

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

Volume 17 Issue 13
April 3, 2009

Cellos and Chapels

Culture on the street

Jonathan Byrd

Law and the Lonesome

Value of X

Class dismissed

Plus:

Editorial,

From Where I Sit,

The Mindful Bard,

and much more...



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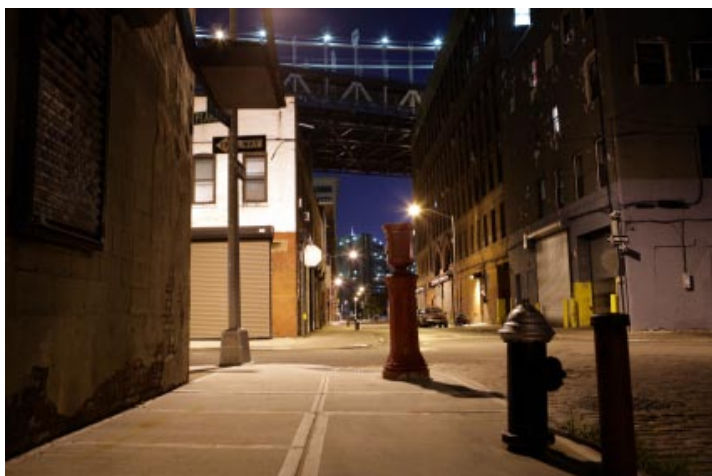
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



FICTION

Clare L. Booth



Meghann and Fiona

"There's culture on the streets too," Fiona said defensively. "You don't need to be in f-ing Carnegie Hall to hear Ginsberg echo off the walls. He was *ours* long before he was yours."

She stood tall, erect, and full of mock grandeur. "I have seen the best minds of my generation—that was *us*, not you."

Meghann grimaced as a rat—or was it a mouse?—scurried over her peep-toe pumps. All the rage in Europe, she thought, and wondered what the street

people there were wearing. Prada rip-offs?

"Fiona—come back inside, we can talk about this later," Meghann pleaded.

Fiona sighed and took a drag of her cigarette. "You don't call me Truth."

"Not this again. It sounds so puritanical." Meghann shrugged. "It's just . . . not you."

Down the street a bit an old lady was singing her dead dog to sleep under a piece of cardboard. Fiona listened for a minute. "La la la la," the old woman sang to the tune of "Rock-a-Bye Baby."

"It's my name. When you weren't there, they were. *They* gave it to me. *They* christened me Truth."

Meghann couldn't stand the way Fiona said *they*. It sounded like a cult: the unknown, like the Others on *Lost*.

"You don't get it," Fiona continued. "The second you're off the streets for good, you stop fitting in. You don't fit in where you came from and you don't fit in on the streets. It's unsettling. Your friends, your family no longer recognize you. To them you're a stranger, but you have nothing in common with your old family either. Say it."

"No," Meghann whispered. When Fiona was 17 she'd had a back alley abortion done by a Dr. Alice on a nameless street in Harlem, behind the strip club, by the dumpster, at half past midnight. She almost died. The doctor said Fiona could never have children; a week later she was gone.

Three years later, when Dr. Alice was caught and arrested, they were unsure whether to charge her solely with performing illegal abortions or with serial murder.

Meghann, four years Fiona's senior, was supposed to protect her. Protect her from boys, drugs, alcohol, the streets, improperly done abortions. Girls from the Upper East Side didn't wind up on the streets. They went to private schools, played the cello. They dripped with prestige and elitism. They married into wealth and had children with posh names in their late twenties. They had the best of the best, everything money could buy.

"I failed you," Meghann whispered. "I won't call you Truth because it's like admitting that over and over again. Come back inside, it's your birthday. You used to love the cello."

Fiona smiled. When she had slept in doorways in Harlem, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, she had dreamt of playing the cello again; had snuck into music stores to pinch classical CDs and a Discman; had crowded at the stage door at Carnegie Hall and the Met to listen to the cellos.

"I used to read Kerouac. *On the Road* was written line by line in the tunnels. It became a game—where was the next line? I would ride the subway with the change I panhandled for, around and around listening to the cellos and reading. It was—peaceful."

Meghann smiled, thinking about Fiona sitting on subway trains listening to a Discman, her knees tucked up under her chin.

"I never told you," Fiona said, "but my favourite place to sleep was this abandoned building on Third. The ceiling on the second floor was painted with odd winged creatures like in *3 Women*. It was like our own Sistine Chapel; I felt safe there."

When Fiona was seven, the family had taken a trip to Rome, ending their trip in Vatican City to see the Sistine Chapel. As luck would have it, however, the chapel was closed to the public the entire two days they were there and Fiona was inconsolable.

"This place backs onto Third, doesn't it?" she asked excitedly. "Come on! Come with me!"

"You're going to miss the cellos," Meghann protested meekly, but she found herself climbing over garbage after Fiona anyway.

"Come on!" Fiona called as she rounded the corner and ran up a flight of stairs.

Meghann sighed—what a bad choice of footwear. A flight of stairs and a broken Jimmy Choo heel later, Meghann stopped dead next to Fiona.

"Look up," Fiona whispered.

Light shone through holes in the walls and floor, illuminating the ceiling. Meghann raised her head and inhaled sharply.

A moment of silence passed between them.

"I want to hear the cellos," Fiona said finally. "Let's go home."

DID YOU KNOW?



AU Library 2.0

If you still think libraries are dusty places with stern librarians, you might be surprised when you check out AU's [Library 2.0](#). Along with all the regular features of the library, they've added some great new tools to help you find exactly what you're looking for.

One popular feature is the LibX Toolbar—just follow the links to the tutorial and FAQs. The Library 2.0 page also has information on using Delicious links; the AU library Facebook group; Shelfari (a virtual bookshelf highlighting new and notable books); Tag Cloud; and more. If you want to get more out of the AU library than ever before, see what's new at Library 2.0 today.

EDITORIAL

Sandra Livingston



Attention Deficit

As economies wobble and layoffs pile up, adults are heading back to school in droves. “Retraining!” is the cry of the hour, meaning everything from upgrading current skills to shifting careers entirely.

Engineers are becoming teachers and assembly line workers are training as dental assistants, while governments are ploughing money into programs to ease the process. The concept is hardly new. As a Human Resources Canada site pointed out in 2004, “today’s worker will have on average approximately

three careers and eight jobs over a lifetime.”

But with a drastic upswing in both the urgency and volume of retraining, it’s important to ask: do people have the skills to *get* those skills? In other words, does the workforce of the typical developed country still have what it takes to focus on and absorb new information?

Apparently, it’s a talent North Americans are losing fast, according to Mark Bauerlein, professor of English at Emory University in Atlanta. He’s the author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*.

And he isn’t alone. David Meyer, professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, specializes in attention, “how we focus on one thing rather than another,” as this [Times article](#) explains. As Meyer notes, chronic, long-term distraction is widespread—and deadly (even in early middle age, people in chronically distracted jobs exhibit high levels of stress-related diseases and even irreversible brain damage).

It isn’t just a matter of memory. As a recent [Guardian article](#) noted, our electronic world takes care of most of that for us (with numbers programmed into speed dial, 55 per cent of people surveyed did not know their partner’s number, while one in 10 couldn’t provide a single phone number from memory).

No, the real issue is whether we’ve lost the ability to *focus*, arguably an important factor when restructuring relies on people learning entirely new sets of skills (or upgrading existing ones)—and doing it well enough to stay globally competitive and turn the wallowing ship of an economy around.

As we’ve seen, CEOs are perfectly capable of running that ship aground in grand style, but the new economies that emerge will require a workforce that can concentrate long enough to grasp the information and skills of an emerging market (green manufacturing and energy jobs, for example).

The trouble is that these momentous shifts are coming at a time when our modern brains have been conditioned to skim and skip over tiny bursts of information (emails, text messages, Twitter, rapid-fire scene cuts on TV shows and commercials)—leaving us ill-prepared to concentrate on anything for more than a few minutes or even seconds.

As the G20 leaders work on the foundations of a new global economy, vying to position their countries strongly, perhaps one of the biggest deficits they should be thinking about is attention.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Jonathan Byrd

Jonathan Byrd is known for writing songs that carry on the venerable rural North American tradition of old-time music. His music once brought a personal commendation from Tom Paxton, who wrote: "What a treat to hear someone so deeply rooted in tradition, yet growing in his own beautiful way."

Byrd collaborated with Canadians Corin Raymond (of The Undesirables) and Chris Bartos on his latest album, The Law and the Lonesome (read review this issue), which was recorded in Toronto and mixed by Byrd himself in his home studio in North Carolina.

The following are notes from a conversation between Byrd and Wanda Waterman St. Louis.

"Deeply Rooted in Tradition"

Old-time music is pre-bluegrass string band music. The music has more of a social purpose, for dances and for people to get together and play music and have fun. It's sort of an oral tradition of music. Bluegrass is obviously more performance oriented. But there are very similar songs and repertoire between the two.

There's this really fabulous deep tradition of old-time music around where I live. It was very engaging when I was younger and I enjoyed it but I never thought about playing it. I wasn't hooked into the old-time tradition until I was in my late twenties.

A girlfriend of mine had given me an acoustic guitar. I'd never had one until that point even though I'd been playing electric guitar since I was maybe 14 years old. But when I was about 27 I started playing with people who played old-time. They invited me out to their festival and it just sounded like a cool party to me so I went. After a few days of being around this music I was really taken with it.

I heard the same songs over and over again (like, how many versions of "Wayfaring Stranger" are there?). So I thought, "These people need some new songs." I thought I could write in that tradition, so I started messing around with that kind of writing. It really fired me up. It's not an easy form of music; it just came naturally to me.

The Law and the Lonesome

The initial song idea was Corin Raymond's. I met Corin in Austin. He'd heard about me and he came out to a showcase to see me. He talked to me after the showcase and said that he wanted to bring me to Ontario. He went home and set up the first gig, selling tickets out of his own pocket. I had a full house that first night.

The next tour I went up with Corin we were driving up to Sudbury and Corin had these lines: "With the wrath of the law and the lonesome above you and all those who love you behind."

Where he got that line from was a review of his own record where he had a song called "Three Thousand Miles." The reviewer had said that the character in the song was "running from the wrath of the law and the

lonesome,” and Corin just ripped the review out of the paper, said, “Thank-you very much—this is going to become something.”

Later I changed “the long way home” to “the wrong way home” and the song was done.

The great thing about this was that it immediately became the title track to my next album, which I recorded on that tour in Toronto. At the time I had no idea I was going to be making an album.

The songs I came up with all felt like they were about the same character. While working on this song we were very inspired by the landscape as we were driving to Sudbury across the Precambrian Shield.

They were also inspired by the Texas songwriting tradition. That title track highlighted all those songs in my mind and sort of pulled them together.

Chris Bartos produced the record and played most of the instruments on it, and within a matter of a few days we had recorded an album.

And of course we gave a copy to the reviewer who had originally inspired the line.

On the Global Small Pond

Everything we’re doing is small-time: small venues—getting the word out though email or word of mouth—and we’re making good money. The major record labels have gone under, radio is now a niche voice, and the venues are closing, but people still want to hear music and we still want to make music, and so there will always be a small-time. Music is coming back to people’s parlours.

On the Cost of Cultural Capital

If Woody Guthrie had had some financial means there would have been no reason for him to travel on trains across the countryside singing folk songs. The larger core issue is that an extremely wealthy, extremely civilized country is often culturally poor. If you go to Switzerland and then go to Bali it’s pretty obvious that when people don’t have a lot of money they get creative.



Two-week Wonder

I do think that my tendency to obsess can be useful. I finish songs in a few hours. If it sucks, it stays in the notebook, but thank God it's done. I hate going back to an unfinished song. Who can remember an unfinished emotion? It's like answering the phone and then going back to making love.

"May the River Run Dry" came up in between recording sessions for the record. I told Corin, sitting at Aengus Finnan's kitchen table, "I'm recording the rest of this record tomorrow. This song belongs on it. We have to write it now." Corin takes years to write a song. In some ways, he's taught me patience, or at least a duller obsession, an obsession that disappears over the horizon for a while and returns when it's ready for another spin. In some ways, I've taught him immediacy, the open-heart-surgery style of songwriting. We have to save this patient now.

I've thought for a while about how I could put this default behaviour to good use in other areas and I've decided to write a novel. It hasn't formed a cloud enough to rain yet, but when it does, I bet I'll be the two-week novelist. I don't expect the first one to be good, mind you, just done. My point is to utilize my natural rhythm in a project where that kind of extended focus is practically required. I throw songs away, but I finish them first. I don't see why novels would be any different.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - Wild Life

With over half the world's population now living in urban jungles, we don't give much thought to daily life in the other kind of jungle: the wild kind. Here's a look at the rich (and sometimes surprising) world outside the city limits.

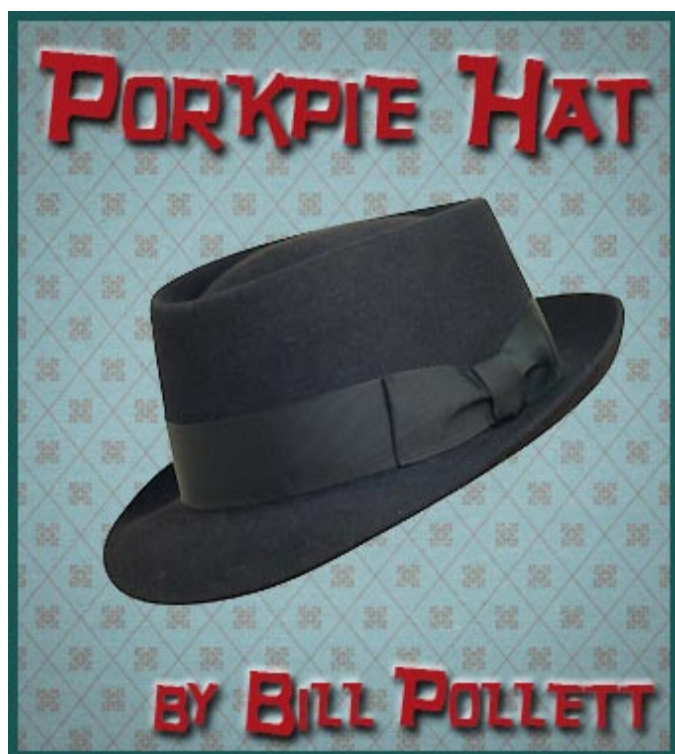
Monkeyshines - These intoxicated gorillas may look like they'd be right at home on a bar stool, but in the jungle the drinks are free and nobody has to worry about taking the car keys away. Sadly, nobody told them that friends don't let friends swing from trees drunk.

Clever Critters - Just when you think it's safe to leave your tools lying around, some clever crow will make a food-fetching hook out of them. And they may have figured out how to make face masks out of wood shavings, but those naked mole rats are still ugly.

Animals Like Us - This Babelgum film is nearly an hour long, but the quality is excellent and the look at tool-using animals is fascinating. Grab a coffee, sit back, and take a visually stunning look beyond the cubicle farm.

Geometry in the Jungle - Forget navigating through the jungle by looking for landmarks—researchers used GPS technology to discover that chimps use mental maps "built around geometric coordinates, as opposed to a navigation style based on landmarks for well-travelled routes."

Surviving the Jungle - Here's the setup: "Your helicopter has crashed on a jungle island. The pilot is dead. The radio destroyed." Can you survive? The boss might think this Discovery Channel game is a timewaster, but you never can tell when those jungle survival skills will come in handy.



The Value of X

Health - Ms. Allen shows us a video of what it looks like when bad cells divide. There are posters of smokers' lungs and classroom rules. We make collages of cancer symptoms.

Math - Outside the window thin, dark branches of unidentifiable autumn trees are being whipped around by a wicked north wind.

A car is reversing in the parking lot, transforming a dirty rain puddle into a pool of liquid rubies. The faint sounds of "Don't Fear the Reaper" are leaking through the car's open window. Somewhere a raven is cawing and a baby is screaming.

The clouds are monsters with sad, sensitive faces. The value of X remains unclear.

French - We learn how to say *grapefruit* and *cake*. We

establish that a black cat is either above or below a certain table. We learn many conjugated versions of *aller*, without actually doing it. One of the cloudfaces has swallowed a thin sliver of pale morning moon, and is holding it in its belly like a radiant fetus.

Phys. Ed. - We practise indifference and dribbling a basketball. I can't help but notice that Karla Kaake has been wearing those same green shorts since fifth grade.

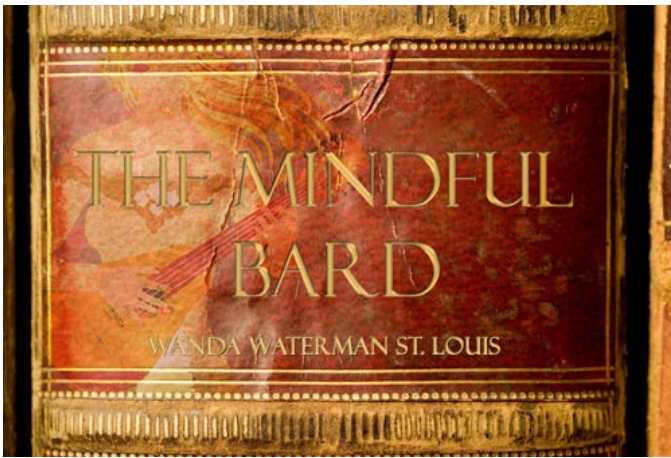
Lunch - We sneak into the woods for chocolate bars and cigarettes. Daisy is pissed off about always lending me smokes. Dave saves a dragonfly from a spider's web. There are rusted engine parts and a car's back seat in the dried-out creek bed. We pretend we're driving to Mexico, the radio on, the wind in our faces, a deck of Export A sitting on the dash.

Science - There's a sub. We break thermometers in the sink and chase the shivery little mercury blobs with the tips of our fingers. Dave steals a frog from a jar of formaldehyde. Later that day, during lunch break, he will cut off one of its claws with a penknife, and put it in the nozzle of the drinking fountain.

English - I write a disturbing poem about unexpected mutations. We hear a scream from the direction of the drinking fountain. When Mr. Bakker leaves the room to investigate, I steal the bulb from his film projector.

Art - There is this new girl in the class, named Piri. It's her first day, so she doesn't yet know that Dave and I are losers. Her breath smells of cigarettes and peppermint. In the drawing, there is a girl who may or may not be her, standing naked on the hood of a Ford Falcon. She is brandishing a scimitar in her left hand.

At the bottom of the picture, there is a sentence written in Czech. I will spend many years of my life searching for a translation.



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

CD: Jonathan Byrd, *The Law and the Lonesome*

Release date: 2008

Label: Waterbug

Hymns to a Singularly North American Solitude

"It's good to see you, Eddie, I just got the word

Nobody knows but this black and twisted bird

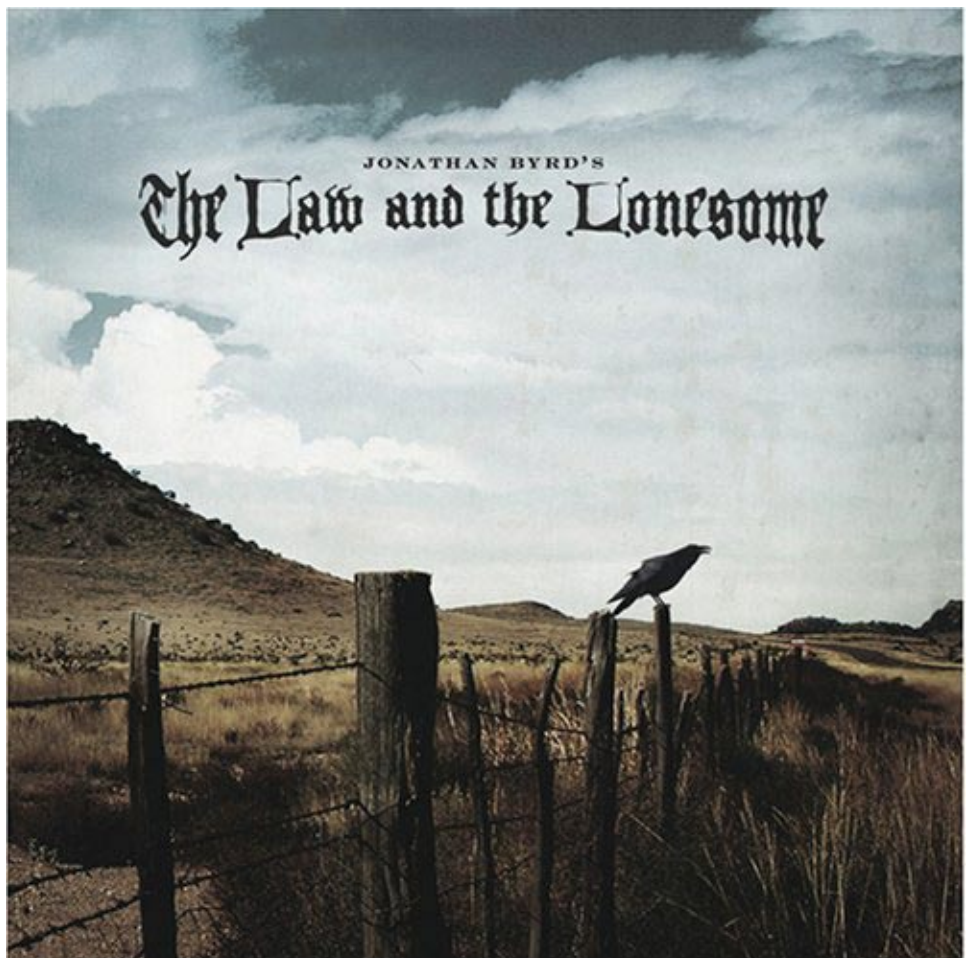
May the river run dry if I lie"

Corin Raymond, Edward Hillier, and Jonathan Byrd, from "May the River Run Dry," *The Law and the Lonesome*

When I started digging into the folk music traditions of my province I discovered to my surprise that the historical influences and resulting songs sung in Nova Scotia were almost identical to those sung in the Appalachian mountains of my grandma's folks. Which raised the question: were we a cultural adjunct of the United States or were they a cultural adjunct of us? Or are we both, in the end, all of a piece?

Today music historians point to the influence of Manitoba's Métis as well as to Quebec fiddlers and Maritime Celtic and Acadian songsters when discussing the development of pre-twentieth century North American folk music.

A Canadian connection with an album by a southern songster may seem incongruous, but it shouldn't. For one thing, for years Canadian songwriters have been skipping back and forth across the border, simultaneously inspiring and absorbing American roots music.



And not just the generation that spawned Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Robbie Robertson, Ian Tyson, and Gordon Lightfoot; from pre-European Indian tribes to early pioneers, the development of musical genres in the United States was paralleled and fed by Canadian musicians to such a degree that it would be misguided to refer to Byrd's chosen tradition—referred to variously as old-time, old tyme, and mountain music—as solely an American genre.

***Byrd's mellow,
sympathetic voice gives
depth and credibility to
these meditations on the
loneliness of lovers,
losers, ramblers, addicts,
and missed turns.***

The fact that *The Law and the Lonesome* was originally recorded in Toronto with the input of Canadian musicians and writers befits an album drawing not on the illusions that are borders but rather on the reality of prairies, mountains, and deserts—and the restless souls that populate them—that recognize no boundaries but sky and water.

Once again we have an American singer-songwriter inspired by Cormac McCarthy. By Byrd's admission this album is in a sense the soundtrack he and his musical collaborators imagined the book and movie *No Country for Old Men* ought to have had. (Now try reading the novel while listening to this album.) He's in good company; a host of prominent culture makers including Sam Baker, David Byrne, and Jim White have

drawn creative energy from McCarthy's novels.

The first song of Jonathan Byrd's that I ever heard, and the one that caused me to seek him out, was "The Cocaine Kid," a fast-talking, Dylanesque, and ultimately uncharacteristic ramble that showcased Byrd's razor wit as well as the breadth of his cultural awareness. Jonathan's typical songwriting style turned out to be much more contemplative, evoking that saddle-and-sagebrush mood you get when listening to old Peter La Farge records or watching Clint Eastwood's Man-With-No-Name movies.

Byrd's mellow, sympathetic voice gives depth and credibility to these meditations on the loneliness of lovers, losers, ramblers, addicts, and missed turns. These experiences are universal, yes, but the experience of them is never the same anywhere but on the grounds where millennia of Indians and centuries of pioneers and cowboys, and now decades of hippies, have trod, worked, dreamed, loved, overdosed, and died, and Byrd brings this history alive in his subjects, which include a Cherokee waitress, a criminal on the lam, the trickster Coyote, and even a Poe-esque crow.

The instrument tracks are minimal and contain only what is artistically necessary. This spare quality amplifies the sense of aloneness in big spaces brought on by these songs and highlights some amazing musicianship. These songs are keepers, the kind you play over and over to nurse a broken heart or convince yourself that life has meaning even if your current situation falls short of your dreams.

The Law and the Lonesome manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria for music well worth a listen: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 3) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 4) it is about attainment of the true self; and 5) it provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic 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 [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Baby News

On Christmas Eve we found out that our daughter-in-law is pregnant. To say we were cautiously thrilled is an understatement.

Greg and Carrie have been married since 2002 and now the time is right for them. We all took a vow of secrecy promising not to say anything until she was safely past the risky first trimester. With a due date in late August, the exciting news is now out.

We pray for a healthy baby because ultimately that is all that matters. With a daughter who works at the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation we have a new appreciation for the pain and sorrow families endure when something goes wrong. Our prayers for that grandchild will continue forever just as they do for our own children.

In the meantime, we now have a reason to go into the baby department at the store. We have a reason to oooh and aaah over the cute and tiny things. We also have a reason to gasp over prices. Having had two kids seven years apart (and with all the baby stuff sold after the first one) I know that a baby raised with second-hand stuff turns out quite alright.

Did we really need a corduroy Snuggli for Greg that cost 40-some dollars and was used twice? I know we didn't need a change table. And baby monitors hadn't been invented yet. We did have an Umbroller type stroller for trips into the city because of the ease of folding it. It was a no-frills unit and cost 17 dollars. The 2009 version is souped-up a bit and costs a hundred and fifty dollars. Real strollers can cost several hundred.

There is no shortage of gadgets, equipment, and devices to make baby's and parents' lives easier. Do I think it's all necessary? Not at all. The little bouncer chairs have a port to plug in your iPod. Fisher-Price has a Rainforest crib attachment that plays 18 minutes of classical music, lullabies, and rainforest sounds for only 45 dollars.

For 55 dollars you can get Graco's parental heart listener gift set to "hear, record and email your unborn baby's heartbeat, kicks and hiccups or record your own heartbeat and play it to your newborn." The kit includes pre- and postnatal classical CD, microphone, speakers, two headsets, recording cable, and maternity belt. That seems a bit far out to me, but no doubt they sell.

I just can't help but think about those parents who don't even bother quitting smoking, drinking, and drugs before the birth of a child or make all kinds of wrong-headed parenting decisions after the fact. Some children get a disadvantaged start right from the DNA level and others get rainforest sounds and mother's heartbeat. I'm trusting our kids to make the right decisions about where to save and where to splurge.

In the meantime, the John Deere wagon with side rails and inflatable rubber tires is on their wish list from us. One hundred and twenty dollars for our first grandkid is nothing, from where I sit.

The Interviewer

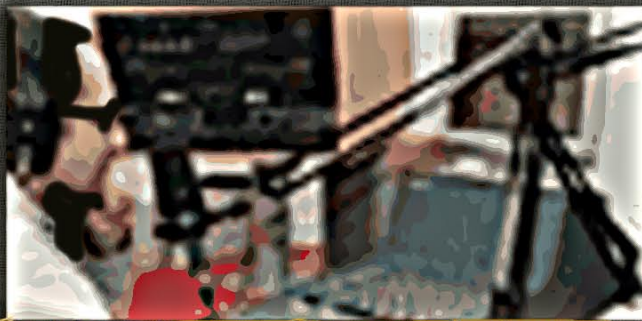
It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

Rockhead #17: Fifteen Minutes of Fame



Reuben decides to produce a radio show on the Blind Boys...



...and have Gord come in and talk about his favourite songs and why he likes them.



For a whole week before the show...

...Gord is beside himself with excitement.

Gonna be onna radio!!!!



What do you like best about the Blind Boys, Gord?

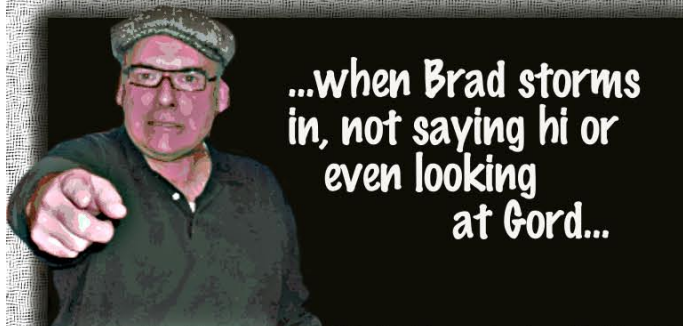
Their songs!



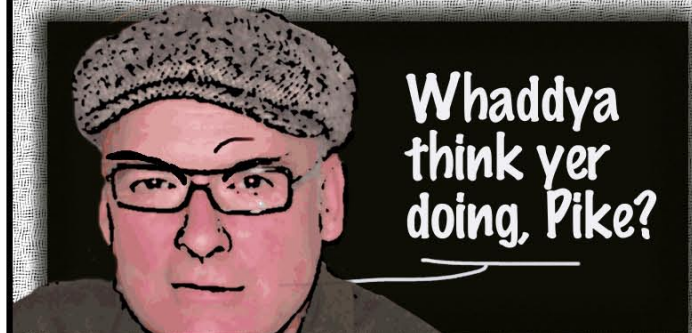
Great interview, Gord!

Afterwards...

Can I have your auto-graph?



...when Brad storms in, not saying hi or even looking at Gord...



Whaddya think yer doing, Pike?

Brad! Hey, Reuben, this here's me brudder! (Didja hear me onna radio?)



He likes it! He really, REALLY likes it!

next: stan gun meds

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!

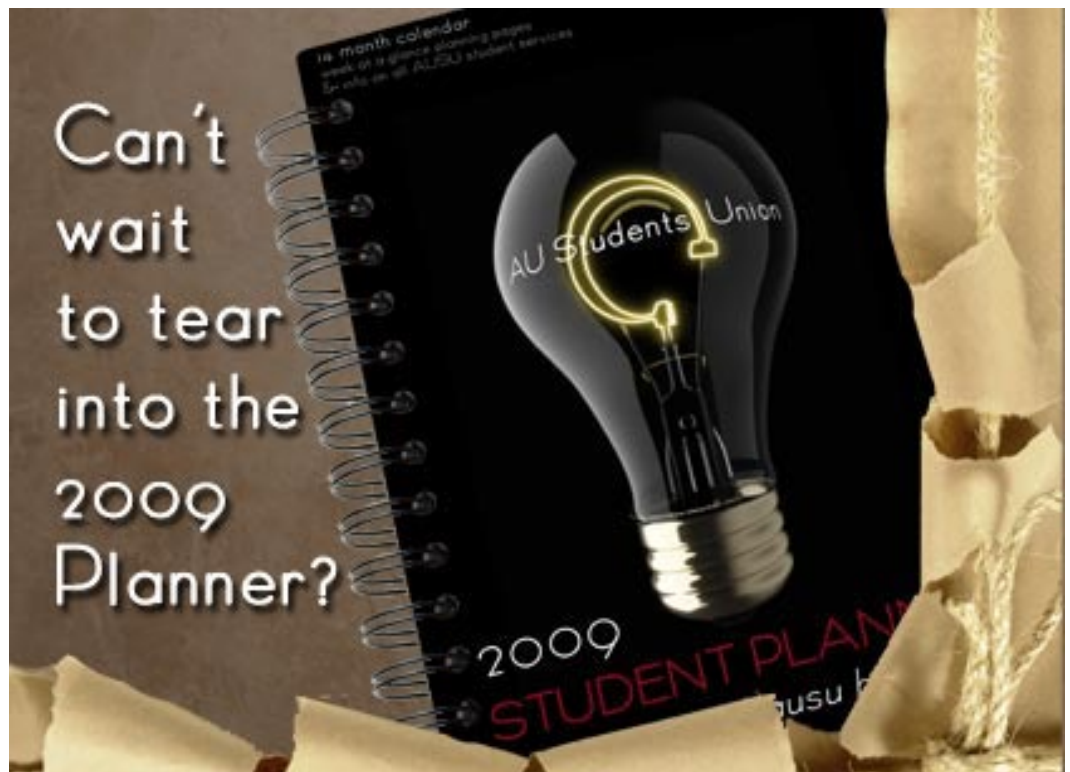
As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

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.

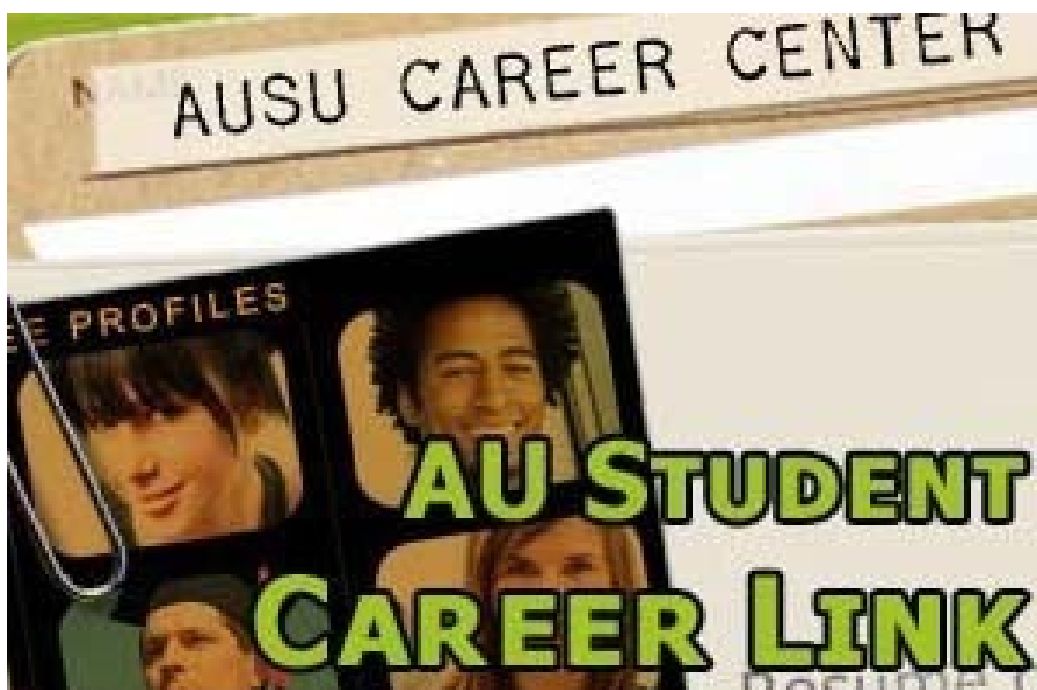
For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

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: Sloppy storage of guns, drugs widespread at border service

The Canada Border Services Agency may be good at seizing contraband, but “sloppy” practices at most of their storage facilities continue to be a problem.

The latest report into the Canada Border Services Agency found issues with access to contraband such as weapons and drugs throughout the 68 facilities inspected, including at airports, postal plants, and land border crossings.

As the *Globe and Mail* [reports](#), drugs such as methadone, steroids, and hash “are winding up in landfills because Canada’s border guards don’t know they’re supposed to be destroyed.”

As much as \$400 million in seized goods is sent to supposedly secure government warehouses each year. Concerns about shoddy practices at the facilities were raised in 1998 and again in 2007. The current audit, completed last month, examined bond rooms in the Toronto and Windsor areas as well as the province of Quebec.

A litany of problems continues to exist, including “below standard” security and access control, as well as missing paperwork for seized drugs. At 15 facilities, non-government persons were allowed access with no control by the agency, while 23 of the sites “had no inventory control whatsoever.” An agency representative told reporters that a review of the problems will be completed in 2009.

In Foreign News: War in Gaza brings rise in domestic abuse

War has always brought costs beyond the obvious, and a recent BBC [article](#) highlights one of them: after the recent bombing in Gaza, women are reporting a sharp increase in physical assaults by their partners.

Women reluctantly discussed the abuse at a meeting organized by the Gaza Mental Health programme, and their experiences are backed up by anecdotal evidence gathered by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which reports a rise in “verbal, physical, sexual and psychological” abuse that corresponded noticeably with recent shelling by Israel, and more generally since the strip fell under Hamas control.

With frustrations rising at the hunger, homelessness, and lack of food caused by blockades, many women report that their husbands are venting their anger on their families, including their children.

As the BBC notes, the problem is made worse because Gaza is a “conservative, male-dominated, clan-based society,” and options to escape the abuse are limited. There are clinics where women can seek advice or comfort, but no shelters. Some NGOs are trying to combat the problem by introducing violence awareness programmes, and as one female member of parliament noted, although women in Gaza have few rights “. . . we are trying. We are struggling.”

EDUCATION NEWS

Vicky Tobianah

**New website helps students cram****University Junction aims to link students from 56 campuses**

MONTREAL (CUP) – A new note-sharing website is hoping to create an online academic community that will provide students with accurate information on courses, exam notes, and tutoring services.

UniversityJunction.com is a free site created by a group of recent McGill University graduates who were frustrated by their undergraduate learning environment.

“[We] found that the professor didn’t explain the concepts as well as they could or [students] just didn’t have enough information to learn the material,” said Liz Mitchell, the site’s communications director.

With over 1,200 users and more than 1.1 million pieces of class resources uploaded from top schools in both the US

and Canada, the site also features a forum-based tutoring service for students who feel intimidated by asking questions in large classes or speaking to professors during their office hours.

“We’ll commit to answering McGill students’ questions within a day, from now until exams,” Mitchell said.

According to their website, their growth plan is to provide material for 160,000 courses on 56 campuses by March, and to eventually reach 160 universities by the end of 2009.

“[We hope] to establish UniversityJunction.com as the leading academic resource for university students,” Mitchell said.

The idea is similar to a different McGill-based program, NerdNotes.ca, launched in September 2007, which focused on providing notes for students, typically in arts courses.

Stefan Dimitriadis, one of the creators of NerdNotes.ca, says the site’s biggest challenge was developing the time and money to exert in such an operation, explaining that it was eventually shut down due to financial costs.

“[NerdNotes.ca was] an experiment, and the response by students was proportionate to the amount of effort [students] put into it,” Dimitriadis said. “Considering the amount of time [we] put into advertising and making the system user-friendly, the response was quite good.”

While NerdNotes.ca charged users \$2.50 a lecture, University Junction is trying to become an ethical alternative to note-buying sites, and wants to avoid legal infringements or violations of professors’ intellectual property rights.

“[We’re providing] a greater understanding of course material without compromising ethics code,” Mitchell said.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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