

# THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 11  
March 20, 2009

## **Moral Majority**

You, me, and A.I.G.

## **Supermarket Spa**

Sweet obsession

## **In Conversation With**

**Todd Snider**

*Plus:*

*The Interviewer, Porkpie Hat,  
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@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org), and please  
indicate if we may publish your letter.



## SUPERMARKET SPA: WHO NEEDS A MASSAGE WHEN THERE'S A GROCERY AISLE TO ROAM?

Christina M. Frey



I recently spent 10 cold minutes huddled over a freezer full of turkeys probably left over from last Thanksgiving, agonizing over the merits of a 12- versus 18-pound bird.

I'd had my heart set on a 15-pound one, and choosing anything else was one more difficult decision at the end of a long day. Eighteen seemed so big; 12, so small. Which to choose?

My thoughts began to wander. Why on earth am I even buying a turkey in mid-March? Better still, why am I here at 9 p.m. instead of curled up on the couch with a mug of hot

cocoa and the phone book open to "Pizza"?

The answer: I'm obsessed with grocery shopping.

I love comparing prices, carrying a grocery list and pen, thinking about menus, checking ingredient lists to see whether items contain anything my daughter is allergic to, and reading celebrity magazines while waiting at the checkout.

I still love shopping for clothes, shoes, and handbags, like normal people, but lately it seems that I get more enjoyment from pushing a cart around a grocery store. My first thought? I need a life! But then I began to realize just why grocery shopping has become my favourite form of relaxation.

### **It makes me feel important**

At home, I'm mom, and the cook—and a writer, but only when everyone's asleep. But in the grocery store, I'm a woman with a purpose, carrying a list, expertly comparing unit prices and deftly transferring cans to my cart. My decisions will affect the future of the world—or at least, of the coming week's menu!

### **It makes decision-making easy**

Or easier. I'm the queen of indecision, and the clothing racks are where I particularly shine. At the grocery store, I'll still spend far too long trying to decide between romaine and leaf lettuce. But at least there, the choices are refreshingly fewer than at the mall, where the possible combinations of sleeves, buttons, collars, necklines, and cuffs seems infinite. In the grocery aisle, there are only four types of lettuce available, and the colour choice is easy: green.

### **There's less guilt**

We all secretly make the occasional splurge, a spontaneous purchase that we don't need. Because the jar of fire-roasted red peppers is so much cheaper than that overpriced handbag, I don't have to guilt myself too much when I sneak it into the cart. After all, I'm shopping for the family, right?

### There's no mirror

We've all had those depressing days at the mall, when nothing looks flattering, the mirror makes us look large and small in all the wrong places, and properly fitting pants don't seem to exist. It's never a problem in the bread aisle, though.

### It's efficient.

Trying on clothes and standing in denial in front of the mirror take time. Tossing spaghetti into the cart does not. Period.

### You can take the family, if you want.

It's certainly simpler to take my two-year-old daughter to the grocery store than to the mall, and we do it often. In fact, I have been known to let her push the cart around the store on a rainy day when her only other game of choice is tearing apart the house.

However, I especially love grocery shopping *alone*—without having to rein in my family from the aisles of tantalizing but overpriced snacks, or without a child who insists on pushing the cart into the displays, starting conversations with shady strangers, and licking the meat freezer. It definitely cramps my style. How can I catch up on the latest antics of Brangelina's kids while my own offspring is next to me screaming blue murder to be let out of the cart?

### It's open late.

If it's been one of *those days*, you can still head out for some retail therapy after the kids are finally in bed.

After ridiculously long reflection on turkey, bargain meats, and the Zen of grocery shopping, I ended up choosing the 18-pound turkey. There really wasn't a right or wrong decision (although the decision to make turkey dinner in mid-March might be questioned when we're still working through the leftovers in May).

All that mattered was the relaxing time I spent in my new favourite hangout: the grocery store.

## DID YOU KNOW?



### Join the Club

If you're looking for ways to connect with your fellow AU students, AUSU Clubs and Social Groups are a perfect place to start.

Club members "interact through websites and discussion forums, while social groups meet in cities around the world and have forums to keep in touch."

Current clubs include AUGSS (AU Gay Students' Society), AULS (AU Literature Society), AUBSA (AU Business Students' Association)—and many more!

You can find a complete listing on the AUSU Social Groups and Clubs page, [here](#), and information on social/coffee groups is [here](#). To take part in coffee group conversations, just sign in to the AUSU Discussion Forums.



## EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston

**You, Me, and A.I.G.**

Moral outrage is spewing across America like some kind of pecuniary Vesuvius. In the face of foreclosures, job losses, and a desperately unstable economy, everyone from plumbers to the president is calling for heads to roll at A.I.G.

Not just the heads of those who pleaded for a government bailout and then handed \$165 million in bonuses to executives; executives “in the very unit of A.I.G. that arguably turned a stable, prosperous insurance company into a dice-rolling financial firm in search of quick profits.”

No, the outrage is also aimed directly at the 463 execs who took that bonus money.

The question (and rightfully so) is this: How dare they take a reward without earning it first?

“Have the recipients of these cheques no shame at all?” demanded Representative Earl Pomeroy, Democrat of North Dakota, on the House floor.

Which makes me wonder—beneath all that righteous indignation, does anyone else get the incredible irony of it all? The realization that, except for the difference in scale, the behaviour of those A.I.G. executives is fundamentally the same as millions of average consumers who gambled with debt and are losing it all?

Because that’s exactly what most consumer credit is: taking a reward (big-screen TVs, vacations, clothes, electronic toys) before we’ve earned it.

It’s one thing to be strained by credit for something essential (say, medication you couldn’t otherwise afford), but there’s no arguing that an attitude of entitlement drives our consumer culture. We want it, we want it now, and there’s no reason we shouldn’t have it.

The stories are all over the news—millions of people are drowning in debt from high-interest credit cards and subprime mortgages.

In one case, a woman was losing her house because of staggering credit card debt. When the camera was done panning the half-empty home and her tearful face, there was a mumbled explanation of how maybe, after all, she didn’t need those hundreds of shoes and purses she’d bought on credit. She looked at the piles of merchandise with longing; it was going to be so very, very hard to give it all up on eBay.

In another example, a couple took out a subprime mortgage on their home to pay for vacations and a new kitchen. When their revolving interest rate went up, they could no longer pay their mortgage. With puzzled expressions, they wondered if maybe they should have saved up for their expensive holiday instead.

Yes, there are those who have fallen on hard times because of medical expenses or other emergencies, but a common theme in far too many articles is that people have knowingly made bad financial choices because they felt entitled to the “bonus” of buying things before they had earned them.

And besides, comes the plaintive cry, it was *there*. How could we say no when they were *offering* it to us?

Essentially, it’s the same argument used to justify accepting those hefty bonuses: it was in the contract. Under mounting pressure several A.I.G. executives have agreed to hand the money back, but that doesn’t justify having accepted it in the first place.

But what of the social cost, you may ask? After all, the A.I.G. bonuses are only possible because of taxpayer money. It isn’t fair that ordinary people should have to pay for the excesses of others, especially others who already have so much.

The same thing can be said of the “bonus” of easy credit. Our landfills are overflowing with the stuff that it’s so effortless to buy and discard. In developing countries, our cast-off cell phones and laptops form mountains of toxic waste. Besides the chemicals that leach into and poison drinking water, thousands of workers are exposed to hazards like toxic fumes and acid spillage as they labour to salvage the parts for pitiful pay.

It may not be in our backyard, but ordinary people are paying every day for the excesses we enjoy thanks to the unearned “bonus” of easy credit. Imagine how much lower the social cost would be if we only took what we had earned.

Should executives in bailed-out companies be rewarded with bonuses? Absolutely not. But oh, how the wails of moral indignation ring strangely hollow.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

**Wanda Waterman St. Louis**



### Todd Snider

*Todd Snider is a singer-songwriter based in East Nashville, Tennessee. His songs are mostly gritty down-home narratives about losers, low-lifes, and mice that roar.*

*Snider plans to release his next album, The Excitement Plan, June 9 on Yep Roc. Read the Voice review of his latest CD, Peace Queer, in this issue.*

### Life and Times of a Sofa Circuiteer

I grew up in Beaverton, Oregon. The neighbourhood was called Raleigh Hills. It’s beautiful there. My family was jockey, republican. We were also kinda rich ‘til I was 15. Then we went bankrupt and lost everything. My father took a job in Houston.

I stayed there about a month and a half. Then my dad had to drive back to Portland for business and said I could ride with him so I could see my friends. My plan was to get there and run away and I did. That was right before my junior year in high school. I was not estranged from my family though—they were okay with it. From there on it was sorta what I call the sofa circuit.

I didn't grow up around music and still can't read it or write it. I learned guitar when I was about 19, from following Jerry Jeff Walker around and watching his hands. At the time I was in Texas, where almost everybody plays guitar, so lots of people helped me, too.

I just picked it up because it seemed like Jerry Jeff was singing about the sofa circuit, which I thought I had the experience to do. It also seemed like a way to improve myself as a sofa circuiter, and it did. It's a lot easier to bum a couch if you can play a few songs. And if the songs are about bumming the couch everybody gets excited. Next thing you know you're bumming boat rides and shit.

**How did you learn to find so much beauty, humour, and joy in such squalid scenarios?**



From being in squalid scenarios, I suppose, and trying to find those things for myself or see them in my friends. I don't usually do fiction stuff.

**Can you describe the process you generally undergo when you write a song?**

It takes months and sometimes a year or more. And I do it every day, first thing in the morning, and then a few more times throughout the day. Just kinda compulsively, like cigarettes. Most of the songs I work on get thrown out or go unfinished.

**Can you describe the development of "Is This Thing Working?"**

It began as an attempt at an analogy of the war on terror. This story was my first draft analogy of it. A second, more educated draft would have required too much research and I didn't want to do that. I also



thought by that time that the story itself no longer needed to be an analogy of anything to interest me. So I kept at it and finished it that way.

Now to me it's this story song that just kinda comes on like it might be two story songs, which I dig more than what I set out to do. It took a long time to do the words and even longer to figure out that there wasn't music.

***My political ideology is that political ideologies are alright. And my religious belief is that religious beliefs are alright, too.***

**What do you need in your life in order to be creative?**

Nothing.

**Are there any books, albums, or films which have been landmarks in your life?**

*Tao Te Ching* about 10 years ago, Jerry Jeff Walker, *Gypsy Songman*, about 20 years ago. *Where the Buffalo Roam* with Bill Murray about 30 years ago. That's pretty much my act.

**What is it like to be a subversive songwriter in the American south?**

It's very muggy in the summer here in the buckle of the Bible belt but I live in one of the many little bubbles we have hidden throughout the South.

My town is East Nashville. It's hippy town. All the major Southern towns have a side that's hippy town.

Most of my shows are in that part of the Southern towns and I try to stay on that side of town wherever I am.

**Do you hold to any political ideology or religious beliefs?**

My political ideology is that political ideologies are alright. And my religious belief is that religious beliefs are alright, too. I get my philosophy on this from Arlo Guthrie, who said that his philosophy on philosophy was that philosophy was alright—immediately, somehow, making him my president and my pastor for life whether he was up for it or not.

**What music have you been listening to lately?**

Mostly '50s rock and roll and some early '60s garage rock and roll. Not records, just songs. I just figured out iTunes and iPods last year and adore them both. I've been listening to Miles Davis a lot in the tub lately too but that's on a normal old record.

**What do you like to do to unwind?**

To unwind I like to be with my wife at my house, build a fire in the backyard, throw a bunch of garlic on it, play with my dog Cowboy Jim, and get stinking drunk.

**Are you coming to Canada anytime soon?**

I hope so.



## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### My 25, Part II

Facebook suggests writing 25 random facts about your life. Last time I gave you my first 11 and a couple that a *Post* writer offered up in his 25.

Did you do your confession with tongue firmly in cheek? Did you include oddball quirks or raging rants? Were you clever or pithy? Did you just sit on your hands? Here as promised are the remaining 14 on my list.

12. Despite having a perfectly serviceable, attractive office I still do most of my “stuff” on a laptop on a small table in the living room. Makes for a bit of chaos but hey, it’s my house, my life. Would I be more productive in a more businesslike setting? We may never know.

13. Will I lose my girl card if I admit I only cook because I have to? If I had a do-over I would have taken some cooking classes somewhere along the way and approached this as a field of study or interest like any other. Maybe it’s not too late.

14. I watch (and enjoy) *Project Runway Canada*.

15. Making jewellery for my metal-sensitive skin is a challenge and a joy. I love the creative potential and the meditative escapism the process provides. Besides, why should I buy a piece for \$10 when I can make it for \$20?

16. Alstroemeria is one of my favourite flowers. I like the exoticism of the blossoms and the myriad colours available. The only missing piece is scent.

17. I have a weakness for footstools and small tables.

18. Aubergine, plum, amethyst—no matter what you call it, I love it. I have a significant collection of glass pieces from a custom-made square plate/art piece to flea market glasses, votives, and vases. Grouped together on a sideboard they make me smile.
19. Snow days are a treat for adults, too. A pot of homemade soup, a good book, pyjamas all day, a cheesy made-for-TV movie midday: who could ask for more?
20. I don’t like cats but I despise mice so that’s why we have a bunch of farm cats. I take personal pleasure in their success at grabbing and devouring those little vermin.
21. Sometimes, when it doesn’t matter, I sacrifice quality just to get things done. I’ll grab a piece of junk mail and scrawl a drawing or a list on it. I don’t need a pristine piece of paper, a straight edge, a protractor, and a five-dollar pen to get ‘er done. Quick and dirty.
22. Hot Couture, White Diamonds, Euphoria: scent of a woman.
23. Nothing pleases me more than scoring a well-made ‘50s slipper chair for 15 bucks in a thrift store, changing the upholstery, and having a brand new piece for my home or Hilary’s.

24. I have a green thumb but if you shrivel, brown, and drop you're outta here faster than you can say philodendron.
25. In August I will become a grandmother for the first time. My prayer is for a healthy baby and many years to enjoy this new chapter.

This has been fun, from where I sit.

## **CLICK OF THE WRIST - There Ought to be a Law**

It seems that even the long arm of the law has had to cut back a little lately: a court in Ohio is so far behind in paying their bills for basic office supplies, it will only accept new case filings from people who bring their own paper. Here are a few more oddities from the land of legalese.

### **Caught in the Act**

It's no secret that a lot of underage teens enjoy a drink or two, but this trio picked the worst possible place: the parking lot of their local police station. According to this news report, their lawyer "couldn't explain the teens' decision-making process that night."

### **Dumb Lawsuits**

Locked up for credit card fraud, speeding, and theft? No problem. Just file a \$23 million lawsuit against NASCAR, claiming it's all their fault for influencing you. That's just one of the ridiculously stupid lawsuits people are clogging up the courts with.

### **Possibly the Worst Law Firm Ad in History**

If nothing else, you've got to give them points for transparency, but this is quite possibly the worst law firm ad ever. (It's even more incredible if the ad is real, but be warned that it includes some strong language.)

### **Worst Lawyer**

Well, maybe just the worst lawyer in Michigan, but this law professor withdrew from his teaching position after a local news report revealed some of the complaints about him. One student defended his former prof, pointing out that "he obviously is not teaching us the unethical practices he took part in while practicing."

### **Longest US Court Case**

When Myra Clark Gaines filed her claim to an estate in 1834, little did anyone know that it would drag on for nearly 60 years, finally being decided in her favour in 1892.

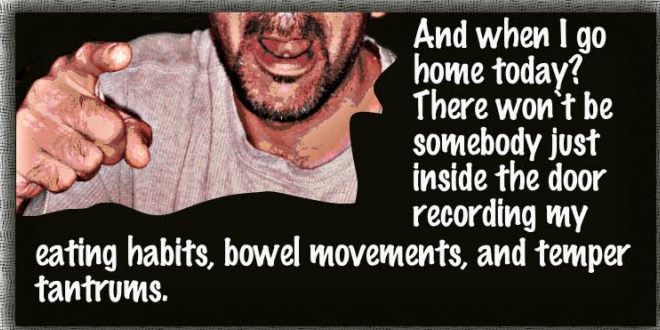
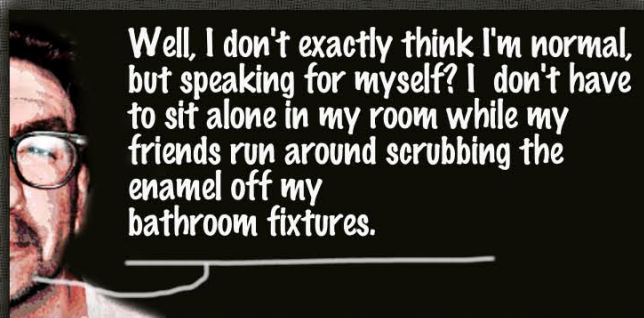
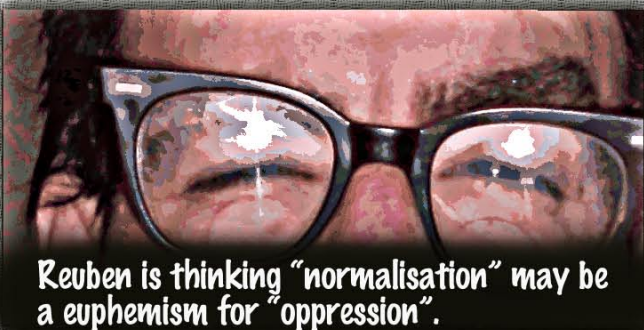
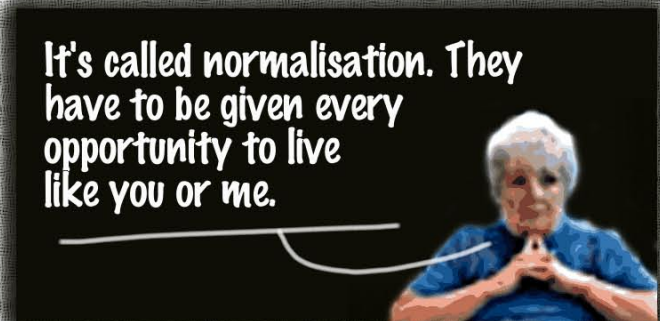
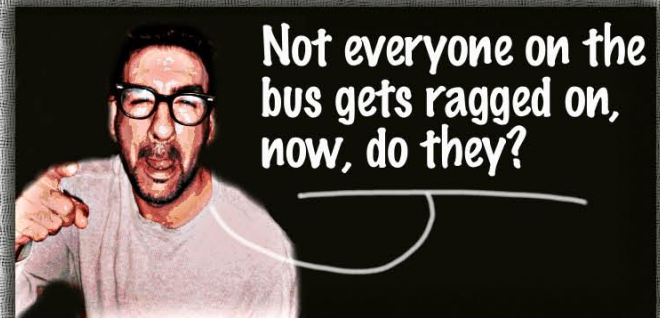
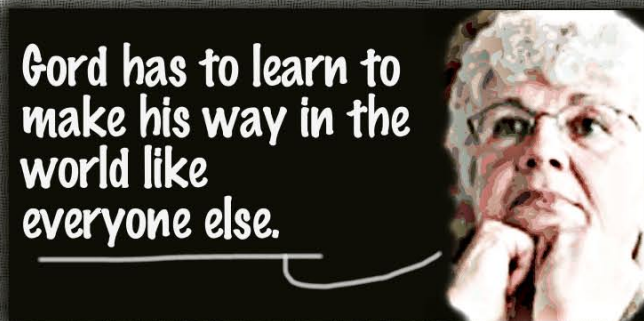


# The Interviewer

*It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...*

*written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis*

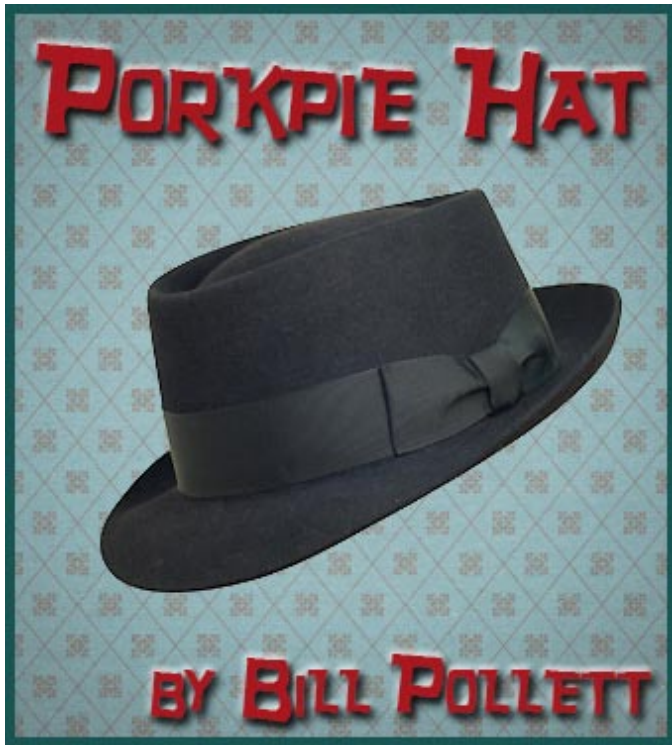
## Rockhead #15: Normalisation



*I get all squirmy thinking about my new Thunderbird!*

*next: Vendetta*





## Stories of Her Own

When she was a girl, she would sit on her mother's lap and imagine the pages of books were windows opening onto a world where she could feel as free as in her dreams.

It was a place of transformations. Wolves walked and talked like men. Women breathed beneath the waves.

There was a time, though, when she tasted the bitterness of others' words on her tongue, and came to feel all the stories were traps for her. They wanted to tell her who she was. But they did not know who she was.

She was no Shakespearean heroine, no Juliet, no Ophelia, or Lady Macbeth. She would not allow herself to be poisoned by love, would clutch no silver dagger to her heaving breast with bloodied hands, nor float down a darkened river tangled with weeds.

She was no country 'n western missus, no fairy-tale princess, no tragic victim of magic or love. She wouldn't never steal nobody's pickup truck, would not prick her finger on a cursed wheel, not sleep for a hundred years anticipating a kiss.

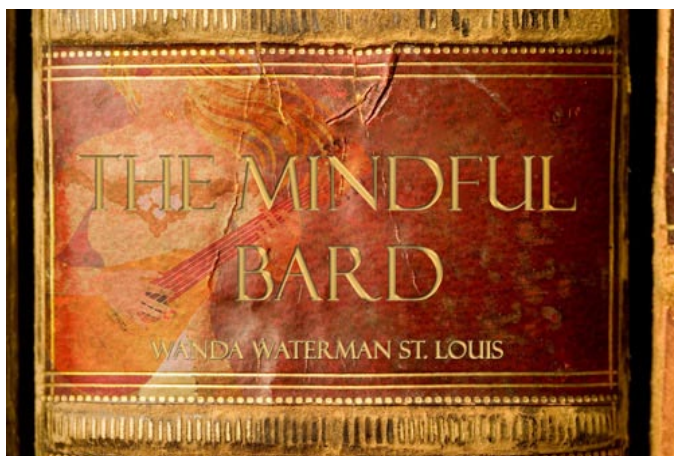
There was a time when she came to feel all the black codes on the pages of fables and textbooks were tiny, precise cogs rotating in an ancient and rusted clockwork of expectations. The machinery turned and turned. The cut-outs herky-jerked their way across a paper screen: the daughter—humble, cheerful, oppressed; the selfless, smothered mother; the painted, dancing whore; the wicked, finger-pricking rider of broomsticks; the housewife measuring her time in painkillers and gin. She looked in all their passing faces, and never saw her own.

There came a time when she found a different window. It opened inward, facing away from the world's machine.

Through this window, she could see the transformations inside her. There were wolves in her heart and oceans in her blood. There were poets sleeping in the belly of whales. When she breathed in, she breathed thunderclouds into her brain, and lightning flashed behind her eyes.

When she ate peaches, fleshy maidens removed their veils for her, and sang her lullabies filled with honey and salt. When she walked abroad, she never walked less than one foot above the ground, and when she flew, the moon slipped beneath her dress. When she lay back upon her bed, she rode tigers through rain-wet gardens.

She had stories to tell, and stories to tell. And she told them.



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

**CD:** Todd Snider, *Peace Queer*

**Release date:** 2008

**Label:** Aimless Records

**School Bullies, Puppets, and Fortunate Sons**

*"... lately my friends have been telling me that my songs have gotten more and more opinionated, so I*

*wanted to let you know before we finished this music that while over the course of this music I may share some of my opinions with you I don't share them with you because I think they're smart or because I think you need to know them; I share them with you because they rhyme. I did not do this to change your mind about anything—I did this to ease my own mind about everything."*

Todd Snider, from "Ponce of the Flaming Peace Queer," *Peace Queer*

The above quotation should be part of the Mindful Bard Manifesto, it's such a sane attitude for artists to adopt.

Creative action should never sink to being propaganda, representing as it does the generous outpouring of a burgeoning soul.

If Tom Waits had grown up in a trailer park in Alabama his music might sound something like this, rich in muggy southern atmosphere, percussive back-alley clankings and thumpings, and extreme tone intervals.

From the opening Buddy Holly chords to the closing acoustic guitar twang, the musical expressions of



Todd Snider's angry, disillusioned, sardonic, white-trash persona are like a balm of Gilead to broken post-Bush spirits, but he never once commits the common singer-songwriter crime of taking himself too seriously.

In his songs Snider portrays the typical God-fearing, ambitious man as a sad, pathetic loser mired in despair, the soldier as a helpless, hapless puppet in a game between psychopaths, and tyrants (both schoolyard and national) as empty shells awaiting the deflation of anyone, big or small, willing to lay down their lives to end the stupidity.

***Snider's songs are a great antidote to those moments of insanity when you ask yourself why you aren't trying harder to keep up with the Joneses, or when you stop feeling that knot in your gut when you hear your neighbours rant on about gay marriage and immigration . . .***

The CD's crowning achievement, "Is This Thing Working?," is an allegory about a school bully who finally gets his comeuppance from a kid willing to take any amount of beating.

You can't help but wonder if all this thinly disguised political protest is already outdated, but then those of us familiar with the precise historical conditions that spawned these songs may be a little too blinkered to see that the long road we're on is just as thick with warmongers and money-grubbers as it was during the Bush era.

Hence Mark Slouka in *Harper's*, February 2009:

*" . . . I still have moments when I realize that the bastards are really, truly out and think that maybe, this time, it really is morning in America, but a voice from outside the ether cone keeps whispering that we haven't changed at all, that we're as dangerous to ourselves as we've ever been . . ."*

Snider's cover of John Fogerty's "Fortunate Son" was born of another time and yet sounds as if it issued directly from our recent woes. Snider sings it with a growling intensity that enhances the song's eerie appropriateness to today's world.

Snider's songs are a great antidote to those moments of insanity when you ask yourself why you aren't trying harder to keep up with the Joneses, or when you stop feeling that knot in your gut when you hear your neighbours rant on about gay marriage and immigration, or when you just need to step back.

*Peace Queer* manifests four of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it confronts, rebukes, and mocks existing injustices; 3) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 4) it stimulates my mind.

*Todd Snider's music was recommended to The Mindful Bard by Thomas Ozere of Ottawa, Ontario.*

*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](mailto:bard@voicemagazine.org). For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.*



## AUSU THIS MONTH



### 2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#).

Anyone who ordered early will have had their planner included in the first batch mailed out. If you did order early, you should have your new planner already!

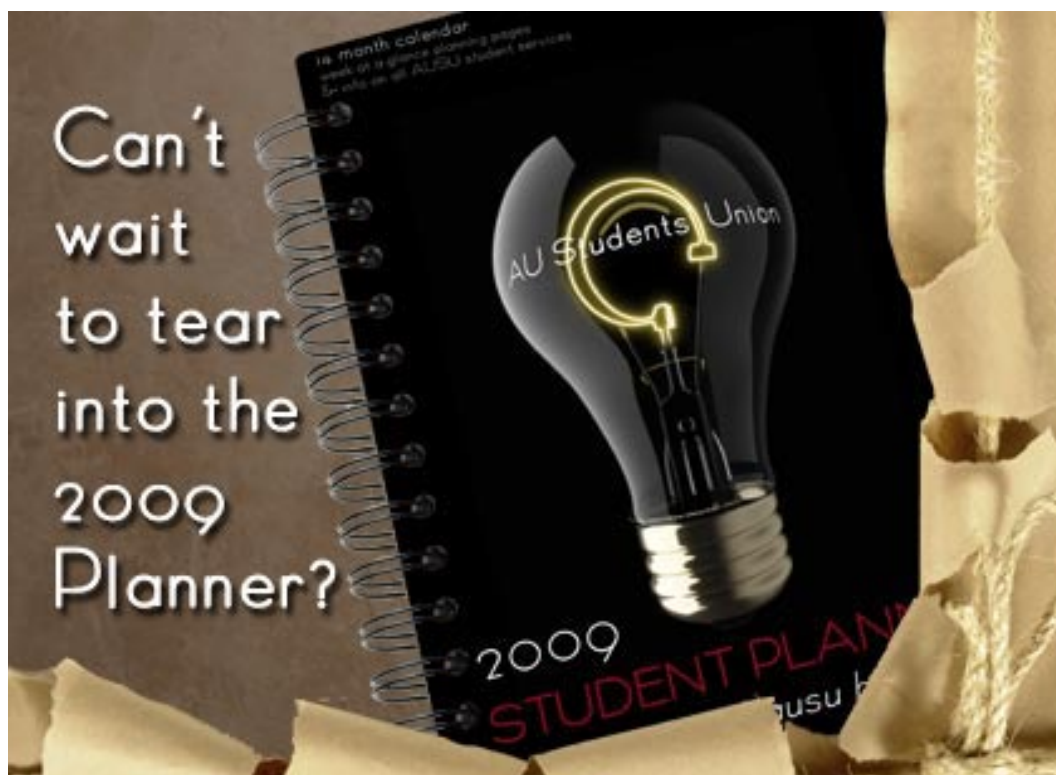
As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

### Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go.

With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it.



*The Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.

### AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination,



and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

### SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. 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.

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.

### Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student.



Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: Beretta semi-automatic handgun to be raffled off as door prize

In spite of a recent rash of gun violence in Canada, the Canadian Shooting Sports Association (CSSA) plans to hand away a semi-automatic weapon as a raffle prize at their upcoming annual meeting and dinner in Mississauga.

For a mere \$20 per ticket, attendees will have the chance to win a “special ‘Canadian Edition’ of the Beretta, ‘the most advanced expression of technological and esthetic feature in a semi-automatic handgun,’” as the *Toronto Star* [reports](#).

The guest speaker at the CSSA dinner will be Garry Breitkreuz, a Saskatchewan Conservative MP (Yorkton-Melville). Breitkreuz has introduced a private member’s bill to “abolish Canada’s controversial long-gun registry and relax rules on prohibited and restricted weapons.”

The raffle of a semi-automatic weapon has outraged those struggling to reduce the number of weapons on Canada’s streets.

“We have got to be finding ways to get (handguns) off the streets, not handing them out as prizes,” Liberal MP Mark Holland (Ajax-Pickering) told reporters.

“It really is an insult to a community that has seen so much gun violence and where so many people have been killed . . . to give that away as a (raffle) prize.”

Although the *Star* could not reach either the CSSA or Breitkreuz for comment, reaction from the office of Toronto Mayor David Miller was clear, with a spokesperson calling the handgun raffle “outrageous, inappropriate and insensitive, frankly, to all the families of victims of gun crime in Toronto and the GTA.”

Disbelief at the move is widespread, including at Montreal’s Dawson College, the site of a rampage in 2006 by a gunman armed with a Beretta semi-automatic carbine. NDP Leader Jack Layton (Toronto-Danforth) also expressed dismay, wondering how anyone could make the “callous” decision to raffle off a weapon, especially in an area like the GTA that saw more than 60 gun-related deaths in 2008.

### In Foreign News: Italy’s new stalking law brings flurry of arrests

Until recently, residents of Italy had little legal protection against stalkers who threatened, verbally abused, or persecuted them. But as *Corriere della Sera* [reports](#), a new stalking law has brought some relief, with 40 arrests since the end of February and a peak of a dozen arrests over two days in mid-March.

The new law came into effect on February 25 and the first related arrest was on March 2, when a 50-year-old Milan resident was charged. The man had allegedly served a “reluctant former girlfriend tea laced with the innards of a dead mouse.”

Arrests have come all across the country, including Trento, Sanremo, Arezzo, Sassari, Bologna, and several other cities. On March 4, a 60-year-old Sorrento man was arrested and charged with obsessively pursuing a woman to the point that he slashed her with a razor blade.

A spate of stalking-related arrests has followed, though numbers from Italy's national statistics institute (ISTAT) reveal that it should come as no surprise. According to *Corriere della Sera*, ISTAT reports that "from 2002 to 2007, as many as two Italians in ten, most of them women, fell victim to stalkers."

Although the vast majority of stalkers are former partners, the new law covers a broad array of offences including "persecution, harassment, offensive language and threats . . . whether the violence is perpetrated physically or by telephone, text messages included."

Mara Carfagna, the minister for equal opportunities, was a prime force behind the new law. She has also announced a new Carabinieri unit that will focus exclusively on stalking.

Many such offences are remarkably evident, according to ISTAT statistics, with "39% of offences committed by partners or former partners" coming with plenty of forewarning, including repeated death threats.

## EDUCATION NEWS

**Andrew McMonagle**

### Profs, students split over e-books



#### Publishing industry maintains calm in the face of digital innovation

WINNIPEG (CUP) - As Amazon releases the latest version of their e-book reader—the Kindle 2—some wonder what will happen to the book industry.

Chad Friesen of Friesens publishing in Altona, Manitoba, acknowledges that some aspects of the publishing industry will be affected more than others.

"We've known that digital has been a threat to print for some time," he said. "But people haven't been able to put their finger on how because it's a new technology."

Friesen thinks that newspapers will be hit hardest, but full-colour printing like the yearbooks they produce will remain unaffected for now.

The Kindle 2 is one of a few hand-held devices released in the past couple of years that use digitized books, otherwise known as e-books.

These e-book readers offer convenient access to libraries of material without the bulk of the printed page. E-books are available for download from various sources including Amazon.com, and run about \$10 per book.

Critics of the technology acknowledge that e-book readers will hurt the publishing industry, but nobody predicts the death of the novel.

"Books are our tie to the past," said University of Winnipeg creative writing student Justina Elias. "The thought of replacing it all with technology makes me nervous."

***"This is nothing  
really new . . . The  
book is an art form.  
Its value far  
surpasses mere  
data acquisition."***

Though she is wary of what the impact will be in the future, Elias remains optimistic.

"My gut reaction is positive. This might make reading more appealing, and that's never a bad thing."

As a writer, Elias likes paperback books, but finds the technology attractive as a consumer.

Some already view the impact as positive, like U of W English major Matthew Rygiel.

"As a physically disabled person, some books are hard to read," he said.

Rygiel has a skin condition that makes it painful for him to pick up and carry heavy objects.

"Newspapers are a pain to read as it is," he said. "Having them delivered [to the Kindle] would be good. If it's easier to read, that's good."

Some writers have worked with the technology: Stephen King is releasing a book exclusively for the Kindle.

Winnipeg author and U of W professor Catherine Hunter notes the novel has survived all of its previous threats.

"This is nothing really new," she said. "The book is an art form. Its value far surpasses mere data acquisition."

Friesen agrees. He notes that during the 1990s, CD-ROM books and other digital versions of publications threatened the industry, but fell short of replacing the novel.

One place where electronic book readers can't compete is in colour. The Kindle 2 has a black and white display. It does have other competitive features, like free access to certain Internet sites like Amazon.com and Wikipedia.org.

Friesen remains confident the electronic readers will not replace the novel's aesthetic value. "It would be tough to curl up in a hammock at the cabin with a reader," he said.



# CLASSIFIEDS

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## THE VOICE

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