

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 04
January 25, 2008

The Gardener

Seeds of knowledge

Do Not Go Gentle

Raging against
the night

Hanging Out

Time to air your
clean laundry

Plus:

*Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan, Music to Eat
Lunch To, From Where I Sit, and much more...*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



Hanging Out

Given that the world's ice cover is melting at an alarming rate, it could be said that government action to address the problem is the most glacial thing around. There's hope, though, in a recent announcement by Gerry Phillips, Ontario's Energy Minister. It seems that substance might finally be taking precedence over style, as the province's government is thinking about reversing existing bans on clotheslines.

Yes, it's true—no longer will Ontario households be forced to spew unnecessary pollution into the air in an effort to save their neighbours' sensitive eyes from the sight of flapping T-shirts and tatty underwear.

Homeowners everywhere (even in premium, executive subdivisions designed for "superior living") will be allowed to run their skivvies out on laundry day—and hang what the neighbours say.

According to the [CBC](#), clotheslines are "banned under some municipal bylaws and contracts with home builders." If the energy minister's plan gets the go-ahead, anyone living in a "freehold detached, semi-detached or row house" will have the option of drying their clothes outdoors (the issue of clotheslines in condos and other high-rise buildings will be addressed separately).

It's about time. In fact, it's hard to believe the bans haven't been outlawed before. As far back as 2003, the Liberals passed a conservation law that gave the province the power to eliminate the clothesline restrictions. The power has been there; the will to act hasn't.

The original logic for the bans involved aesthetics. A line of clean laundry flapping in the breeze was considered an eyesore, a blemish that would spoil views and bring down property values.

It's hard to believe the short-sightedness of this view. We are so close to the tipping point of destroying this planet, it may even now be too late to turn back (but don't worry—we ought to know for sure in the next 20 or 30 years). Temperatures are rising, cases of asthma and pollution-related heart disease are increasing. During the '90s, there were four times the number of [weather-related disasters](#) than in the 1950s.

The list goes on, yet the clothesline issue isn't restricted to Canada; it also affects many homeowners in the U.S. The [Wall Street Journal](#) documents the backlash faced by an Oregon woman who decided to cut down on energy use by hanging some sheets out on a sunny day. Her neighbours complained. When she protested that the rules were outdated, the subdivision's management company threatened legal action.

As one neighbour said, the "clothesline bombards the senses." Her concern? "It can't possibly increase property values and make people think this is a nice neighborhood." Perhaps she hasn't considered that floods, tornadoes, and scorching temperatures won't do much for her home's resale value either.

In the face of unprecedented environmental damage, it defies reason that anyone could still value the comparatively shallow aesthetic of clothesline-free neighbourhoods over preserving our endangered habitat. But those attitudes run deep: around 60 million people in the U.S. live in "association governed communities, most of which restrict outdoor laundry hanging."

Although home energy use is only one small piece of the puzzle, small things make a difference when multiplied by millions. People's objections to clotheslines might be dying hard, but if our collective attitudes on the environment don't take a fast leap forward, that won't be the only thing dying.

Do Not Go Gentle: My Grandmother's Rage

Jennifer McNeil



"What am I to do now?" This has become my grandmother's refrain.

It was shocking when I saw her again after she had been moved from the Alzheimer's care centre to the nursing home. My mother had tried to warn me, but I was still unprepared for the vacant eyes, the crooked body, and the guttural repetition of, "What am I to do now?"

At first, we had answers for her. We talked about the weather and about what was happening in our lives. We read her favourite Scottish poems and sang songs to remind her of her youth in Glasgow. We attempted a humorous rendition of "Happy Birthday" and opened her cards. "Oh, look at this one from Auntie Dorrie. You remember Dorrie, don't you?"

I thought I saw a glimmer of recognition in her empty eyes before she continued her questioning. With an exasperated sigh, I said, "Nothing. You're just going to relax."

Of course, this disease won't let her do that. Her failing mind and now her failing body hold her in a constant state of fear and pain.

Apparently, we're not the only ones bothered by my grandmother's questions. The nurses keep her door shut most of the time because she's so loud, shouting her confusion until she's hoarse with the effort. I want to get angry with them. How dare they treat my grandmother like this? This is my gran, I want to say, the woman who used to make me toast soldiers and hot chocolate, and who always had a comforting word and cuddle to share. This is the quiet woman who spent most of her life in a loveless, abusive marriage and faced it all without question, without ever raising her voice.

This, above all, is a human being. How can you shut her out? How can you leave her to suffer alone? But then I remember my exasperation in the short hour we spent together on her birthday and, despite the lingering indignation and my own feelings of guilt, I understand.

Seeing my grandmother suffering that day and learning about her isolation, I realized that throughout her life, my gran has always suffered alone. It was the way she chose to survive, perhaps something she had learned from her own mother who was also a survivor in a much different way. My great grandmother was sharp-tongued and feisty, raising three children almost entirely on her own after her husband returned crippled from the First World War. Even near the end, when she suffered from dementia and her 92 years of hard living had left her body shrivelled and useless, her spirit was obvious in the way she rolled up her newspapers and tried to swat the male residents at the home.

She was a fighter, and so, in her own way, is my grandmother. Quietly and unassumingly, she fought her way through a life of hardship and pain. Now she is fighting death with a loudness that is startling, as if she has finally found her voice after all these years. She shouts and questions. She makes her presence known.

This new feature of my grandmother, whether brought on by the disease or some long-hidden aspect of her own personality, makes me simultaneously uncomfortable and proud. During the birthday visit, I tried to shush her, to keep her calm and quiet by stroking her hair and hands and reading her favourite poems in a

soft and soothing voice. When nurses passed in the hallway and caught my eye, I felt inexplicably embarrassed, as if they were judging me because of this loud and obnoxious woman in their care.

Now that I am away from that place, the nursing home with its clinical smells and surfaces, I am pleased by my grandmother's behaviour. I want her to fight, to heed Dylan Thomas and "rage, rage against the dying of the light." I want her to be heard and to force us all to think about life and death, the important questions.

"What am I to do now?" she asks. Indeed, what are we all to do when faced with mortality in this way?

Perhaps that is why the nurses shut the door and why we all want my grandmother to stay quiet. When confronted with her refrain, we realize there are no conclusive answers. Instead of encouraging her rage against the coming night, we try to hide or soothe it away because we are afraid and we don't want to face her questioning for ourselves.

Maybe that's okay. Maybe that's how we all survive. But the next time I visit, I am determined to let my gran shout, to listen to her questions without fear. I will hear her newfound voice and I will celebrate her fight to "burn and rave at close of day."

AUSU TOWN HALL MEETING

With nominations underway and elections right around the corner, AUSU council is an exciting place to be!

On Friday, January 25, council is hosting a town hall-style meeting (details are posted on the AUSU website's main page) where members can get to know their councillors and ask questions about the upcoming election—or just about anything else they want to know!

Watch next week's *Voice* for details about what's sure to be a lively and informative event.

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The Gardener

Pam Pelmous



There once was an elderly gardener who loved nature. She spent much of her time outside her tiny cottage, tending a beautiful garden filled with many colours, shapes, and sizes of plants and flowers. There was one part of the garden, however, right in the very centre, which did not easily yield growth.

According to others, it made the garden ugly and ruined an otherwise picturesque scene. Some people even suggested that the gardener move to another location of more fruitful soil so that she could create the perfect garden.

The elderly gardener never said a word in reply. She simply knelt down beside the stubborn patch of dirt in the centre of the garden she loved so much, and patiently worked at the earth. All summer she followed a steady routine: add fertilizer, aerate the soil, plant, water, protect, and wait.

Finally, near the end of the summer, some tiny sprouts broke their way through the soil to the surface. After a few weeks, a sizeable array of shoots was making their way through the soil, and although they were not as strong as the others, they blended beautifully with the rest of the garden, adding to the richness of variety.

Visitors marvelled at the achievement, questioning its plausibility. After all, that patch of soil had clearly been deficient; everyone had seen that.

This elderly gardener, dear readers, was not a miracle worker. Her secret was that she cared enough to try—and she steadfastly believed in succeeding.

Teachers are much like this gardener, patiently working with a child's capacity to learn much like a gardener works with the soil. Knowing that every child has the capacity to learn—although some accomplish the task more readily than others—teachers lovingly work with the mind and plant the seeds of knowledge.

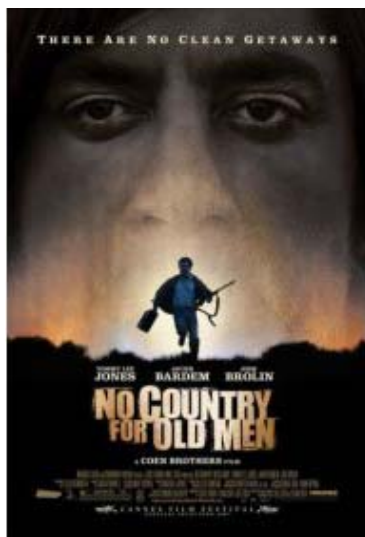
Under the right care, though not necessarily at the same time, seeds take root and grow. While plants are rarely the same in strength or size, they are all something beautiful to experience, especially when they are commingled in a garden.

Gardens, like classrooms, can be found everywhere. They can be planned and grown in a particular location (like a school) or can grow untamed at the playground. Moreover, gardens do not follow a specific formula. No one ever knows what they will ultimately look like; not exactly, anyhow.

There is no magic number, no special pattern, which will make one garden more beautiful than another. Gardeners do not ultimately control the growth of their plants and flowers. They do not have the capacity to "make a tree." However, their gentle tending greatly influences the arrangement and robustness of the outcome.

MILK-CRATE BANDIT

Erik Ditz



Please Ask Your Children to Leave the Room

*No Country for Old Men - Directed by the Coen Brothers**Starring Woody Harrelson, Tommy Lee Jones, and an extremely scary man*

Beautiful location, great acting from a cast that couldn't have been chosen better, brilliant dialogue, and loads of rootin' tootin' shoot-em-up barn-burnin' cowboy-style blood-and-guts action—but when the credits rolled, I felt like a kid getting to the dentist when he thought he was going to Disneyland. I loved this movie, but it would have been better if it had an ending.

*Black Sheep - Directed by Jonathan King**Starring Nathan Meister, Peter Feeney*

Horror films from Australia and New Zealand are notoriously gory, campy, and self-aware. Peter Jackson is of course the first name that comes to mind, with opuses like *Dead Alive* and *Bad Taste*, and the Spierig brothers' brilliant tribute *Undead* was a pileup on the genre freeway, paying homage to sci-fi, zombie, spaghetti western, and action. *Black Sheep* proudly carries on this tradition, burning the retinas with incredible special effects, blending cartoony surrealism with nauseating detail for a look that's half Tom Savini, half Robert Crumb. Two words: Zombie Sheep.

*Bamboozled - Directed by Spike Lee**Starring Jada Pinkett Smith, Damon Wayans, Tommy Davidson*

A blackface minstrel variety show set in the watermelon patch of a Southern plantation. This is the funniest movie ever made.

*The Golden Compass - Directed by: Chris Weitz (based on the book by Philip Pullman)**Starring Nicole Kidman*

Although the plot isn't really original—see *Neverending Story*, *Black Cauldron*, *Labyrinth*, *Pan's Labyrinth*, *Dark Crystal*—*Compass* was still a pleasure to see. The evil empire is genuinely scary, the effects are spectacular, and the Marlboro Man is in it. Oh yeah, and armoured bears are worth at least a hundred million points. While the idea of having animal spirits that follow people and help them seems a little familiar, and I'm still not sure I agree with encouraging kids to use magical dust to fly to other dimensions, *The Golden Compass* remains a visually stunning and entertaining film.

*Zeitgeist - Directed by Peter Joseph**Starring some planes and buildings*

The first five minutes of "the spirit of the age" is a *Baraka*-like slide show of images, only sped up and focusing pretty exclusively on war. It terrified me completely. After the director binges on human suffering, the film is divided into three main portions: the first discusses the origins of the Christian faith; the next handles the fabricated government version of 9-11 because it's some kind of modern documentary

prerequisite; and the last covers what all of this means to us right here and now, like the North American Union, international banking cartels, historical world war precedents, government-monitored tracking chips embedded in our souls, etc.

The movie is highly interesting and informative, if a bit zealous in the last bit, but I'd still recommend watching all the way through. At least Michael Moore isn't in it.

Severance - *Directed by Christopher Smith*

Starring Tim McInnerny, Babou Ceesay, head-butt killer, head-squish killer, knife-in-butt killer, and even more killers!

While it is tempting to call this a horror movie, it's really very much a comedy that uses horror for a format, much like Abbott and Costello's "Who's On First" uses baseball—not mocking it, but using it to make another point entirely. This movie is well thought out, truly funny, wickedly gory, and goes really well with Neapolitan ice cream and those little wafer cookies.

Shoot 'Em Up - *Directed by Michael Davis*

Starring Clive Owen and a baby

Clive Owen is a man to be reckoned with. Anyone who can keep a straight face while cutting an umbilical cord with a handgun is either a sociopath or a damn good actor. This movie is non-stop action, and I'm not Roger Ebert so I don't have to say that every time an action movie gets made. I mean, there's literally nothing but gunplay and wild stunts from start to finish, and though the plot is mainly irrelevant, the cinematography and effects make it well worth watching.

Mirror, Mirror - *Directed by the worst people on earth*

Starring Billy Drago (eventually)

Mirror, Mirror - Basically, a Winona-Ryder-circa-Beetlejuice look-alike moves to a new town, finds a haunted mirror, and starts pulling Carrie-esque stunts on her classmates, brutally—and psychokinetically—murdering anyone that makes fun of her for wearing huge sombreros and 16 tons of white makeup. Lots of blood and even an awesome sink-mounted garbage disposal amputation performed on Stifler's mom from *American Pie*.

Mirror, Mirror 2: Raven Dance - I assume it's called Raven Dance because once in a while they show stock footage of a raven sitting on a mirror. In one scene a guy pretending to be a doctor pays a hillbilly to scare a girl by stealing her underwear. Oh yeah, there's a cat named Pie-Whack-It and no blood in the whole damned thing.

Mirror, Mirror 3: The Voyeur - Finally, Billy Drago (*Tremors 4*, *Sci-Fighters*, *Cyborg 2*, *LunarCop*, *Soccer Dog: The Movie*, *The Untouchables*) showed up! Oh no, he's trapped in a poorly lit, gauzy dry-hump love triangle with a girl and a mirror that grants wishes. I wish this was a better movie.

Mirror, Mirror 4: Reflections - By the time they realized it would be clever to include a mirror-related pun in the titles of these movies, it was too late to turn back to the horror format. This film was exclusively released in this box set. Billy Drago sends his apologies to all the fans clamouring for more of his pasty flesh. Gotta buy the four-pack, suckers!

The Chronicles of Cruiscin Lan

by
Wanda
Waterman
St. Louis



MUSIC TO EAT LUNCH TO

Mandy Gardner

Strung Out – *Blackhawks Over Los Angeles*

Release date: June 2007

Label: Fat Wreck Chords

Tracks: 12

Rating: 10

Since the band's first release on Fat Wreck Chords in 1994 (*Another Day in Paradise*), Strung Out has been a huge hit on the SoCal punk scene and has also cultivated decent fan bases internationally.

Earlier albums featured a different line-up than the one that created *Blackhawks Over Los Angeles*, and through the progression of three drummers and two bassists Strung Out has softened up just a little

while fine-tuning some undeniable technical talent.

Jason Cruz's vocals have evolved into a perfect melodic accompaniment to the incredibly strong technical guitar talents of Ross Ramos and Jake Kiley—guitar that has also softened up after 15 years in the industry while maintaining that biting quality of hard punk rock.

Chris Aiken's skill on bass had an immediate effect on the development of the band, and with Jordan Burns keeping time on the drums, Strung Out has changed from a talented, thrashy punk group into a melodic hard-core punk band that stands alone in terms of technical skill and composition. This most recent record is a full-on reminder of everything good, powerful, and influential in music.

Blackhawks Over Los Angeles has no weak points; there are no songs that wouldn't be successful singles, no clashing themes, and no disappointing lyrics. "Downtown" and "Mission Statement" are perhaps two of the most impressive tracks on the album for sheer musical prowess on both guitars, while "Letters Home" tackles the issue of sending soldiers to fight in a war whose initiatives they have accepted without real comprehension. The lyrics represent the feelings of a soldier stripped bare of propaganda and battle slogans; a man worried that he may die for reasons he is unsure of.

Strung Out has been on the back burner of the music industry for a few years now, having opted out of the over-the-top marketing campaigns of major music industries in favour of the free creativity offered by Fat Wreck Chords. The band last released a record in 2004 (*Exile in Oblivion*), and if anyone doubted the band's ability to progress since that album, *Blackhawks Over Los Angeles* is going to blow them away.

This is a truly inspiring record by an amazing and understated band, one that I hope follows the trend of more and more successful releases by Strung Out over the last decade.



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

CD: Bob Snider, *A Maze in Greys*

Release date: 2007

Label: Borealis Records

"Those are nearer to reality who can deal with it light-heartedly, because they know it to be inexhaustible."

Golo Mann

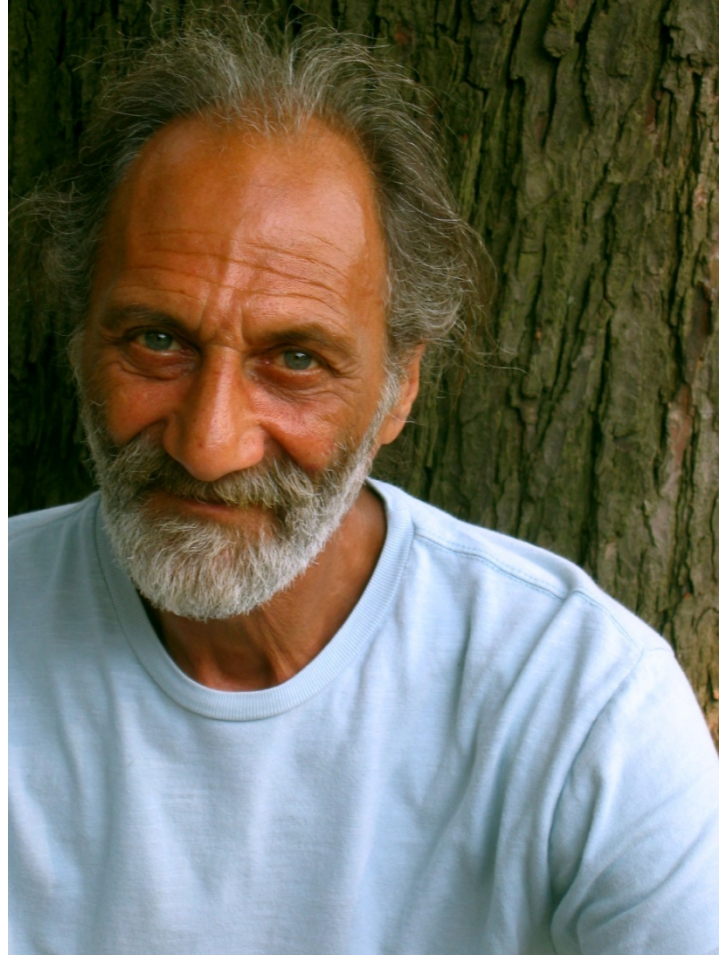
My earliest memory of Bob Snider is from a hippie wedding in Bear River in the summer of 1973. The vows had been traded in a meadow on a hill overlooking the river, and the guests had then schlepped back down the hill for the reception, held in a replica of a Dutch windmill, where a bevy of lovely, long-haired girls in shawls, black velvet blazers, flowery skirts, and bare, unshaven legs hovered breathlessly as Bob played his guitar and sang "Here Comes the Sun."

In *A Maze in Greys* he shares a similar, albeit tongue-in-cheek, sentiment: "Always say the sun is shining even in the pouring rain."

This reminds me of an anecdote Bob is fond of relaying at his concerts, about some guy who asked him why he never wrote protest songs. Bob's reply was, "I don't have to; everything's okay." It's a statement that understandably draws laughs. It's also one of the clearest windows you'll find into Bob's inner world.

On the Sufi enneagram Bob Snider would be a nine with a four wing, at least if I'm calling it. Or maybe a four with a nine wing . . . Either way, he's a poet who doesn't wallow in the deep-seated discontent that makes us poets such drips at parties. But knowing discontent to be a necessary component of every poet's soul leads to the realization that Bob copes with his discontent by embracing chaos. Christopher Morley said, "The courage of the poet is to keep ajar the door that leads into madness"; Bob has simply chosen to live more intimately with madness than with discontent.

Are we better off embracing chaos than making up a bunch of rules and enforcing them at the cost of freedom and happiness? (Such a question is especially significant in the wake of government responses to 9/11, but it has always mattered.) Bob would have us think so, albeit he doesn't claim that it always works:



*But I'm not trying to convince you
that I know what I'm doin'.
It's just a feeling that I've got
and it may not be worth pursuin'.
But it got me this far
and I've learned to trust it more.*

References to cards and other games of chance are peppered through these songs like evidence displays in a courtroom where the nature of existence is on trial. As much as you may find the cards-fall-where-they-may philosophy distasteful (and this CD is full of references to people who do) you'll be hard put to prove it wrong, at least based on the last century's track record.

*"Miracles and wonders
abound on every hand.
They saturate the sea and air.
They permeate the land.
They make the dictionary
entirely arbitrary.
So people made a word for them
and the word is 'ordinary'."*

from "Ducks on the Pond"

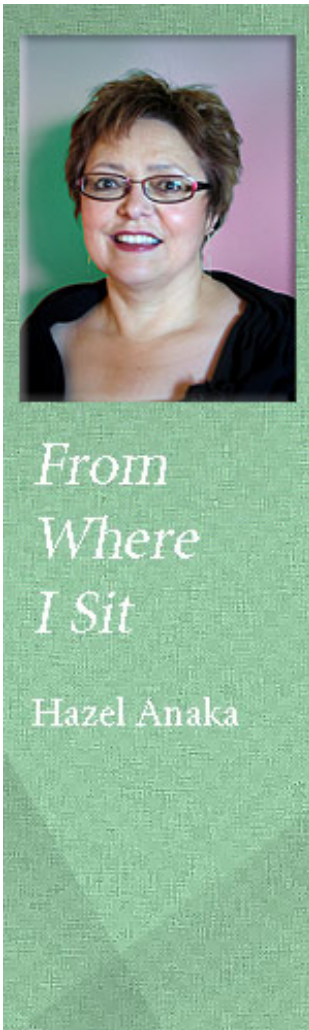
Much of *A Maze in Greys* is taken up with songs about the vicissitudes of romantic love, which might look like escapism if it didn't fit so tightly with the embracing of chaos. Fearlessly welcoming love is one way an artist can keep the door to madness ajar. Sure, love sends you to heaven and then spits you out and leaves you for dead, but eventually you pick yourself up, ushering in a period of personal enlightenment during which the wisdom of the universe rushes in and imparts noble truths to your heart which can be set down on paper and later used to buck up not only other fools of love but people in general.

This whole process leaves you feeling elated, transcendent, and, finally, strong enough to love again. Call it pathetic if you like, but the world owes a good portion of its best works of art, both formal and popular, to this whole bizarre process.

The band sounds just like the band Mother Courage would have had, had Mother Courage had a band. They're a great bunch of players who sound like rascally young prodigies let loose in a music store. (Pay special attention to the barrelhouse pie-anna in "Rusty Pail Blues," the call and response between the instruments in "Plum," and the rolling and bouncing syncopation in "Too Many Numbers".) These guys are deep enough into Bob's lyrics to build tension and relax it where needed. The toy instrument sound that sometimes emerges is the perfect accompaniment to a singer who retains the slight lisp and exaggerated inflexions of an unselfconscious five year old (he wouldn't sound inappropriate singing "How Much is That Doggy in the Window?"). Both voice and music belie the depth of the subject matter; this and a generous sense of humour keep it all intellectually interesting but not ponderous.

A Maze in Greys lives up to five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for stuff well worth listening to: 1) It is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it mocks existing injustices; 3) it inspires an awareness of the beauty and sanctity of creation; 4) it reveals an attainment of true self; and 5) it provides a needed respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling an enthusiastic return to meaningful endeavour.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. For a list of criteria, go to mindfulbard.blogspot.com. If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



Art Imitating Life

Futurists predicted that through the miracle of technology we'd all be working at home. Bypassing the often-brutal commute, upping productivity, and bringing back a semblance of home life were the promises.

Brian Basset's *Adam@Home* cartoon strip has been chronicling the highs and lows of this work-from-home dad since his own layoff from a job as an editorial cartoonist in 1994. Art imitating life?

Faithful readers know Adam spends as much time at the coffee shop, copy centre, and on the couch as he does tethered to his computer or actually being dad to his kids.

Both Adam and I know one of the best things about working from home is the freedom it affords. We can set our own hours as long as we remember regular business hours still rule the world. He can wear pyjamas and I can wear a nightgown 'til noon if we're so inclined. At least I don't have to worry about the courier ever showing up at my rural home.

Depending on the day, we also share the dishevelled look. I don't know if Adam suffers from insomnia but I know it's making my life hell.

One of the mixed blessings of working at home is the seductive pull of distractions. Adam is a coffee/Internet café freak. That doesn't turn my crank. Both of us are forced to summon the discipline to ignore the dirty dishes, hamper full of laundry, and dust bunny reproduction taking place in corners and crevices. It takes strength to say no to tagging along with hubby on a day of Edmonton errands, and most times I don't.

Likewise, Adam buckles under the pressure from his kids. Sometimes we both just need to talk to someone. Anyone.

By far, the biggest distraction I face when I'm home alone is the TV. Most days it's on for hours, providing background noise while I read, write, do paperwork, housework, or exercise. For Adam it's the lure of the couch.

Much as I've cursed the technology, I've also grown to rely on Internet and email to make things happen faster, easier. Working at home would not be possible without it.

Emailing my column to an editor is as easy as a few keystrokes. Googling any topic under the sun has broadened the scope of research and shrank the world.

Adam brings grins and nods of recognition to anyone who's lived this life. All kidding aside, it takes a great deal of discipline to make this work. Fighting the distractions is huge. Following self-imposed deadlines is crucial. Setting limits on breaks and capitalizing on your own peak performance time, whether it's 6:30 a.m. or 10:30 p.m., brings structure to the day. Goal setting each day keeps deadlines from blurring from one day to the next, one week to the next. And let's not forget rewards and recognition for especially productive days or the completion of big projects. That's the least the boss can do, from where I sit.

AUSU This Month



AUSU Election 2008 - Message from the CRO

Dear AU Students:

My name is Rehan Qureshi and I am pleased to have been appointed your Chief Recruiting Officer (CRO) for the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU)'s 2008 General Election. It is my position to accept and verify nominations for the election; field any questions and interpret policy and procedures for nominees; and to ensure an accurate and fair vote count at the time of voting. Please feel free to contact me at cro@ausu.org for any of the above.

If you have ever wondered how to get involved with your Students' Union, or wanted to play a role in shaping the experience of AU students, then here is your chance! Elections

will be held from March 9 - 12 on the AU website, so send in your nominations for AUSU council today.

Qualifications for nominees include:

(As stated in AUSU Policy 3.01.9, Election Conduct) "For General Elections, any Active Member in Good Standing may submit a self-nomination to run for a seat on Council." To be an active member you must be enrolled in an AU undergraduate course when the election opens on March 9, 2008 (pre-registrations do not apply; the course must have started). Plus, to be a "member in good standing" means you are an individual who is an AUSU member, has paid all fees, and has not been subject to disciplinary action from AUSU. Students must submit their name, student I.D. number, address, email address, and written consent to act if elected, along with their nomination.

All self-nominations/nominations will be acknowledged after the nomination closing date. The nomination period runs from January 9 through February 6, 2008. Nominees will be given an opportunity to withdraw their name from the list of nominees provided their notice of withdrawal is received by the last day of February 2008.

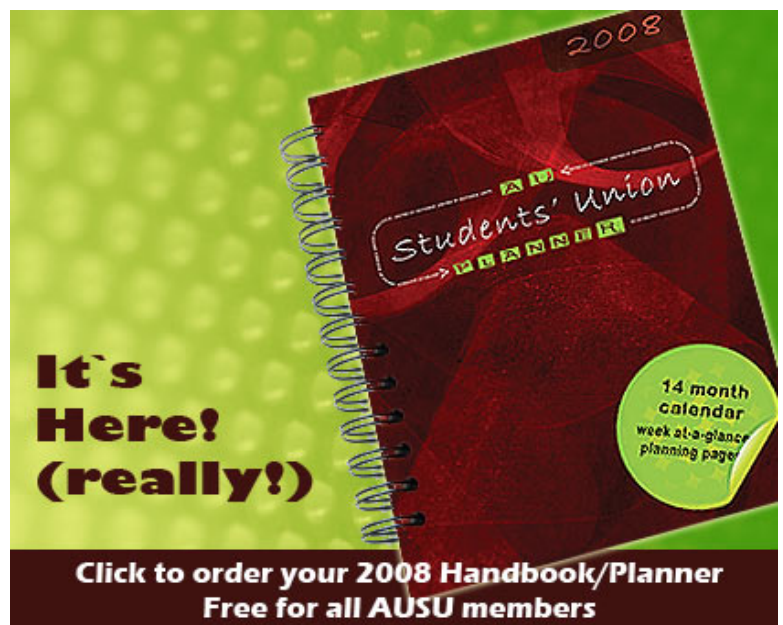
I invite you all to participate, as the student body governs on your behalf and every vote counts. I am available for any questions regarding the election so feel free to contact me. Good luck to all who enter and hopefully we will see the rest of you at the polls!

Sincerely,

Rehan Qureshi - Chief Returning Officer (CRO)
cro@ausu.org

AUSU Handbook/Planner 2008 in stock now!

The wait is over! The 2008 AUSU planner is in stock and on its way to members. We've added a few enhancements this year, including cheat



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 **SmartDraw**

sheets for common citation styles, a clip-in page-marker ruler, and a funky fridge magnet to remind you to get your weekly dose of *The Voice*.

Last year we had about 400 pre-orders, but this year we have 1,000! Please be patient. We're working as fast as we can to fill all of the orders and everyone should have their book by the end of January when the 2007 edition calendar pages run out. As always, we're excited to know what you think of the planner and welcome all feedback to ausu@ausu.org

Smart Draw – Benefit for AUSU members

AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our [website](http://www.ausu.org).

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts. For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however.

Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU Election

Convenient.
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January 9 through February 6th, 2008



At Home: Newfoundland sees funeral crime wave in January

A 46-year-old Newfoundland woman has been charged with theft following a funeral on January 7. The police who made the arrest say that the woman had been a volunteer at the Anglican church in Harbour Breton where the funeral was held, and thus in a prime position to collect and take off with cash donations from mourners.

The money was taken from various sympathy cards that were collected at the church; the woman is being charged with theft under \$5,000. The scheduled court date for the suspect is March 25.

So far, police are unsure whether the same woman might be connected to recent similar crimes in the province. On January 15, another Anglican church, this one in Corner Brook, fell victim to theft during a funeral. It appears that while mourners were in the main hall of the church for funerary services, the

thief went down into the basement to search through their coats and purses. The thief stole a wallet and money from two purses, although police will not say how much was taken. The placement of the purses and the circumstances of the church service apparently provided exactly the right conditions for such a theft to occur.

Constable Robert Edwards remarked that it was sad to know that an individual's financial difficulties were enough to make him or her feel the need to steal from churchgoers during a time of mourning; he also asked for the public's help in identifying the criminal.

In Foreign News: Cuba votes 2008

Cubans headed to the polls on January 20 for the scheduled round of federal elections and despite much criticism of the Communist electoral system from Western countries—particularly the United States—voter turnout was extremely high and there appears to be no anxiety about the future of the Partido Comunista de Cuba following the lengthy illness of leader Fidel Castro.

After being hospitalized a year and a half ago, Castro handed control of the Cuban government over to his brother Raul; Cuban legislators and voters have come to terms with the idea that if Castro is not elected president this February, Raul is the likely candidate.

Although Cuba is a Communist state and has been since the early 1960s under the leadership of current President Castro, its government is actually elected by the voting public. Since the latter half of the 1970s, voter turnout in Cuba has been above the 90 per cent mark and the Communist government frequently hails this statistic as a success on the part of Democratic Communism.

The major difference between Cuba's electoral system and those of traditional democratic countries is that it operates via a one-party system. The ruling party is the only official national political party; apart from individual party members being drawn up on the ballots for their respective constituencies, voters can also vote to elect every Comunista Party member into Parliament. This does not mean that independent

candidates cannot run for Parliament or that any votes for them are discounted; what it generally means is that these candidates are not expected to be voted into the presidential office.

After Parliament is voted in by the electorate, the elected politicians will decide amongst themselves who will occupy the Senate and who will become president. Due to his ailing health it is very unlikely that Castro will be re-elected to this position, which will end an incredibly long run in office. Under his leadership Cuba has retained a cool relationship with the United States but has prospered under its own accord; the Cuban government currently boasts one of the highest percentages of women and mixed-race representatives in the world.

Castro needs to decide whether he would accept the presidential position by February or March, when the new government meets to cast its votes.

CLICK ON THIS – Mixamillion

Lonita Fraser

Since variety is the spice of life, here's a mixed bag of goodies to enjoy over the weekend.

Rules Kids Won't Learn in School

Now if they could only furnish you with this in pint-sized form.

Museum of Talking Boards

And you thought it was just Ouija boards!

Sun Jars

A little project to bring a little light into your life.

Virtual Cave

Explore the world beneath your feet from the comfort of your computer desk.

FFFFOUND

All sorts of images from all sorts of places.

Free Hugs Campaign

"Free hugs is a real-life controversial story of Juan Mann, a man whose sole mission was to reach out and hug a stranger to brighten up their lives."

EDUCATION NEWS

Sarah Millar



The gap year trade-off: higher employment, lower income

TORONTO (CUP) -- Students who take a year off between high school and university have higher employment rates than those who burn straight through, according to a new study.

Youth aged 22 to 24 were the subjects of a study released by Statistics Canada . . . on January 7. The study found that the employment rate for “gap” students was 87.5 per cent compared to 79.6 per cent for non-gappers. But don’t book your ski trip just yet.

“However, when you look at earnings, those who went straight through and got a university degree, their median weekly earnings were higher. So a bit of a mixed message here, and something I try and emphasize is that these are very early labour market earnings,” Kathryn McMullen of Statistics Canada explained.

The data for the study was drawn from the Statistics Canada Youth in Transition Survey, which began tracking the youth in 1999 when they were 18 to 20 years old. Subjects were contacted every two years to see where they are at.

The study compiled data from gap and non-gap students, including students who went straight into the workforce from high school and students who dropped out of university or college without finishing their degree.

“There’s a number of pathways youth can take from high school into the labour market,” McMullen said. “So this larger study [published in November] really did a tracking of a large number of these pathways. So we thought, well let’s focus on one of these and track them through and see if there are differences in those early labour market experiences.”

McMullen said that her organization will continue tracking the youth to see if the initial employment and income levels are stable over time. She stressed that these results are very early labour market analysis, and the study also did not include students of that age bracket who were still in school.

She noted that the higher earnings could be explained by people who had already finished a master’s degree or other form of higher education before moving into the workforce.

“That’s what we want to try and sort out in terms of do the employment rates close and do the earnings gap reduce?”

The biggest thing current university and college students can take away from the latest report is that completing post-secondary education pays off in the long run.

“Whether you take a gap or don’t take a gap, make sure that you go on to college or university and complete your program. It’s very clear that that whole group of people are doing much better in the labour market.

“The second message would be, and again this is one that we can’t really answer, but I think it’s a concern of parents and students themselves—if I take a break, will I go back on to school?”

McMullen said that data collection is complete on the youth at the age of 24-26, and a follow-up study will be done with students aged 26-28. She expects that data to be released early next year.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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