

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

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Talk Block

Lost in translation

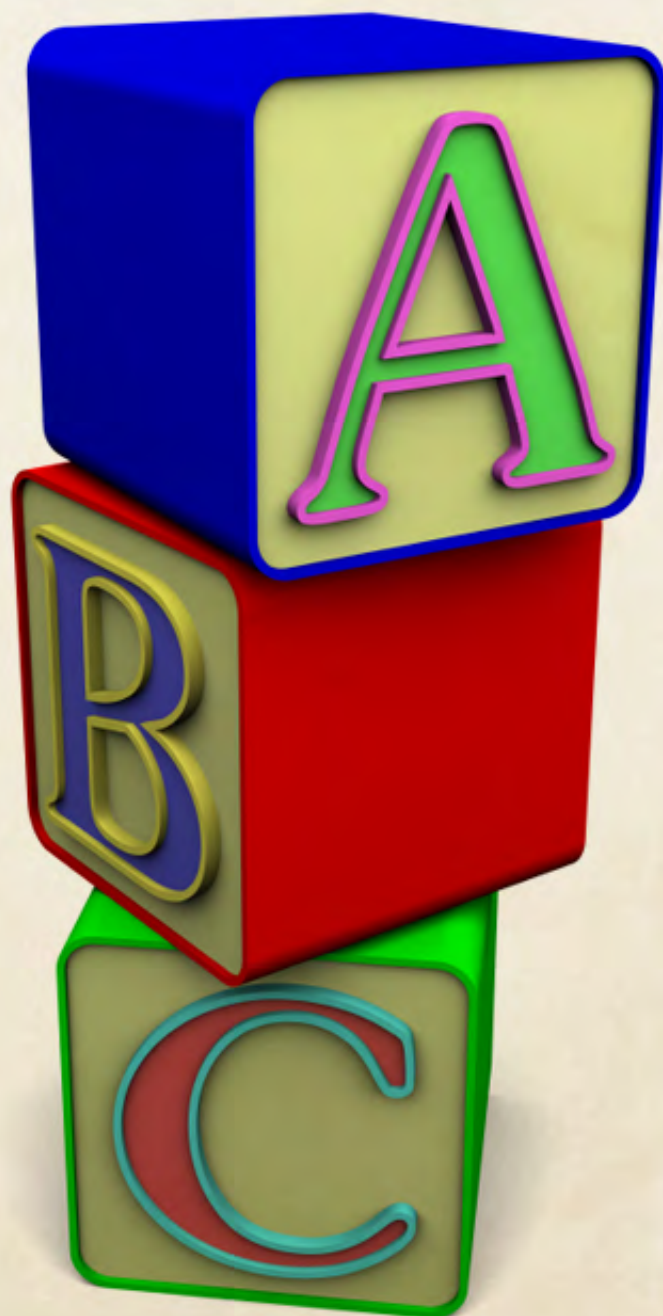
Never Too Late

Path to literacy

Hollywood Indian

Reel Injun strikes back

*Plus:
In Conversation
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, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey



Lost in Translation

During a recent trip to Montreal, I had the opportunity to brush up on my very, very rusty French. It's amazing how quickly it all comes back even after some fifteen years of disuse. What's also amazing, though, is the perspective gained from being away from a language for so long that you see it through a different lens entirely.

Although everyone in the city was fluent in English, the written word was primarily in French. My husband's French is limited to pop culture phrases, so he was linguistically lost. After I had to get out of the car at a gas station to tell him what the pump reader was saying, it became my job to translate menus, street signs, and—when one of them was particularly catchy—billboards.

It wasn't always successful. You know the dead air when a comedian tells a lousy joke? Sometimes I'd attempt to translate an amusing ad, but the joke would fall flat. It just wasn't funny; the English words weren't an adequate vehicle to communicate the laugh. Quite literally, the humour was lost in translation.

A few days later we were driving through the Catskill Mountains—of Rip van Winkle fame—and naturally I had to whip out the smart phone to Google the name's origin. Although it is debated, the consensus seems to be that “kill” came from a Dutch word for “creek.” There are “kill” rivers, mountains, and communities all over Pennsylvania and upstate New York, parts of which were settled by the Dutch during the 17th century.

My Googling turned up something else intriguing. Apparently, a town named Fishkill was the subject of a 1996 [petition by PETA](#), which claimed that the name invited cruelty and violence toward fish. And this got me thinking about how easily meaning and motive are lost in translation in everyday life.

How often does this happen outside the purely linguistic sphere? How often do we attribute motives to words and actions, applying the yardstick of our own social language—our upbringing, values, or personal moral code—to others? How often do we shut down in anger or frustration at the pigheadedness or circular reasoning of people who surely can't still be defending their positions?

During the course of our trip, there were times when I'd have to accept the fact that the French-language jokes just weren't going to work in English, because the cultural background behind the idiom or saying wasn't shared by the two languages. Accept it, and move on. And while it's just as hard to communicate with those who don't share our values or socio-cultural background, it's even more important.

Because there's more at stake than a funny billboard.

IN CONVERSATION

Wanda Waterman



Rachid Taha

"Since I started making music I've worked with some very interesting people, some in the field of techno-progressive music, yet all the while also listening to singers like Oum Kalthoum. I've also listened to a lot of intellectuals, writers, and painters who've helped me evolve. This has enriched me; it's my wealth."

Rachid Taha in an interview with Wanda Waterman, 18 July 2013

The Luminous Inspiration of a Multicultural Milieu

Rachid Taha is an iconic Algerian singer-songwriter based in France, where he arrived with his family at the age of 10. He became a sensation in the '80s by mixing his native Algerian genres with punk and other musical styles and by mocking the hypocrisies of the French government, who outlawed a song of his that sounded a little too critical of the regime. He's currently touring his ninth album, Zoom (see the Voice review [here](#)), and will be playing in Montreal on July 29 and in Saguenay on July 31 as part of the Festival International Rythmes du Monde. He recently took the time to answer Wanda Waterman's questions about what enabled him to remain for so long at the vanguard of both Middle Eastern and Western alternative music.

A Rich Stew

I've already written about Taha's unique ability to mix Middle Eastern genres with Western music while managing to be deliciously innovative in both. In his view, his impressive creative output has always been fuelled by the rich stew from which he emerged and to which he's deliberately exposed himself to all his life. That and an insatiable curiosity have conspired to create a unique body of songs and musical collaborations.

"I live in a very multicultural world, and I've always been curious. I like discovering things. I like Western art. I like to listen to Arabic music, Italian music, and American rock and roll. I love to listen to Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, and Richie Havens."

Another prime influence is film: "I'm really interested in the cinema, especially Japanese cinema (I love Kurosawa). I've always liked Jim Ford. Again, my curiosity ends up feeding my music."

In spite of some of the obstacles he's faced in his adopted country, it didn't hurt that he grew up in France, a country prone to showcasing the best of world arts and culture. Living in France also gave him the opportunity to rub shoulders with some fascinating people and to work with the movers and shakers of both high and pop culture.

An Enduring Wealth

“Since I started making music I’ve worked with some very interesting people, some in the field of techno-progressive music listening, and at the same time I’ve been listening to Arab singers like Oum Kalthoum. I’ve also listened to a lot of intellectuals, writers, and painters, who’ve enriched me by helping me evolve. This is my wealth.”

On Working with Brian Eno

“When I started making music,” says Rachid, “I felt certain that one day I’d meet Brian and work with him. There are a number of like-minded people like him who gravitate to what I do. David Byrne’s another one. It’s always love at first sight.”

Why Base a Title Track on Oum Kalthoum?

“Oum is a singer I love. It’s notable that the biggest star in Arabic music is a woman. For me to name this album for her is a way to pay tribute to women. I think in the future women will receive more honour in the Arab Muslim countries.”

What’s the political significance of Oum Khartoum in the Middle East now? “This is a situation that’s a bit difficult at the moment because of the revolutions that ousted the dictators who came into power after World War II. We must not forget that for Western Europe it’s only been a little more than 60 years since this war—this is not such a long time. Arab countries are now in the same position and I think we should give them time to evolve and go further.”

Deep Hurts

In “Algerian Tango,” Taha sings of a deep wound: *I can’t forget the past, the racists, or those who enslave us. I’ve opened my eyes and my heart, and have given you everything, and you have lied to me.*

What’s the answer to this kind of pain?

“The solution is love,” he quickly replies. “When I talk about personal hurts it’s because in my work people I trusted betrayed me in the end. There were also love stories that ended badly. My songs are a kind of biographical radiograph.”

Canadian Friends

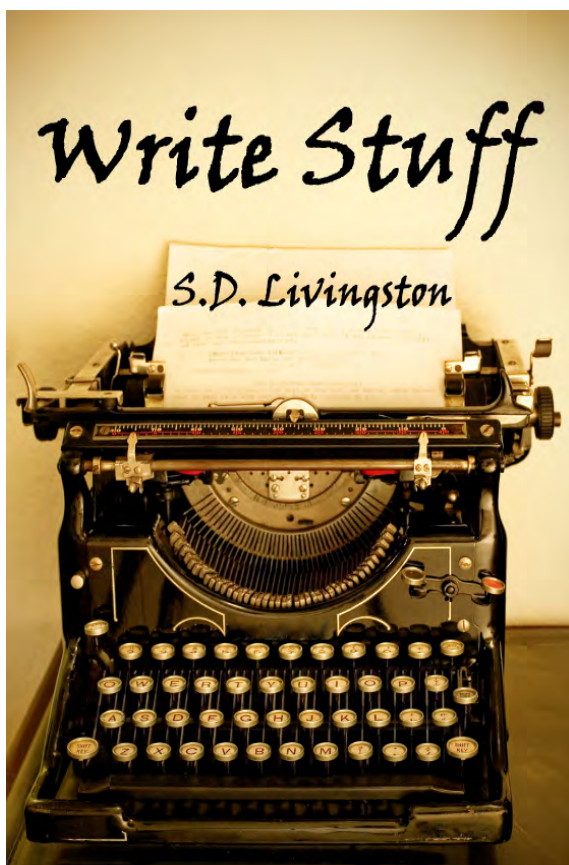
“I’m always really happy to come to Canada. I have a lot of friends there. I’ll sing my album as well as a lot of my older songs, with five other musicians on the stage. Afterwards we party. I hope a lot of people come—it’ll be a great evening!”

This article would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of Ahmed Krimi of Gafsa, Tunisia.

COMIC: WEIRD CANADA

Wanda Waterman





First Words

Some of us hit the books early, thanks to *Baby Einstein* and Dr. Seuss. Others started a little later, hitting their stride with series like *Goosebumps*. But what about those who never learned to read, and still struggle with basics like the words on their cereal box—or even their own names? As these inspiring stories show, it's never too late to learn those first words.

Ed Bray was a young man when he and his fellow soldiers stormed the beaches at Normandy. He earned two Purple Hearts for his bravery, was married and held jobs, but through it all carried a surprising secret: he didn't know how to read. As this [CBS News video](#) shows, he couldn't even read the words on the many medals he's received.

His wife and coworkers helped him conceal the fact, but at the age of 89 he decided enough was enough. "I want to read one book before I die," he explains in the video. Early in

2013, with the help of Professor Tobi Thompson, Bray achieved his goal. The first book he read was a biography of George Washington.

Bray isn't the only adult who's struggled long and hard with illiteracy. Not only does the problem affect people's earning potential, it also has a direct effect on their health. According to [ABC News](#), "a study from the Archives of Internal Medicine revealed patients who had difficulty reading prescriptions were 50 percent more likely to die from disease than patients who were literate."

This could mean that nearly half of adult Canadians are putting their health at risk. A 2003 government [survey](#) found that 52 per cent of Canadians over 16 "had literacy scores in the Level 3 category or above." Level 3 literacy is the minimum level "required to function well at work and in daily living." Next time you're at work or the mall, look around you. Odds are that about half the adults you see would not be able to read a prescription bottle well enough to understand what they were taking.

But much like Ed Bray, other adults well into their senior years have worked hard to read those first words. Like Gabriel Lavoie, a former truck driver from Quebec who learned to read in his seventies. As Lavoie says in this [article](#), he spent years eating the same meal twice a day; each time he went into a restaurant he would simply order the special, rather than reveal that he couldn't read the menu.

And Jim Arruda Henry, who [learned to read](#) at 92, took things even further. He went on to become a first-time author at 98 with his memoir, *In a Fisherman's Language*.

There are still a few weeks left to enjoy summer, but when the back-to-school sales start, don't forget that kids aren't the only ones who can get excited about hitting the books. If you know an adult who needs a hand, two great places to start are [ABC Life Literacy Canada](#) and [ProLiteracy](#).

Because it's never too late to savour those first words.

*S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel *Kings of Providence*. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).*

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Out, Damned Spot!

This weekend marks the anniversary of Macbeth's legendary defeat by the Earl of Northumbria in 1054. The Earl, uncle to Malcolm, was trying to return Malcolm to the throne held by Macbeth ever since his defeat of Duncan in battle 14 years earlier. Confused? Truth is stranger than fiction, and Macbeth's real story isn't quite the same as the one Shakespeare made famous. But we love the Bard anyways, and summer's a great time to remind ourselves why.

Shakespeare in the Park

Whether you like your Shakespeare in the park or on the stage, with traditional costuming or something more modern, with or without musical accompaniment—or even fused with hip hop—chances are you'll find it here. The Shakespeare Fellowship keeps a current list of plays and festivals going on all over the world; check out what's happening in your community this summer!

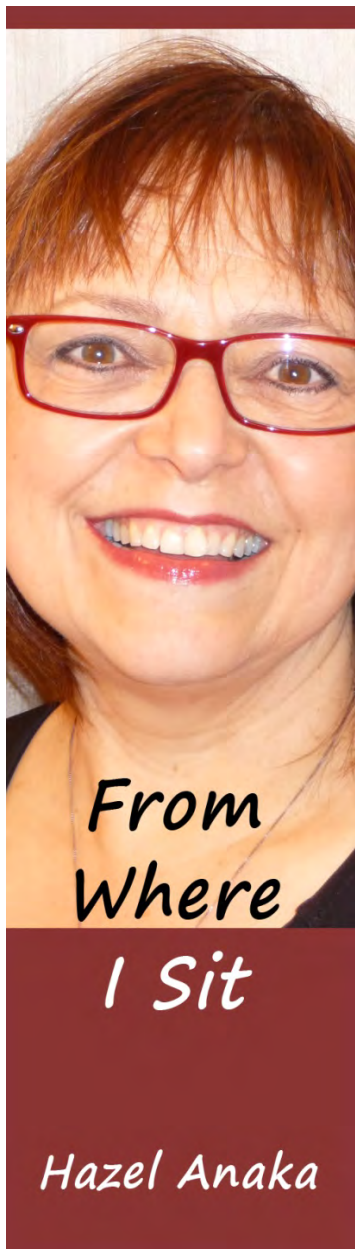
Curse of *Macbeth*

No witches required; theatre tradition suggests that performances of the play *Macbeth* have always been accompanied by a lurking curse. Say the name "Macbeth" in the theatre, and you risk incurring disaster. Fact or fiction? Hard to say, but I'll keep referring to it as the "Scottish play" when I'm in the building.

Word to the Wise

Maybe the play's not the thing—or *your* thing. But it's impossible to deny the far-reaching influence Shakespeare's had on the development of the English language. From words like "addiction" and "archenemy" to household phrases like, well, "household phrase," we use Shakespeare-created language every day. For a more irreverent look at Shakespeare's influence, see the [Cracked article](#).





Adapt Graciously

For at least 40 years, I was a daily reader of the *Edmonton Journal*. It wasn't part of a morning ritual with coffee and croissant, because we had to pick it up from a convenience store in Andrew. There's no door-to-door delivery when you live in the boonies.

Most days, reading it was the last thing I did before bed, sitting in my favourite chair in front of the TV with the paper spread out before me on a small table. If I had been busy, there might have been an accumulation of newspapers to read. But I read them all. In order. I needed to keep the story thread of the comics, oh, and life-altering current events too, in chronology.

And even though the content of the paper sometimes raised my blood pressure or had me shaking my head in disbelief, I found a calm in the process of carving out this time for me.

Reading the newspaper so late in the day meant that by then I had heard any really big news on the radio or TV or through word-of-mouth. Today, 24-hour TV news stations and real-time feeds allow us to see news happening, and anyone with a phone and a Twitter or Facebook account can be a reporter. It has largely replaced the water cooler methodology of communication.

This instant "news" isn't always reliable or balanced or fair or even true. It doesn't have the advantage of professional writers, who use research, context, and sober second thought to get it right. And while there is delay in any print medium, there is also time and space to give a story or an issue the background or follow-up it needs.

I never read every word, cover to cover, but I did rip out a lot of items for reference or to share with someone else. I'd set a particularly good cartoon in Roy's spot at the table. I tore out obituaries and saved items with practical how-to information.

So several months ago when I was told I could no longer subscribe to the *Journal*, I was upset. For a few months the storekeeper saved a paper for me from his daily inventory. The daily price was about triple what I had been paying as a subscriber, but we bit the bullet and paid. Then the shopkeeper had a falling out with the delivery guy and stopped carrying the paper altogether.

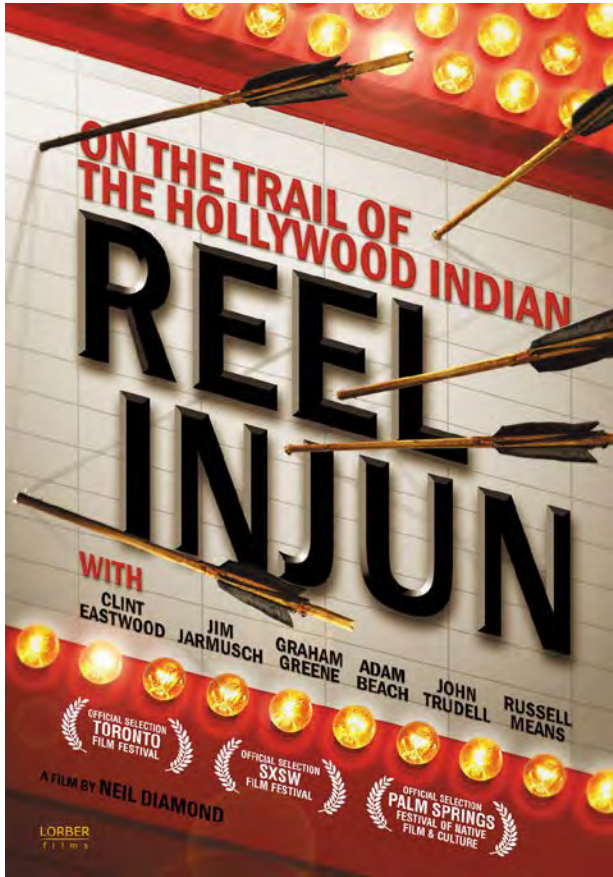
I'm in withdrawal. Past attempts at finding something on the *Journal* website have been incredibly frustrating; too much "noise" to wade through to get where I want to go. Buying the occasional newsstand copy just reminds me of what I'm missing.

Looks like yet again I need to adapt graciously to what is, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



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

Film: *Reel Injun* (National Film Board of Canada)

Directors: Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge, Jeremiah Hayes

Cast: Starring Chris Eyre as himself, with interviews with Clint Eastwood, Jim Jarmusch, Robbie Robertson, Sacheen Littlefeather, John Trudell, Russell Means

Genre: Documentary

(*Watch the film online [here](#).)*

Bury My Heart in the Hollywood Hills

We once had a cat who was such a gifted hunter that she eventually got bored with mice and rats and turned to bigger prey, like squirrels and weasels. One evening she brought home a bat. She hadn't quite killed it because she wanted us to see how frightening this creature was as it

hissed, flapped, and writhed on the floor. She would glance at it every now and then and then stare up at us, purring happily, as if to say, "Look at this terrifying thing I caught!"

There's a malicious tendency in Hollywood films to glamorize Native Americans in order to inflate our own colonialist egos, presenting them as either a fearful threat or a stylized ideal. Putting Native Americans at the center of our Campbellian hero's tale has done them a terrible disservice and contributes to the social and economic problems they're still experiencing. It's little wonder that they've consciously rejected the image portrayed in films and television and are now developing their own films about their own realities.

There's a scene in *Smoke Signals* in which three Indians are watching a Western shoot-'em-up. "You know, the only thing more pathetic than Indians on TV," remarks Thomas-Builds-the-Fire, "is Indians watching Indians on TV."

The strange loop caused by Hollywood's century-long depiction of Native Americans and their resulting self-perception is given careful examination in *Reel Injun*. But another dimension is present that one doesn't often encounter, and that is what the Indian symbolizes in Western culture and how this symbol develops in response to changing cultural tides.

The title of the film sums it up, making a pun out of the quest for authentic “Indianness,” which is carefully staged and then spit out as celluloid. In the end, Native American identity is crucified by Hollywood’s power to define what it means to be Indian.

The mythical struggle between white cowboys and Indian attackers lies at the very heart of Western pop culture and has informed and inspired high culture as well. The “look” of the Indian was carefully contrived, with the dress of the Plains Indian generalized to all tribes. The white cowboys were good; the Indians, though a terrifying and formidable opponent, were bad, representing the shadow side, the great untamed. Even little white and Indian children got that—there often would be prepubescent fistfights outside the cinemas after the cowboy movies let out.

But Indians also represented a rich world of fantasy, an idealized world of make-believe that would have those same little pugnacious white boys happy to assign their cabins the names of Indian tribes at summer camp. In the ’60s, Native American identity was co-opted by white young people who wanted to “get back to the garden” and embrace more primal—and thus supposedly more liberating—lifestyles. The Indian was wild and free and uninhibited; he had great skill as a warrior, and the beauteous adventures of his life were the stuff of dreams. Wherever people longed for freedom from social constraints, the Indian archetype wasn’t far behind.

Sadly, an overemphasis on the mythic qualities of the noble pre-colonial savage tended to correlate with attempts to extinguish them. (*We’re going to destroy these people, but here are some nice stories to help you remember them.*) The ideal could easily be set aside long enough to justify the genocide. The more cunning and superhuman the Indians, the more easily could John Wayne insult them, kill them, and desecrate their graves.

“I remember once we were on a set, the director said ‘I want a real native, upfront. I want to see the real thing.’ We couldn’t find one!”

Clint Eastwood, as quoted in Reel Injun

“The strange loop caused by Hollywood’s century-long depiction of Native Americans and their resulting self-perception is given careful examination in Reel Injun. But another dimension is present . . . what the Indian symbolizes in Western culture and how this symbol develops in response to changing cultural tides.”

Cree filmmaker Chris Eyre set out “on a journey to find my Hollywood roots,” as he puts it. The film image of the Indian defines, like it or not, the Indian archetype, and this fantasy, as Adam Beach points out, is pretty much indispensable to our culture. But what does this mean for Indians in search of their true selves?

The movies have for the most part done a lousy job at negotiating reality for generations of Native Americans, but now at last Indians are at the cultural negotiation table, contributing honest, authentic films about their real existence and their own interpretations of their own myths. And the work they’re producing is amazingly good.

It's a good sign.

Reel Injun manifests eight of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind; 4) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 7) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 8) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

DID YOU KNOW?

AU Press



Did you know that Athabasca University has its own scholarly press? AU Press has recently published its Fall 2013 catalogue of offerings, but many students don't know about the Press, its offerings, and its mission.

Like most university presses, AU Press publications are peer-reviewed; editors subject all submissions to heavy scrutiny and only publish "scholarship of the highest quality." Subject areas focus on geographical regions, including "Canada, the North American West, and the Circumpolar North." The Press seeks to publish "innovative and experimental works" while "[promoting] neglected forms such as diary, memoir, and oral history."

One unique facet of AU Press is that it is all about open access to scholarly material, via digital delivery and Creative Commons licensing where possible; AU Press is committed "to the dissemination of knowledge and research through open access digital journals and monographs, as well as through new electronic media." This means that all AU Press publications—including books and scholarly journals—can be accessed, free of charge, via the Internet.

In addition to print-type publications like books and journals, AU Press publishes scholarly websites in line with its geographical focus and academic standards.

For further information, including current offerings, videos of book launches, author readings, and more, visit the [AU Press site](#).

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Drummer Boy

How fast can you hit the drums? Couple hundred times a minute? How about over 1,200 strokes in 60 seconds? That's the record set by a young Canadian drummer, who was recently named the world's fastest speed drummer.

As the *Toronto Star* [reports](#), 22-year-old Tom Grosset, an Etobicoke, Ontario native and graduate of Humber College's music program, "earned the title at the World's Fastest Drummer finals" last week.

Grosset's winning score—1,208 strokes in one minute—is just five strokes higher than the prior record. He's the only Canadian to have earned the title to date.

Speed drumming requires skill, but it's more than merely quick handling of the drumsticks. Grosset told reporters that he has to "really [concentrate] on the sound of the pad because when you're going really fast sometimes you'll start to play in unison."

Grosset initially became interested in speed drumming after "some innocent Googling about drums," but it took seven years of practice (an hour every day for seven years!) before he was ready to show his skill at the competition in Nashville, Tennessee this month.

After his triumph, Grosset's decided to take a break and focus his musical energies elsewhere, including his role in a jazz fusion band. "People are going to automatically assume that I'm a speed drummer, a metal head," he told reporters, adding that this isn't the case; he's "just trying to improve as a musician."

Around the World: Roll Call

It's widely known that dolphins and other sea mammals communicate through a series of whistles, grunts, and other underwater vocalizations. But recent research shines a light on just how distinctive these whistles can be.

As NBC News [reports](#), newly published research on bottlenose dolphins indicates that dolphins "call to each other using distinctive whistles that serve as names."

The names are believed to arise when "dolphin infants . . . begin making a unique whistle, and over time, that whistle becomes their name."

As the dolphin matures, its unique, individual whistle—often used like a "personal calling [card] to invite other dolphins to play"—takes on a new meaning when other dolphins use it to call out to that particular friend.

Researchers previously knew that dolphins "could learn specific vocalizations in captivity," but this research is significant because it shows the same "ability in wild dolphins."

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. *The Voice* does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

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THE VOICE

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