide vest, or interrogate a mole. But they can change a baby's diaper and dial a telephone at the same time. They can grow tomatoes in so-so soil, and one of them can do a pretty mean cartwheel. They can carry a tune and get a mean-eyed two-year-old to laugh. They can tell a dirty joke and bake banana bread. They can tell the difference between love and hate, between truth and lies, which is what makes them so very dangerous, I suppose.



Noticing the Everyday Special

When you're young, you sometimes (at least I did) have this idea that there will be these big moments—things like sports championships, graduations from high school and college, getting that first career, your wedding day, your honeymoon, the buying of your first home—that will be the significant and defining times of your life.

If you're not careful, you can begin to imagine that these big-ticket events are the only things that really count in life, and the rest of what you do, all the day-to-day stuff, is just filler. It's this sort of thinking that paves the road to mid-life crises, and the sense of worthlessness that blights so many people's retirement years.

The truth is, though, that there are not very many of these pomp and circumstance-filled times. And when they do arrive, they are often not the way you expected them to be. For instance (to be blunt) for every fairy-tale wedding that comes off without a hitch, I'll bet there are a hundred brides who feel they are suffering through a living nightmare of stress, anxiety, sleep deprivation, and many other forms of

emotional torment.

One of the truly wonderful things, for me, about getting older and hopefully a little bit wiser, is my ever-increasing appreciation for the smaller, quieter moments that enrich my life. I have a display case containing several trophies, the winning of which seemed so important to me at the time. I have nicely framed academic credentials on my office wall, and several photo albums filled with pictures of exotic holiday destinations that my husband and I have travelled to. No tropical sunrise I've ever seen, though, compares to the sense of wonder I felt when my daughter and I got up early one morning, walked to the beach six blocks from our home, and discovered what seemed like tens of thousands of purple starfish clinging to the rocks exposed by an extra-low tide.

I have stayed in ritzy European hotels, but I more clearly remember childhood nights spent roasting weenies and camping out in my aunt and uncle's backyard. Likewise, no West End theatre show I've seen compares to my niece and nephew's puppet shows, performed on a stage made out of an old refrigerator box. I have eaten in five-star restaurants, but by far the most memorable meal I've ever had consisted of burnt toast and orange juice (why it was memorable is a whole other story!).

My point is, every single day of our lives is filled with unexpected pleasures. When we focus too much on the big dreams, the big goals, the hoped-for big events, we run the risk of letting potential magic slip through our fingers.

Still Remains - *The Serpent*



Release date: August 7, 2007

Label: Roadrunner Records

Tracks: 11

Rating: 8

The Serpent is the third full-length release from American techo-metal band Still Remains, a group with talented members that give their songs a flavour not unlike the UK-based Enter Shikari. With T.J. Miller on vocals, Mike Church on guitar and backing vocals, Jordan Whelan on second guitar, Steve Hetland on bass, Adrian Green on the drums, and Ben

Schauland on the keyboards, this is a band that reminds me of Slipknot for all the different elements the members bring to the music.

The track "Avalanche" shows off the diversity of not only the talent but also the songwriting, as Miller takes the heavy metal screamo vocals and then his bandmates trail the song off with soft acoustic guitar and a sweet little melody. These seemingly contrasting pieces of music are composed well independently and in conjunction with one another, helping to give the album a well-rounded feel that keeps you listening the entire way through. Let's face it, there are some great metal albums out there that can only be listened to five or six tracks at a time; this is not one of those.

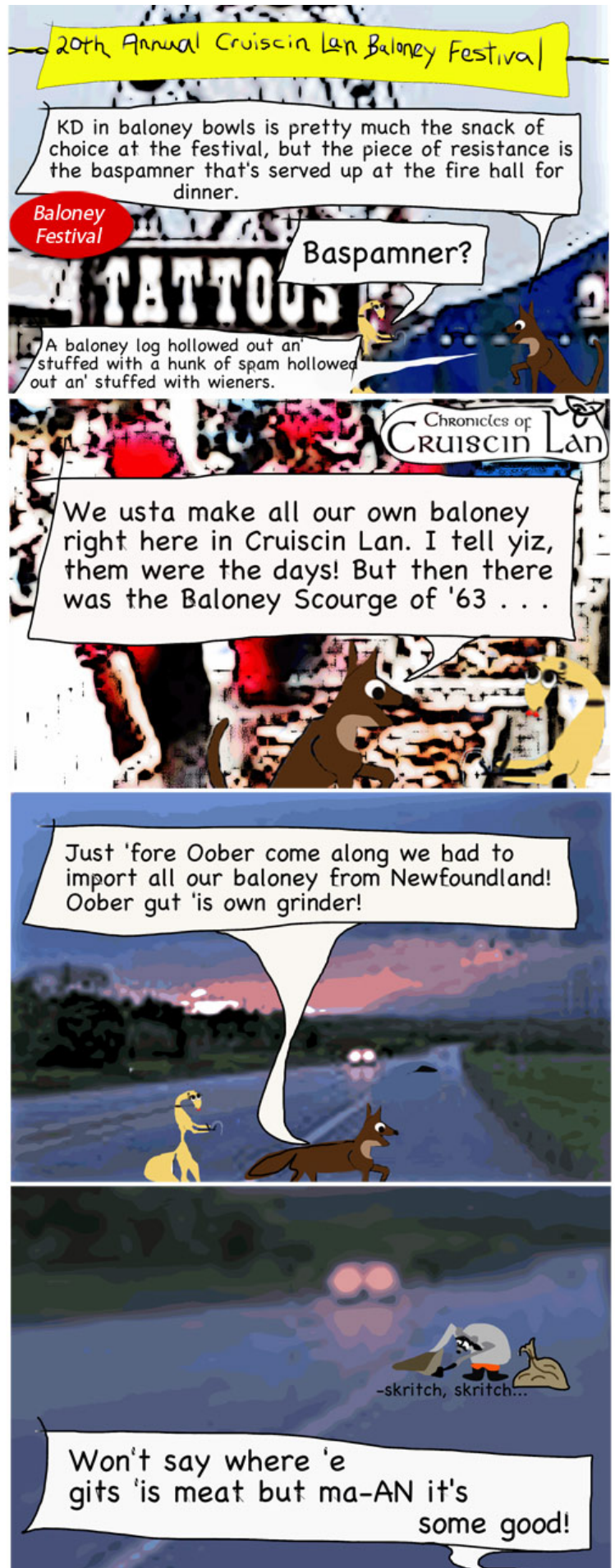
Many essentially heavy metal bands attempt to bring some glam guitar into their songs, mixed with differing layers of vocals and shouts, bass and even keyboard, but I don't think very many of them get it this right.

Still Remains has figured out the perfect mixture for the band members, and with each song locked into a strong balance you can tell that the musicians are left to bring a steady energy into their playing that comes through very well. I never once had the impression that a guitar solo went on too long, or ended too high, or that lyrics coming from either the bottom of Miller's lungs or higher up in his vocal chords were unwarranted. It's an essentially flawless metal album, and the keyboards give the tracks that extra dimension to bring the two guitar lines together without a sharp edge.

The Serpent is due for release in August, and if you are a hardcore metal fan or if you just buy one or two metal albums to round out a more diverse CD collection, I think this is one you will enjoy. If you are a particular fan of Enter Shikari or Aiden, Still Remains is entirely able to give you what you are looking for and perhaps gain themselves a new and dedicated lifelong fan. Check it out.

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



AUSU THIS MONTH



Coalition for Student Loan Fairness

AUSU is currently investigating the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness (CSLF) to determine if participation with this group would be advantageous to our members. The group, a grassroots movement of student loan borrowers from across Canada, supports fairness in the loans repayment process.

The CSLF notes that Canadian students are charged a rate of 2.5 to 4.5% above prime for loan repayment, resulting in interest charges that can amount to as much as 33% of the loan principal over the lifetime of the loan. Borrowers who utilize interest relief during low-income periods may pay considerably more. Given that student loans are offered as a public service and incentive to learning, the high profitability of these loans is of concern to AUSU.

CSLF also notes that students over the age of 30 are not included in government surveys of student loan experiences. This is of particular concern to AUSU as the majority of our membership is 30 years of age or older and we know from our experiences with our members that the current loans program does not adequately serve these members, nor does it serve members who wish to work to support themselves while studying part-time.

CSLF also asks that the government provide an Ombuds office to handle student loan complaints—a change that would help address many of the problems we hear about regarding lost forms, incorrect instructions, and confusing requirements. Additionally, CSLF supports providing for consolidation of multiple student loans into a single loan with a single payment, a change that many students have asked for.

Members are encouraged to check out the CSLF website at <http://www.studentloanfairness.ca/index.php>

AUSU Frappr—Show Us Where You Are

On June 20 AUSU launched a Frappr member map on the front page of AUSU.org. Just three days later, nearly 140 members have added their dot to our map, and a "picture" of the dispersion of our website visitors is taking shape. We're thrilled to see so many of you leaving your little mark on our site, and we love all the great pictures and shoutouts people have uploaded. Members who have left anonymous pins are encouraged to add their name (or alias, if you are shy) so we know you are all different people! If you haven't added your mark, drop by www.ausu.org—and don't forget to read the posting information if you are new to Frappr.



At Home: Montreal's Gay Pride parade hits a stumbling block

Controversy surrounding the Gay Pride parade in Montreal this month has been continuing for the several years it has taken organizers to put the event together, and in the last stages of set-up it seemed that the parade was doomed for the scrap heap after all the buildup.

The parade has been on the events calendar for gay-rights groups worldwide, and organizers were expecting to pull in massive international crowds. With visa difficulties for performers and attendees, however, coupled with last-minute organizers pulling out of the event, the parade was stricken from the calendar as recently as May 17 and officially considered "cancelled."¹

According to the CBC, however, the event is locked in for July 29.² The initial cancellation was due to the fact that the Divers/Cite group, formerly key organizers for the event,

refused to step into the role at the last minute after Célébration de la Fierté LGB2T de Montréal pulled out. Finally, the group Celebration Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and all Friends (LGBTAF) was arranged and given the task of organizing the parade.

Despite the assumption that the parade will not host as many attendees as it might if it took place in conjunction with the other related festivities, many people are convinced that this is an integral part of Montreal Gay Pride, and without the festive and colourful parade the entire event may not have the clout it has in the past.

After the hassle so many performers and attendees have faced just getting into Canada for the event (if you recall, several visas were refused on the basis that foreigners were criminals in their home countries due to their homosexuality), it seems only fair that organizers pull out all the stops.

¹ Hour, 2007. "Montreal Gay Pride parade cancelled." Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://hour.ca/news/news.aspx?ilIDArticle=12097>

² CBC News, 2007. "Montreal Gay Pride rolls out on Sunday." Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2007/07/24/qc-gaypride0724.html>

In Foreign News: Poaching is a way of life for Eastern Russian villagers

Amidst worldwide calls for stricter legislation on hunting and poaching, it seems that global organizations dedicated to wildlife preservation and environmental conservation have failed to consider the adapted lifestyles of poor fishing villages. Although anti-poaching legislation is meant to benefit the world community on the whole, regional communities are left to suffer when their economies are too frail to support a population that cannot feed itself without the consumption and sale of illegally obtained fish and animal products.

The eastern Russian peninsula of Kamchatka is home to Igor and Sergei, neighbours in a small town called Ust-Bolsheretsk that a Reuters article describes as “drab.”¹ The two men, in fear of international and local law, refused to divulge their last names as they answered questions; however, they explained how the lives of themselves and the rest of their community were based fundamentally on fishing and poaching.

As Igor says, “There's no work here. If you don't [fish], you go hungry.”²

The main problem with this daily poaching of wild salmon is, as Russian Wild Salmon Centre program manager Gennady Inozemtsev says, that “birds and bears eat salmon, while salmon live only where the natural conditions are just right. It's all part of one natural chain.”¹ With Kamchatka residents eating up the resources of salmon and any other fish they can get their hands on, the brown bears and local bird populations are suffering.

Clearly, initiatives to stop poaching outright would strike east Russians hard; however, the continuation of current poaching rates will severely cut down native animal and bird populations, damaging the ecosystem permanently. Kamchatka is in need of more regionalized, unique legislation and investment that might strengthen their legal economy and wean them off of a quickly depleting natural resource.

¹ Reuters, 2007. “Poaching feeds and bleeds Russian Kamchatka.” Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://www.reuters.com/article/inDepthNews/idUSL2284689720070627>

² NPR, 2007. “Poaching in Far Eastern Russia Threatens EcoSystem.” Retrieved July 25, 2007, from <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11439051>

Living Arrangements

Sometimes, in the name of function and functional, we forget the form. Just because we are required to sleep, sit, and store everything we own, doesn't mean it has to be milk crates and two-by-fours.

ISTDIBS - <http://www.1stdibs.com/>

Everything from the seats we sit on to the places where we keep the books we read while sitting, and the lights we use to read the books by. Some truly beautiful items to decorate your life and home.

WillyGoat - <http://www.willygoat.com/outdoor/default.asp>

Living isn't just a matter of staying indoors alone; sometimes it's the outdoors, and the playing about in the great world beyond our home walls—or even the backyard home away from home.

Tree Trunk Table - <http://www.ddcnyc.com/product.php?id=151481>

The name of the modern living game is reduce, reuse, recycle. So, if that trunk just has to come out of the yard, why not keep it for another purpose?

Real Simple Furniture - <http://www.realsimplefurniture.com/>

With all the world's beautiful complexity, sometimes the simple things are best.

Foldschool: Cardboard Furniture - <http://www.foldschool.com/>

And if you're after the almost absurdly simple and don't have a lot of money to burn, why not turn some cardboard boxes into something a little more useful than "that stuff that's taking up all that storage space in the basement"?



It's time for an update from the Gallery! The AUSU council met on Monday, July 23, and here are some of the highlights.

Council has been busy, and ten items were up for voting and approval. Most of the policy amendments had already been opened and discussed by email, so the only thing to do during the meeting was ratify the vote on each of them. (If you're interested in reading the AUSU policies, you can check them out on the website at <http://www.ausu.org/bylaws/policies.php>).

For most of the changes and new policies, everyone was in agreement, but there was one interesting exception. AUSU is looking into the benefits of participating with the Coalition for Student Loan Fairness (CSLF), a group of student loan borrowers who support fairness in the process of repaying loans. One of council's recent proposals was the idea of giving CSLF a \$3,000 honorarium to help fund some of their work, a research project called "The Canada Student Loans Program: Solutions to Improve Public Confidence and Operational Effectiveness." It sounds like a good idea, especially if it might result in some positive changes for AU students who use student loans.

While the motion was approved, the vote wasn't unanimous, and now I'm curious to find out more. (From listening in on a few meetings, I know that councillors are really well versed in the minutia of policies and bylaws, so I'd like to find out a little more about councillors' thoughts on this.) I'll check into it and report back in the next Gallery.

In the Reports section of the meeting, there were a few items of note. First, council has narrowed its search for an auditor, and the field is down to three. Second, the Awards Committee was able to give out two emergency bursaries after sorting out a discrepancy in how GPAs were being calculated. It seems that AU was using a lifetime GPA in the criteria, but the process has been remedied and students were awarded the funds.

The last interesting note is about the AUSU website itself. It was brought to council's attention that recent minutes of council meetings weren't posted on the site. Apparently, there was a glitch in the system and even though the minutes were posted they weren't visible. The problem's been fixed, though, and if you want to read about what's been happening in past meetings, you can find everything at <http://www.ausu.org/council/minutes.php>.

It's also been suggested to council (via the AUSU discussion boards) that they need to improve their communication with students. Specifically, it was requested that councillors read through all the posts and look for questions or issues addressed to them, and also that notices about council meetings be posted on the discussion boards. This point was brought up in the meeting, and I have to say that I agree with council's reasoning on this: there's already a central place to find information.

Council meetings are posted weeks in advance on the main page of the AUSU site (although it was agreed that the calendar could be placed in a more prominent position). All the contact information is there, so my question is, why duplicate the effort? I think the discussion boards are great, but if I have a question I'm going to go straight to the source. It makes more sense to get good, reliable information from council, and then, if you think it's something other students might be interested in, use the boards to share the facts.

In August, council will hold some key meetings with AU staff, including the new registrar Jim D'Arcy. The next formal meeting is September 24, so I'll be back to listen in and let you know what's new!

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THE VOICE

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