

NORTH OF CENTER

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FREE

TAKE HOME AND READ

VOLUME I, ISSUE 5

On parade with March Madness Lexington's MMMB winds its way through the streets of Louisville

By Nick Kidd

March Madness Marching Band (MMMB) is a community marching band born and bred in Lexington. Its roster of more than 60 members have donated everything—instruments, costumes, rehearsal space, sweat, time and much more—to lead the band from the drawing board to the streets of Lexington and beyond. I first learned

like walking—we don't worry too much about keeping lockstep) while playing drums, and I was sure I'd bungle the material. But the band's spirits were high and I soon reckoned that there was no place for inhibition in MMMB.

From where I marched, I could see our dancers knocking 'em dead in front of us. Taking their cue from the dancers, the musicians started taking liberties: moonwalking, spinning

FreeKY Fest, Lori Houlihan. I contacted Lori and asked her a few questions, starting with where she got the idea to create a community marching band.

Lori had attended Atlanta's Echo Project festival a couple years ago, where she saw Portland's March Fourth perform. "I noticed these newer punk rock marching bands happening, like March Fourth and Mucca Pazza, and they were filled with professional musicians. Mick Jeffries was trying really hard to get one for the FreeKY Fest and we started talking about the deep well of talent here in Lexington and figured we could just put one together."

Six months later, when Lori was put in charge of Local First Lexington's entry in the downtown Lexington's Holiday Parade, she thought the possibility of creating a local marching band to show off local talent would be the perfect way to promote the Local First ethos.

"Mick and I met with Jennifer Miller, Farhad Rezaei, Steve Baron and others, and everyone loved the idea," Lori said. "I thought we'd recruit actual professional musicians to do this parade. But it ended up being more people who had been musicians in high school or college marching bands who joined, so we put our first show together with about thirty performers, with everyone from an 8-year old to a 60-year old. Of course, I was only planning on it being an entry for the holiday parade," Lori said. "I never thought it'd take on a life of its own."

So how did the band grow from thirty in its first parade, to approximately sixty today? "Well I think people, if they don't know the history of the band, assume we're old dear friends but we're not. It's not a clique of people and there's not one scene of people that's involved with MMMB. There's no age or level of craftsmanship. We kinda come from all over the place. And it's all come together with Facebook, really. I used it to recruit people to come to our first practices and market the band and talk about it."

When Lori mentioned Facebook—which provided my introduction to the band—it shed light on the constructive power of the social networking behemoth while helping me understand how MMMB could, as Lori pointed out, mysteriously lack a particular "type" of member. Alas, Facebook's broad appeal can partially

explain the apparent randomness of our ranks, including DJs from WRFL, North of Center contributors (including Colleen Glenn from the Film/Media page), local musicians, Mecca dancers, children, and many strangers I'd never seen before. I have no idea where everyone goes when we disband, nor what kind of life awaits him or her. But as someone who's long feared that Facebook ironically reduces human interaction, I was encouraged to see that Lori had utilized the site effectively to recruit people for emphatically "offline" endeavors.

The anonymity provided by the Internet means MMMB has no idea just who might be aware of the band let alone who might join next. "If there's someone who wants to come into our band and offer some creative element to our machine, then have at it," Lori said. "We have a few

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The Lyric: A brief history and an update

NoC News Bureau

In 1997, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established between the city of Lexington and the state of Kentucky for the city to buy and renovate the Lyric as an African American cultural project. It was a part of a larger contract to support and develop the arts in Lexington. Acquisition through condemnation took longer than expected and the MOU was amended in 2002.

The Lyric Task Force was formed and in its early days, the members worked to involve the community in the dreaming and planning processes for the use of the Lyric. In 2005 and 2006, public forums were held to determine what the neighborhood would like to see in the renovation and its future use. The task force presented a plan to council and it was unanimously voted for in October 2006. The money for the construction costs was bonded in fiscal year 2009.

In the beginning of this month, Lexington city council accepted the construction bid with only one dissenting vote, and the Lyric's rebirth became a reality.

The restoration began this week. The renovation of the Lyric will create Lexington's first LEED-certified building. The work is projected to take a bit more than a year with a completion date of September 2010.

In recent months, leading up to this historic vote, a work group put together a compelling and innovative business plan for the Lyric. With a business work group lead by Shaye Rabold, a facility concept and business plan was crafted that transformed the original vision for the theatre into what will be a nationally-acclaimed theatre and cultural arts center for African Americans. Programming for the Lyric will be centered on the theme "Telling Our Stories." The facility will include a theatre performance space, a gallery, and a multipurpose space.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the long-awaited revival of this historic theatre will take place Thursday, July 16th at 10 A.M.

Drop on by.



March Madness performing at the Belvedere during Louisville's Forecastle Festival, July 11, 2009.

of the band on Facebook, where Jennifer Miller posted a video of the band rehearsing James Brown's "Living in America." I watched and listened with great pleasure as the band loyally paid homage to the Godfather of Soul while maintaining the style of traditional marching bands.

The next day I bumped into Brian Connors-Manke, an MMMB trombonist whom I'd spotted in the video, and asked him when I could see the band in action. He told me MMMB would be marching in downtown Lexington's Fourth of July parade, and then, to my surprise, asked me if I'd like to join.

I accepted on the spot, asking only "When's practice?"

Practice came two days later, where I feebly hoped to play the snare drum from my trap set: the wrong drum for the job. Fortunately, MMMB had an extra marching snare they let me borrow. Six days and one practice later, I performed in the Fourth of July parade with MMMB for the first time. It was also my first time "marching" (more

in circles, high-fiving members of the crowd—all while keeping the music reasonably tight. I looked around at my bandmates and noticed them all smiling back at the adoring crowd. It went on like this for a mile or more, the distance passing quickly.

This was my first real taste of the MMMB experience, my initiation. The rush was exhilarating.

The crowd loved our rolling tide of red, white, and blue band regalia. Our performance merited MMMB the "Best Non-Float" of the parade, an award MMMB has claimed in every parade it's ever entered.

"A punk marching band"

Having recently played my second show with MMMB—just one week after the first—at Louisville's Forecastle Festival, I decided it was time I started asking the questions I'd neglected to ask before I joined the band. I quickly learned that MMMB's founding member was someone I'd worked with on a planning committee during last year's

A different kind of free trade More alternate economies in Lexington

By Beth Connors-Manke

A friend who grew up in West Virginia and has lived for the past several years in eastern Kentucky, remarked once about all the yard sales her area. On the first of the month, the time when government checks traditionally made their way to mailboxes, sales were everywhere. Some houses had racks and table tables permanently stationed in the yard. At least one place had a sign advertising "Indoor Yard Sale"; "indoor" meant in an outbuilding on the property.

I asked my friend, a native Appalachian and self-proclaimed "junk monkey," to speculate about that type of economy. Her answer began

like this: "Poor people end up with the burden of the cast off stuff in a capitalist society. Goods filter down until the worst crap is in the poorest places, and the poor people have to deal with it. A culture of stuff, of pack-ratishness ensues."

She continued on to paint the economic picture in her home place: in poor and isolated areas, there are fewer commercial stores offering goods. Material items get circulated, instead, through yard sales that have used goods and, as she has recently noticed, new items like unopened 12 packs of pantyhose. Unsure if the sales brought any substantial profit, she wondered if the practice of yard sales and flea markets was a "cultural habit

or a socio-economic necessity." She saw that for some "goin' tradin'" was a pastime or employment if one was out of work for injury or disability. Thinking of her own family and friends, she saw that the perpetual cycle of goods trading was rooted in a belief in "trading up"—parlaying something relatively worthless into something weighty. Like Kyle McDonald, the guy who between July 2005 and July 2006 traded a red paperclip and eventually got a house, they could make something out of almost nothing.

Well, we're here in Lexington and, despite the economic downturn, we've got no shortage of pristine,

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The Neighborhood

North of Center is a periodical, a place, and a perspective. Keep reading to find out what that means.

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On someone else's land Misadventures in gardening

By Beth Connors-Manke

In Search of London Ferrell and His Legacy

When I initially heard about the garden last year, I assumed—based on other strange naming practices in Lexington—that “London Ferrell” referred to the streets bordering the garden. My first visit to the garden proved me wrong; the community garden is on Third Street between Elm Tree Lane and Martin Luther King Boulevard. When I had a chance to corner Sherry earlier this spring, I asked her about the name. She said, “Talk to Bob Voll.”

On a rainy Thursday afternoon a few weeks ago, I wandered from the garden to the caretaker's cottage in the Old Episcopal Burying Ground, which sits next to the garden. I had an appointment to talk to Bob, a volunteer from Christ Church Cathedral who takes care of the burying ground, and Carolyn Ware, the archivist of Christ Church. They had agreed to unravel—at least in part—the London Ferrell mystery for me.

Before meeting with Bob and Carolyn, I had done some research and knew that London Ferrell was a slave born in Hanover, Virginia who became a preacher in Lexington in the early 1800s. A free person when he came to Lexington, Ferrell was a popular figure, respected by whites and blacks alike.

I also knew that the Baptist minister had been buried in the Old Episcopal Burying Ground. As I settled down to chat with amateur historians Bob and Carolyn, I was anxious to know how a black Baptist pastor ended up laid to rest in a white Episcopal cemetery in 1854. A great storyteller, Bob made me be patient for my answer—I needed to hear the history first.

A document claiming to be Ferrell's biography tells the story of Ferrell's early conversion. At the age of eleven, Ferrell and another little boy nearly drown while bathing in a river. Sobered by the brush with death and sure that they “would have gone to the ‘lake of fire and brimstone,’” the boys devoted themselves to God. Baptized at twenty, Ferrell began preaching shortly thereafter and, in the biography, is said to have had the charisma and holiness necessary to tame an overseer who had barred Ferrell from preaching at a slave's funeral.

When Ferrell and his wife Rodah arrived in Lexington, Ferrell was invited to preach in the homes of prominent whites in Lexington, including the Thomas Hart family, Christ Church members. Ferrell, Bob said, “was noted immediately as being very proficient by the whites and then was demanded in other homes. He became very recognizable and had impressed the people here [in Lexington].”

Intrigued, I wanted to know what about Ferrell's preaching drew people. Was it his charisma? The message? A mixture of the two? Bob responded by stressing how little we know about Ferrell except basic facts—there aren't even any pictures of the preacher, I was told.

Speaking to Ferrell's popularity, Bob continued, “When he died, London Ferrell had the largest church in Kentucky, of any color, any race. This was 1854, before Emancipation. He had, at the time of his death, baptized over 5,000 people.” Carolyn added, “His funeral is said to have been the second largest only to Henry Clay's.” Obviously, even a transplant to Lexington like me had heard of Henry Clay. But why, I began to wonder, hadn't I heard of London Ferrell?

This question grew in importance as Bob unfolded the story of the 1833 cholera epidemic.

When a cholera epidemic hit Lexington in 1833, Bob said, “there were three clergy that we can find reference to who ministered to the victims and to the families: the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Bosworth Smith, London Ferrell, and Father Edward McMahon. There was an alliance, we believe, that may have started in 1833. The burying ground was purchased in 1832, and six months later there was a cholera epidemic. We know that there were people whose bodies were just left at the gate.” While Ferrell survived, he lost his wife Rodah to the epidemic. The preacher continued his ministry, pastoring First African Baptist Church until his death in 1854.

Bob told me that London Ferrell is the “only known African American to have been buried at the burying ground. There may be speculation that other blacks were buried here as a result of the cholera epidemic. It would have been typical of whites to allow that to happen, but to never acknowledge it. And there's no record in any of our books of anyone giving approval for Ferrell to be buried here—not that there had to be.”

Carolyn noted, “One of the things that I found in the archives was that a former archivist had written ‘Why was he buried here?’—I don't think anyone has ever really discovered that.”

The rain had stopped for the afternoon, and I was ready to tromp through the wet grass to see Ferrell's headstone. “So where's his grave-stone?” I asked Bob, expecting an easy answer.

*Note: London Ferrell's name has taken on multiple spellings. The community garden uses “Ferrell,” as does a stained glass window at the First African Baptist Church. Another spelling is used in *The Biography of London Ferrill, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Colored Persons, Lexington, KY*, printed by A.W. Elder in 1854 (available online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/ferrill/ferrill.html>). Although “Ferrill” may be the earlier and more accurate spelling, I use “Ferrell” for consistency's sake.

Part two of Beth's search for London Ferrell will come in our next issue. A teaser: she has to leave the Old Episcopal Burying Ground to continue her adventure.



March Madness performing at the 4th of July parade in downtown Lexington.

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March Madness Marching Band (cont.)

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professional musicians carrying things, but (MMMB's) not filled with professional musicians. You almost can't compare us to what inspired us, to be a punk-marching band.”

Still, there's plenty punk about MMMB, though it wouldn't seem obvious to anyone who associates the word “punk” with commoditized fashion found in shopping malls across America. We're punk in other ways, like playing for free, supporting our local economy, and generally disregarding any outside authority beyond our audience's. When our bus to Forecastle broke down—twice—the band responded in about the most punk way imaginable: by playing to the passing traffic along I-64.

Our broad formula exudes punk too, in that we've adopted the sheer multitude of standard marching bands but gutted the traditionally formal nature of such acts. This allows us to play and dance with a great deal of freedom, allowing our creativity to shine through and garner the attention of more than just music-lovers.

“I don't mean to make light of our musicianship, but I don't think that that's the magic of our band,” Lori said.

“What is the magic of our band?” I asked.

She answered: “It's a diverse group of people who've come together from all over the place who create something that makes people so happy, including the people who do it. The joy is the magic of our band. The magic is that it's such a fun family thing, which might not seem obvious to someone like you, but it's great for me to have my kids there with me.”

With each of us bringing a unique energy to the group, regardless of experience or musical influences, it makes sense that there are kids in MMMB. They're as much a fount of energy, spontaneity, and imagination as anyone. And Lori's right: having so many sharing in the MMMB experience *is* magical, with a big part of the thrill derived from watching our audience's reactions through one another's eyes.

Community work and local-first music

Of course, we're not all fairy tales and magic in MMMB; there's lots of hard work that goes on behind the scenes to make MMMB work, so I asked Mick Jeffries to help me understand how it's all held together. “First of all,” Mick said, “all of the band members have day-jobs. We do the band for the sheer joy of performing. But some of the people who make the band possible—Teresa Tomb, Farhad, Tripp Bratton—are professional artists. We couldn't do it without their expertise, and as much as they're driven by their passion and love for the art, we don't expect them to do what they do for free.”

Beyond MMMB's professional artists, local businesses and fans have graciously chipped in to support the band. Local First Lexington, Smiley Pete Publishing, Bourbon n' Toulouse, The Hive Salon, Mecca and others have helped the band along, donating everything from practice space to food, beer and umbrellas. MMMB has also received donations of dozens of elaborate costumes from Jennifer Miller and, recently, a surprise donation from a fund raiser organized by the aforementioned Deborah Hensley.

These local businesses and individuals have helped give purpose to the band, which is why MMMB always marches with the Local First banner.

“Right now there is no money, but when we get contributions, like that of Deborah Hensley's, we want to give the money to Mecca (who donates our practice space), to Farhad, and to Tripp (who compose our music). Some of these people in here with us, we can't expect them to do it just for fun. So if we experience any degree of funds, we direct it to them. The band owes a debt to the large heart of some of our community's finest artists and performers.”

“The spirit is community people working—and playing—with other community people for the community,”

Mick said. “When it comes down to it, we're a band, and our people provide everything from their desire to participate to their instruments to many of the outrageous costumes. While people tend to provide their own material, there's enough enthusiasm to make up for anything lacking in one area or the other. Everybody wants to share the good times.”

North of Center is currently seeking submissions from artists and graphic designers for a nameplate logo. Please contact Keith Halladay at noceditors@yahoo.com for details and submission instructions.

Free trade in Lexington (cont.)

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never-before-been-used retail goods. But if you've looked in your wallet, at the property value of your house (at least this isn't Cleveland), or at your business ledger, you may have noticed a lack there. In earlier issues of this esteemed paper, Danny Mayer took a long look at what he calls "The Basil Economy": how food locally grown can be distributed without that stuff absent from your wallet (cash). My look here is at two instances of how services (need to go to the dentist?) and harder, less perishable stuff than basil (like mannequin heads) get traded.

Art SWAP

On the evening of the June 19th gallery hop, my housemate, helpmate, husband, and generally better-half started scurrying around as if to go somewhere. We were supposed to spend a rare evening in, so I was irked. A canvas in his hand, he said he was going downtown to trade some of his art for other stuff. As much a junk monkey as my friend from Appalachia, I figured I'd join the fun so I grabbed a woven bag from my closet. The site of the exchange was the Downtown Arts Center where Bill Santen's and Bruce Burris's "SWAP" was on exhibit—or kindof. I'm not sure something is an exhibit if you can touch it, take something from it, and shove something else in. The installation is a large shelving unit, with cubicles containing things like a gourd, an old Minolta camera, paper lanterns, some joker's business card, a big jar of nails, and a mannequin head. The idea is to bring something to trade for something already on the shelves.

My better-half traded a piece of his art for some drum mallets, and my bag took the place of an old munitions box. Bruce Burris was on hand so I cornered him, asked him what "SWAP" was all about.

"Bill Santen and I were talking about the Digger Free Store in San Francisco in the 1960s. I happened to live near one of the old Digger Stores, near Haight-Ashbury. We were talking about that, and the present economy, the history of swap meets, and people making exchanges. We created this piece, particularly in this building, because we wanted to encourage a couple different things: free exchanges and consideration of how this building, a public building, is used."

"There's a particular public that doesn't use this building. So what if we encouraged use through providing an activity or an exchange—for an economic reason—for people who normally may not use it? In these boxes are things anyone could use: beans, shoes, broken equipment."

What I liked about "SWAP" was the participatory aspect of the art: anyone who could grab something from somewhere could trade. But the question was who would come into the Downtown Arts Center to do it? Would the people who hung out in Phoenix Park all day participate in "SWAP"? Or, would it only be the generally white, liberal art hop crowd? Burris had already considered these limitations and realistically assessed, "there was nothing before and now there's a little." (Burris told me later that a group of about 20 kids from Camp Carnegie swapped items at the installation.)

"We really wanted to comment on the economy, the nature of exchange," Burris said. Watching the early trades, Burris was interested in how some people were troubled by the question of

equal value—feeling their item wasn't equal in value to the one they wanted to take. "What are those feelings all about? Really these shelves are filled with things that someone didn't want. If you replace it with something that is, in your mind, of lesser value—well, what is that all about exactly? So these are the sorts of things we're really looking at here."

"SWAP" addresses the issue of cultural habits that my Appalachian friend had noted. The installation begged the questions: What's fun or interesting about trade? How does it link us to others in ways that are not explicitly capitalistic? What does it say about our personal and collective values?

Without money mediating the exchanges in "SWAP," one assessed the worth of an object in an entirely different way. When I left my hand-woven bag, it wasn't in exchange for the box; rather, I had offered it to some future swapper who wanted simply to enter the fun, to participate in an artistic interpretation of circulation of material goods.

In terms of the socio-economic side of barter, "SWAP" couldn't fulfill pragmatic needs of Lexington residents. Someone may have really needed that green ketchup in one of the cubicles, but that person would be an anomaly. One couldn't very reliably shop "SWAP." But Burris's comment about the Diggers pointed to fuller attempts at barter that had, however provisionally, been tried in other places, at other times.

Digger Economy

The Diggers was a group with roots in guerrilla street theatre and West Coast counterculture active in the mid to late 1960s. In residence in the Haight-Ashbury area of San Francisco, the anarchists distributed free food and used goods to the young people who had flocked to the Bay Area and Golden Gate Park for social and political revolution. Their name harkened back to the English Diggers of the mid 1600s who tried to reclaim common land to farm, eschewing private property. An extensive online archive (www.diggers.org) makes available some of the documents circulated by the San Francisco group.

One Digger manifesto exhorts all to give up their money, Digger style: *Money Is An Unnecessary Evil*.

It is addicting.

It is a temptation to the weak (most of the violent crimes of our city in some way involve money).

It can be hoarded, blocking the free flow of energy and the giant energy-hoards of Montgomery Street will soon give rise to a sudden and thus explosive release of this trapped energy, causing much pain and chaos.

As part of the city's campaign to stem the causes of violence the San Francisco Diggers announce a 30 day period beginning now during which all responsible citizens are asked to turn in their money. No questions will be asked.

Bring money to your local Digger for free distribution to all. The Diggers will then liberate it's [sic] energy according to the style of whoever receives it.

In a later article entitled "The Post-Competitive, Comparative Game of a Free City," the Diggers envision a different way of life: a "Free City" with a free food storage and distribution center, a free garage and mechanics, a free bank and treasury, free housing, and a free "medical thing." Eventually, the movement morphed and disseminated

to other parts of the country. In no way short on ideas and cultural precepts, the Diggers and their fellow travelers couldn't turn the tide of American capitalism. If governmental resistance hadn't squelched it first, the Free City eventually would have had to face the practical issue of scale: is barter possible on a large scale, when it's not just people without resources scrounging and swapping? The Free City seemed an economy meant to be overwhelmed by greater powers.

Genesis Trade Exchange

Who could successfully spread the gospel of alternate economy in capitalist America?

Oprah, of course.

Kristie LaLonde, with her husband Mark and father Keith Nally, started Genesis Trade Exchange in Lexington after she saw an Oprah Winfrey show about a woman who paid for her wedding by bartering. Kristie is not unique

client. And then he took the hundred dollars and cut expenses with it."

Genesis's 460 members have traded everything from facelifts to automobiles. Although it has some aspects of a financial institution (Mark can give members a line of credit in the exchange), Genesis is mostly a marketing tool. According to Mark, "A trade exchange makes business sense—it makes sense for everybody. It doesn't only make sense for the service industry; it makes sense for the retail industry. Everybody needs new business." While there are no tax advantages for members (Genesis submits 1099s for all sales that are done on trade), there are no tax disadvantages either, Mark says.

Mark had been generous with his time, but later I was a little disappointed. I realized I had developed my own idea about trade exchanges that was rooted in an ethical desire to transform economic systems that didn't



"SWAP" installation at the Downtown Arts Center.

in making her Oprah inspiration into reality. Use Google: you'll find more stories of women who started trade exchanges after watching that Oprah show.

I asked Mark LaLonde, president of Genesis Trade Exchange, to give me his pitch for the company, which has been in Lexington for ten years and whose membership is 95% locally owned businesses: "The whole idea is using what you've got to get what you want. And what we all want is more cash paying customers as small business owners."

Genesis takes as its primary goal driving business to its members. Mark's job is to find businesses in Lexington and the surrounding communities to join his trade exchange. His member businesses include "anything from publicly held companies to your everyday, good ole boy electrician and plumber." Network members have an account (an offering of goods or services with a monetary value attached to them) with Genesis that they use to barter for goods and services from other members.

For example: when a plumber needs to see a dentist, he can use \$100 from his Genesis account to purchase the dental work. At checkout time, the plumber and dentist fill out a transaction form that is forwarded to Genesis, which acts as a third party record keeper. Then the dentist can use that \$100 to barter for goods available on the exchange, such as carpet cleaning, advertising, or lawn care. In Mark's words, "The dentist took an unsold billable hour in a place where he didn't have a client, and he turned it into a

work. Trade exchanges like Genesis are pragmatic and all business (apparently Donald Trump even uses them). They are an alternate economy in the sense that they don't use federal currency and, to a limited degree, allow members to circumvent cash transactions. But, obviously, the goal of a small business is to be a business. Far from radical, the trade exchange is about capitalist economic necessity, pure and simple.

So while Genesis doesn't seem to be about changing cultural habits, Mark's business does witness the way economic strife forces people into new patterns of consumption and exchange. He notices that, in a bad economy, members are more willing to change service providers and more flexible about their goods and services. His members show creativity in how and when they purchase items when money is tight.

Barter isn't a panacea for all our economic woes. It takes time and energy, and sometimes it is just shuffling lots of stuff around within the same system of poverty or lack. I doubt trade, as an alternate economy, really challenges the fundamental problems we have in our current system. It may be an adventure that brings us unexpected items or experiences, like my munitions box. Barter may have Cinderella stories like the red paperclip into a house, or a \$40,000 wedding paid for through trade. But the dream of "tradin' up" that my Appalachian friend described isn't likely to bring the poor out of poverty. However, as the Diggers showed, it may feed and clothe people for one more day.

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Thupid: in defense of Michael Bay (sort of)

By A.G. Greecs

What to do about Michael Bay? The man is a walking punch line.

Everything he does is loud, dumb and often unintentionally hilarious. Who can forget the touching scene of the crying robot in *Transformers 2*?

And having become incredibly wealthy making unbearable movies, Bay incessantly whines about how mean everyone (bloggers) are to him. Then he compounds his Little Lord Fauntleroy image by making exaggerated claims about his own genius. And let's face it, any claims about his genius have to be wildly exaggerated. It's Michael Bay we're talking about.

Just a few weeks ago, for instance, he got into a widely publicized spat with Megan Fox after she said *Transformers 2* "is not a movie about acting." This was a huge mistake because:

a) Getting into an argument with Megan Fox about *anything* is not exactly a way to affirm your intellectual credibility.



"Look Bee, you'll always be my first car. I love you, man." *Transformers 2* (2009)

b) If you're going to pick a fight with Megan Fox, maybe you shouldn't do it over the only defensible thing she's ever said. (Are we expected to believe that *Transformers 2* is a movie about acting?) It would probably be better to fight with her over something she was demonstrably wrong about. There's not exactly a paucity of choices.

And c) In the course of whining about how mean Fox is, don't say—as Bay said—that "Nick Cage wasn't a big actor when I cast him, nor was Ben Affleck before I put him in *Armageddon*." Saying this will cause everyone to remember (1) that you were partially responsible for

almost destroying Affleck's career (*Armageddon* and *Pearl Harbor* back to back was sort of a body blow), and (2) that Cage was working with directors like Francis Ford Coppola and the Coen brothers roughly a decade before you were shooting your very first Meatloaf video.

That's the fundamental problem with Michael Bay. It's not just that he's bad (though he is very, very bad). It's that he's fundamentally unlikable in a really public way. Because he's so deliciously mockable it's easy to forget that he isn't, in fact, the worst director in history. He's not even the worst living director.

So, in defense of Michael Bay, I would like to present a list of six working Hollywood directors (sorry Ed Wood, Uwe Bowl and assorted film students) who, in terms of stupidity, pointless violence, misogyny, ridiculous melodrama, loudness and general contempt for their audience easily equal—if not actually surpass—Michael Bay.

Honorable Mention: Chris Columbus

Chris Columbus' movies aren't bad, per se. It's more that he is so fantastically boring that he creates his own gravitational field. In reverse chronological order his films include: *I Love You Beth Cooper*, *Rent*, the first two Harry Potter movies (the boring ones), and *Bicentennial Man*. Are you asleep yet? Let's keep going. *Stepmom*, *Nine Months*, *Home Alone 2*.

Sigh. Again, not exactly bad, but there's something slightly depressing about a twenty-year career with *Mrs. Doubtfire* as the highlight. Looking at Columbus's list of extremely

commercially successful movies, I get the sense that Americans as a whole may not be the most interesting people.

5) Joel Schumacher

True story: Joel Schumacher is really old.

Well, okay, he's seventy. But that's pretty old when you consider how immature his movies are. David

a very botox-eddy mid-eighties head of Arnold Schwarzenegger, photo-shopped onto a different actor's body, stomping into things for what feels like a really long time. The effect is surprisingly realistic (although Schwarzenegger's characteristic lack of expression probably helps). It's pretty easy to imagine a future with action movies populated entirely by re-scans

"Because Bay is so deliciously mockable it's easy to forget that he isn't, in fact, the worst director in history."

Edelstein once described Schumacher's films as being like video games, but without emotional involvement. If that seems harsh, keep in mind that Schumacher directed *Batman Forever*. Then he compounded the sin by inflicting *Batman and Robin* on us—a movie so egregious that a decade after its release, it caused slow initial ticket sales of Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins*, despite the fact that the films had nothing in common besides copyright attorneys.

He went on to make *8MM*, a movie that illustrated with pointless literalism the extent to which American movies fetishize violence. Just in case, you know, we hadn't been clear on that before. As if all that weren't enough, he also gave Colin Farrell his start in Hollywood. Thanks for that, dude.

4) McG

Another director who got his start making music videos, McG possesses a list of credits that is short but pungent. He did the *Charlie's Angels* flicks in all their softcore glory. This summer he returned with *Terminator: Salvation*, a two-hour long action movie with just enough dialogue to make a decent full-length trailer.

Like a lot of lousy directors, McG doesn't seem to like actors all that much. So after the governor of California declined a cameo in *Terminator*, McG managed to achieve the holy grail of bad directors—he rendered using actual actors in a live action movie obsolete.

For those of you haven't seen *Salvation*—and I wouldn't recommend it—the climax (er, loudest part) features

of Liz Taylor and a Bond-era Sean Connery.

3) Brett Ratner

Ah, Brett Ratner, a man who believes that women are made of latex, what can we say about you? You did *Rush Hour*, but then you did *Rush Hour 2*, and (why not?) *Rush Hour 3*. You made *Family Man*, a heartwarming drama about the importance of designer clothes for virility. You put the last nail in the X-Men coffin (though it was Gavin Hood who actually buried it). You made *Red Dragon*, because if there's one thing America needed, it was another movie about Hannibal Lecter.

You are basically Michael Bay, but with a douche-bag goatee. If I thought that Michael Bay was capable of growing facial hair, I'd suspect that you were the same person.

2) The Wayans Brothers

In the interest of full disclosure, I should probably mention that I've never actually seen a Wayans brothers' movie. I have, however, seen a lot of trailers for them. They never fail to inspire red-hot, television-destroying bouts of impotent rage. Just sitting here contemplating the fact that *White Chicks* ever got made is actually enough to make me kind of angry. And then they made *Little Man!* I think a need a drink.

Wayans brothers' movies actually make me terrified for my country. Seriously. If anyone reading this paid

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When style gets in the way of story

Michael Mann and the problem with *Public Enemies*

By Zach Carter

I am a camera guy, a geek really. Obsessed, most would say. If you ever wonder who reads those two hundred-page novels that come with any of the latest electronics, that would be me. A fun afternoon for me is checking the specs on the latest non-released prototype from Japan that has the resolution of film but can fit in your wallet. It really pumps up my ones and zeros.

I tell you all this so that when I say Michael Mann's new film *Public Enemies* (2009) has the aesthetics of a father filming his seven year-old's birthday party, you will get my meaning. Now, let's be fair because "aesthetics" is a loaded term. Mann's latest film tells the true story of the notorious Depression-era bank robber John Dillinger's exploits and the FBI's quest to take him out. *Public Enemies* is an extremely well-researched and well-written film. The acting and art direction are also truly breathtaking.

Unfortunately, all of these great aspects of the film were overshadowed by Mann's newfound "style." His style (I am sure that's what he would call it if he were asked) entails using the Grass Valley Viper camera at 30 frames per second. The result? A film that attempts to be different, but in the end shoots itself in the foot.

When we left the theater, I asked my friends a simple question, "What did you think?" The general feeling

was A) everyone's heads hurt, and B) that movie was too damn shaky. Fighting back my own feelings about this film, I thought about what could have caused their response to the film. I knew that the movie was filmed in 30 frames per second; this was obvious when I watched the trailer.

Mann's choice to shoot a film in 30 frames per second is a poor one at best. In 1927, the choice was made to make 24 frames per second the standard frame rate for motion pictures. This shift came after almost 30 years of shooting movies at 16 frames per second. At that speed, actors appeared almost to jump across the screen (sorry Chaplin). Hence, the decision was made to shoot movies at 24 frames per second because, at that setting, the moving images onscreen portray real life better than any other frame rate.

When a film is shot at 24 frames per second, there are fewer frames to fill up each second than when there are 30 frames. So, the space in between each frame is blurred to smooth the motion together. This is called "motion blur." Actually, the human eye is what does most of the blurring. Watching a movie shot at 30 frames per second, you're going to see more of the individual motions that comprise each movement onscreen. In other words, the image will be a whole lot more jittery.

This is a quality that will stick out like a sore thumb if you are looking for it. Watching a film shot at this frame



Dapper Johnny Depp dons chapeau in *Public Enemies* (2009).

rate can create a headache on its own. Just ask anyone who has watched the entire 86 minutes of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999).

Public Enemies stands out as a movie shot at 30 frames per second. Take, for instance, the scene in *Public Enemies* in which Johnny Depp jumps over a bank counter towards the camera. You may remember this moment from the trailer, even if you haven't seen the film. Depp's movement doesn't have the grace or motion blur that a film shot at 24 frames per second would. Instead, Depp looks like he is being filmed by the behind-the-scenes cameraman. (Ever watch the "behind the scenes" footage tucked away in the "Bonus Features" of a DVD? Notice how rough and jarring the images are? Imagine an entire movie that appears this way.)

Some may point the finger at the camera, The Grass Valley Viper (Viper

for short), as the reason for the film not looking like a "film." OK, fair enough. The Viper uses a digital format. It does not record on film, and therefore could not ever hope to look like a film should. If the only films you have seen filmed on a Viper are *Collateral*, *Miami Vice*, and *Public Enemies*, I would understand if you wanted to avoid all movies shot on a the Viper.

But the Viper itself is not the problem. Directors are choosing the Viper for a couple of reasons. For one, it's cheaper to shoot on a digital format. This means that the savings can be passed on to some other aspect of the film. In some cases, that savings is what allows the film to be made at all. The Viper, in theory, also offers the same depth of color as its analog counterpart, film, making it a cheaper

continued on the next page

Culture

Idaho, Alaska's *Manipulate and Multiply*

By Michael Dean Benton

I first saw Idaho, Alaska around a year ago at Al's Bar. I was a relatively new patron of the bar, I was thinking about moving into the neighborhood, and the music I was hearing from the stage reflected my love for the bar and the neighborhood. Raw, diverse, complex, it seemed familiar, but escaped easy definition. At first it seemed dangerous, but if you took the time to listen closely, you could sense a deeper soul. It definitely wasn't the standard sanitized rock music that was being offered on any of Clear Channel's corporate stations.

Flash forward a year later to the next time I would see them. I am now

base of a following release in February. This is their second studio CD (*Kissin With the Devil*: 2007) and they also have a live recording (2008).

Manipulate and Multiply.

My first impression was that this is a sinister title for a CD. It brings to mind the paranoid scenarios of 1950s Cold War 'B' films in which alien creatures take over the collective body. After a first listen to the CD, I sensed it could refer to the more dehumanizing aspects of contemporary American culture in which artists are treated as commodities to be manipulated, sold and multiplied.

In direct opposition to this surface interpretation of the title, the CD's music and lyrics challenge my cultural anxieties. On the one hand, it reminds me that manipulate refers to the shaping power of the craftsman and the artist; to take raw materials and shape them into something unique. On the other hand, any expressive work of imagination involves a desire to see it multiply through the world. Working with our hands we manipulate

our world through the objects we shape, and working with our minds we manipulate our culture through the stories we shape.

Manipulate, like propaganda, often evokes a negative association from creative, independent people. However, if we reflect honestly, artists, as much as politicians, seek to manipulate their world and hope to multiply their vision of that world. This is the sense that I have developed through the music of Idaho, Alaska's newest release. There is a portrayal of the material darkness of the collective soul, but underlying it is the hopeful exploration of how we can change it through creative exploration of that cultural landscape.

"Into the Desert," which opens the CD, evokes the madness of a culture in which a "life worth living [is] vanishing." It evokes a landscape of "silent deserts" in which we are tilting at illusionary "windmills." These illusions cause us to be deaf to the "lost cause" and "hopeless extremes" that are right in front of us if we would but hear them.

Artists do not escape blame for this cultural wasteland because they are shown to be complicit in the

emptiness of the desert: "And I cried through the night - all the horrors I had dreamed came to life/As though they were scripted, recited, performed on cue, predicted/And the crowd stood and cheered as my head was lost in an overwhelming fear/Of the desert swallowing my soul and sense of well being, wondering..." Professionally it can be suicidal to follow your own path, rather than perform to the cues of the entertainment industry; creatively though the only performance that counts, that really counts, is the one that is authentic to your vision.

In "Drowning in Trust" we see the struggle these days is not simply the struggle against what we may find to be wrong with the world, but an even deeper existential problem of attempting to even begin to define one's authentic vision. Throughout the CD we witness the struggle of developing an authentic vision: "It took me quite a while to realize I'm not right" (*The Inverted Front End*); "Maybe in a while we would understand the game/Of meanings" (*Station Wagon*); "There was volume and distraction only a nomad could see" (*In the Desert*); "evenings when you spent asking, 'What

went wrong?'" (*Brand New*); "I can't tell shit from this education" (*March, April, May*); and "The noise from the fuzz is getting on my nerves/I'll try and ignore it through the meaninglessness of my words" (*Projections Fail*).

Throughout *Manipulate and Multiply* we are reminded that the process of producing maps, stories and histories is the best way we can face this existential problem. We are all responsible for the authentic awareness of our lives and we all need to recognize our complicity in allowing mass-produced illusions to divert us from the reality of the world. There is despair in their assessment, but in their powerful live performances, and on *Manipulate and Multiply*, there is the insistence that through instinctual performance we can challenge this desert wasteland.

Through our own potential as artists and thinkers we can wrestle with the silence of the cultural desert. How do we perform our lives in the midst of passive spectacles of conformity? Idaho, Alaska seeks to shock us out of our complacency with a sensory and intellectual bombardment, perhaps in an attempt to renew our appetite for the authentic.

Neko Case to perform at Woodsongs Old Time Radio Hour

By Megan Neff

Neko Case will perform at 7 pm Monday, July 20, for the weekly Woodsongs Old Time Radio Hour at the Kentucky Theater. The event will be a special broadcast event, leaving the limelight open to Neko Case and "her stripped down band" for the entirety of the program.

Maybe it's just that damnable modifier of "alternative" preceding the "country singer-songwriter," but Case's music resists easy categorization. An underlying country influence can be felt on all of her solo releases, but something darker lurks deep in the music's atmospheric quality, chorus of heavy strings and eerie piano tinkling, as well as within the often-sinister lyrics.

This might have something to do with the fact that Case has not followed the typical dusty path to country music stardom. She began playing drums in local Vancouver punk bands while in art school, moved on to indie-rock band The New Pornographers and collaborated with musicians spanning the genre-spectrum before developing her own personal breed of "country-noir."

The performance comes just months after Case's third solo album, *Middle Cyclone*, won over the hearts of commercial and independent music lovers alike. Hitting no. 3 in its opening week on the Billboard main album

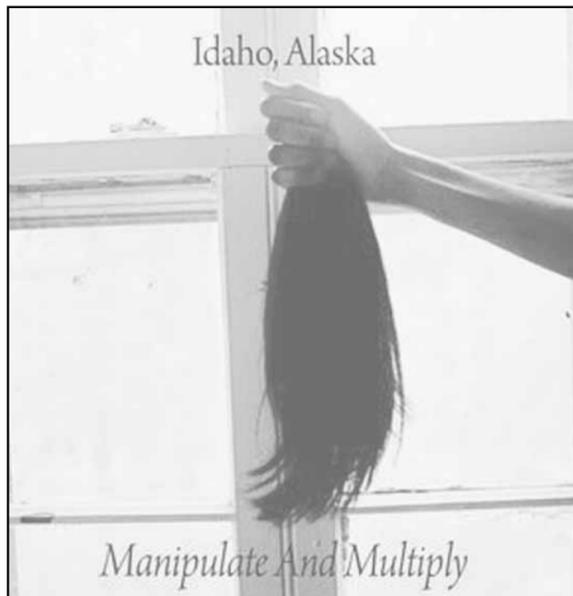
charts, it took the prize for highest debut released by an independent label in 2009 up to that date. But commercial fame is the least of the songstress' ambitions—Case has turned down multiple major record label deals in favor of keeping full artistic control of her music.

"I'm not out to become Faith Hill, I never want to play an arena, and I never want to be on the MTV Video Music Awards, much less make a video with me in it," Case told Seattle's *The Stranger* as she began her solo career in 2002. "I would like to reach a larger audience and see the state of music change in favor of musicians and music fans in my lifetime. I care very much about that."

Case will take to the road again come late August with Joey Burns (Calexico), Imaad Wasif and Jason Lytle (*Grandaddy*) on a tour spanning the states and Canada. No dates are listed in Kentucky, though, so don't miss out on this chance.

If you would like to attend, doors open at 6:20 pm. Plan on arriving before 6:45 pm to be seated before taping of the program begins. Tickets cost \$15 for the general public, \$10 for students and \$5 for Woodsongs partners.

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit the Woodsongs website at www.woodsongs.com.



living in the MLK neighborhood. Al's Bar is a fixture of the local scene and Idaho, Alaska is releasing their second studio CD *Manipulate and Multiply* after coming back from a tour. The second show, a raucous party at Al's Bar celebrating the release of the new CD, was infused with the excitement of their finishing the summer tour, and the music they played that night carried the same raw power and complex music of the first show.

Chris Soulis (Singer), Mike Matthews (Bass) and Mitch Snider (Guitarist) formed Idaho, Alaska in 2007, and the current incarnation includes Mike Grote on the drums. Chris writes most of the lyrics for the band with Mitch contributing his first two songs, "Drowning in Trust" and "The Inverted Front End," for this new release.

The songs for *Manipulate and Multiply* were developed and practiced over the last year. The band then recorded all 15 songs live in one day on May 15, 2009; it was mixed by Mark Borders the following three days at Nitrosonic studios (www.nitrosonic.com). 11 of the songs are on the new CD and the other four will form the

Public Enemies (cont.)

continued from the previous page

alternative without any quality loss in color.

To prove my point, there are two other movies that also used the Viper as their main camera that came sans Mann's newfound "style" attached—*Zodiac* (2007) and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), both directed by David Fincher. Fincher takes the same camera and makes it appear pretty darn close to the way shooting on actual film would look while creating a unique style, without the headache side effect. This is because he shoots these films in 24 frames per second and then builds his style from there.

Michael Mann is a good filmmaker. The man made *Heat* (1994) and *The Insider* (1999) for godsakes. I don't want to ridicule Mann but simply want to ask: what happened, buddy? When did you go from articulate storyteller to a film school student with something to prove? I am all for making films in a unique style, but why is frame rate the factor that you want to change?

My guess is that Mann is going for an edgy look. If 30 frames per second makes images look more "real" because they are jittery, perhaps he felt that a gritty story like John Dillinger's would be better emphasized by a shaky, edgy, in-your-face look. But while that may have been Mann's intention, it backfires because the appearance of the film actually detracts from the fascinating story unfolding onscreen. It's downright distracting.

Film is a visual medium, and if the visuals are distracting, then we can't get into the story. That, for me, is the case with *Public Enemies*. However, if you have masochistic desire to feel like your head is in a vice grip for 140 minutes, then, by all means, see *Public Enemies*. I would just advise to stock up on the Dramamine.

Besides, if it's a gangster film you're in the mood for, there are much better choices out there—*Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938), *Asphalt Jungle* (1950), and *The Godfather* (1970), to name a few—and they all come migraine-free.

GREEN CORNER OF THIRD AND JEFFERSON
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LANTERN

EVERY SUNDAY



OPEN-MIC
Hosted by Jerry Moody

8:00-12:00

Youngsters yamming on insecure idols

What the LeBron James video incident tells us about ourselves

By Keith Halladay

By now you've read or watched the coverage of the "incident" involving LeBron James, his shoe sponsor Nike, and Xavier University's Jordan Crawford, the last of which (allegedly) yoked a two-hand jam down upon the King during action at the LeBron James Skills Academy up in Akron. A photographer filmed the dunk, but a Nike executive absconded with the tape, evidently under instructions from James himself.

I was curious about the mood on the street: would this damage LeBron's credibility, or would popular opinion swing against him?

"Bitchmade," said my buddy Lance, as he scraped at the label on his Beck's bottle. "I'm think I'm starting to like Kobe better."

As you may know, that's no insignificant utterance. LC nearly fell out of his chair laughing: "yes...yes...come to the dark side," he incanted, while Lance frowned and muttered something inaudible.

The sagest member of the group, Philly Moe, cleared his throat, heralding a fresh take: "Nike didn't need to do that, because being dunked on never hurt a player of LeBron's caliber. Remember when Iggy yammed on Kobe on *back-to-back* possessions? Shit didn't even make *Sportscenter*."

"No, no, no," interjected Neil. "Everyone gets dunked on the NBA, but you don't let a local nobody in Starburys dunk on you in a pickup game."

Crawford wasn't simply a local nobody, of course—he's a good player on a good Xavier squad—but the point was made, and the conversation drifted to other topics. Then Jersey Nate walked in, and LC asked him what he thought.

"Bitchmade. And one of a series of bitchmade moves off the court, which leads me to suspect that LeBron has a bitchmade side to his personality at odds with his public image." Nate paused, then resumed: "Bean better."

So that was the mood on the street.

But "bitchmade" can harbor many shades of meaning; in this instance, one might define the term as "lacking sufficient self-assurance, and possibly also testosterone."

Which is bad. Bitchmade doesn't sell shoes or get people to tune in to meaningless November games against the Pacers. No word on David Stern's state of mind, but the first of these variables is Nike's concern. Now, while it's possible that Crawford humiliated LeBron to such a degree that the *dunk itself* made LeBron appear bitchmade (it's possible, as Patrick Ewing knows well), thereby explaining why the company executive was so eager to relieve the photographer of the incriminating tape, it seems unlikely that it could have been worse than any number of Youtube-available posterizations of Magic or Michael.

Confusing matters is the allegation that LeBron himself ordered the confiscation of the tape. Nike will do what Nike does, but was Bron that ashamed? Really?

Writing in the June 2008 *Public Relations Review*, Jane Summers and Melissa Morgan commented that "successful sporting celebrities have been able to generate and sustain a massive PR machine whose fundamental role is to maintain the marketability and high profile of these stars."

We know this; we've known it for some time. Superstar athletes are commodities of incredible value, with a corporate infrastructure managing every part of the athlete's public persona. Summers and Morgan remark that "fans are very sophisticated in their understanding of this construction and that many view this process as very commercial and often unrealistic."

Yet we want perfection anyway, and when we don't get it, we gleefully surf to Deadspin or Kissing Suzy Kolber, devour whatever camera-phone footage we can find, then condemn the hapless athlete to whichever circle of PR hell matches the offense in question, despite knowing full well that we pulled the same stunt (whatever lewd misdemeanor it happened to be) at least nine times during sophomore year.

Summers and Morgan call it a paradox: "When we acknowledge that high-profile sports are based on aggressive competition," they write, "where physical contact, foul language and trickery (commonly known as tactics) are an expected part of the performance, why then are we surprised and even outraged when those who play sport at the elite level are caught behaving in similar ways off the field?"

continued on the next page



ROCK vs. Radioactive City Rollergirls

Friday, July 3 — Champs Skate Center

Final Score : 85-69 (ROCK)

MVP ROCK:

Ryder Die #13 and Ragdoll Ruby #42 (tie)

MVP Radioactive City:

Mean Mean Mississippi Queen #H3X

High Scorer ROCK:

Ryder Die, #13 - 28 points, 3 Grand Slams

High Scorer Radioactive City Rollergirls:

Evelyn A. Heathern, #9 - 25 points, 0 Grand Slams

Most Penalties ROCK:

Sharon Moonshine #190 - 6 minors, 6 majors

Most Penalties Radioactive City:

Mean Mean Mississippi Queen #H3x - 6 minors, 6 majors

Next Home Bout at Champs Skate Center:

Sunday, August 30 v. Fort Wayne



Roller Derby

Yuengling fuels Buckingham's frenzy

Mad Dog scores 2 in 4-0 rout

Wednesday, July 8, 2009

Coolavin Park
NoC Sports Desk

Fans traveled from as far as Chico, California to watch as Tim "Mad Dog" Buckingham scored two goals en route to a surprisingly easy 4-0 Team Two (T2) victory over Team One (T1) in the fifth game of last Wednesday's Bike Polo (BP) matches. Buckingham's teammates Chris Simpson and Brian Turner each contributed one goal to the spanking.

With bruising BP players Kevin Kliment and Drew Combs absent for the evening, and with Texas phenom Rich Lopez reportedly drinking his day away at the Green Lantern, the day's events lacked much of the brutish physical play that marked the June 24 matches. In its place was a more effete, stylized, and fast-paced action that saw more passes and fewer open goal shots.

Game five play began at 7:46 PM under clear skies with Simpson randomly chucking three mallets apiece to either end of the court in order to decide teams. Opposing Simpson,

Buckingham, and Turner on Team 1 were Shane Tedder, Tiff Morrow, and Kyle Hord. Court temperatures were moderate during game play, which allowed Tedder to don his Darth Vader outfit: helmet, elbow pads, shin guards, athletic cup. While all agreed the get-up was quite stylish, the gear also seemed to wear down Tedder as match play wore on.

Buckingham opened T2's scoring assault after Hord blew an open goal run-out at the far end of the court. The missed shot skipped off the back fence and into the mallet of Simpson, who quickly changed directions and hit Buckingham on the left side for a mid-range shot through traffic and into the goal for a 1-0 T2 lead at the 7:48 PM mark.

The play was typical of the match. T1 spent little time on the offensive and as a result expended most of their energy defending their own goal from an onslaught of shots by Turner, Simpson, and Buckingham.

Despite the reliably valiant defensive goalie work displayed by Morrow, by the 7:54 PM mark T1 was ready to

cry uncle. A series of skillfully executed passes, a couple good bounces, and a visibly tired defense allowed T2 to score three times in quick succession.

The first goal in the five-minute scoring flurry came from a Simpson quarter-court slap shot from twenty feet inside the red "foot-down" circle, which went through the spread wheels of Morrow defending her goal.

Simpson's score was set up by an excellent cross court assist from Buckingham. Three Yuenglings in by game time, Buckingham swerved left before righting himself and delivering the pass across court to Simpson in a move that seemed to confuse both Tedder and Hord, who were defending the perimeter and only two (non-Yuengling) beers in.

Three minutes later, at the 7:57 mark, Turner corralled a Buckingham miss around the goal and sent it back to "Mad Dog" for an easy tap-in and a 3-0 lead.

Less than a minute later, Tedder mounted what would be the final T1 offensive into T2 territory. In what was a fitting sequence of events for this game, Tedder was pick-pocketed by Turner at quarter court while attempting a shot. Turner immediately went the other way and hit a straight on half court shot that sent the crowd wild and the score to 4-0.

The goal seemed to take the air out of the tires of T1, so the two teams called it a rout and started throwing mallets into center court to draw up new players and teams for Game 6.

North of Center is looking for writers and photographers to cover events worthy of reporting and commentary in north Lexington and elsewhere. Please contact Danny Mayer at noceditors@yahoo.com if you're interested in contributing.

Opinion

On London Ferrell's locked gates

On Thursday, July 9, locks went up on the gates fencing in London Ferrell Garden. Passage into the “community” garden on Third Street is now restricted: 8:00-10:00 A.M. on Thursdays and 10:00 A.M.-1 P.M. on Saturdays. If you paid \$5 for a plot in the forty personal gardens that adjoin the larger public garden, or if you regularly use the garden and can get a hold of Sherry Maddock at the number provided on several prominent signs at the fence, you may also get the combination to the lock.

In an email sent to paying plot holders of the garden, Sherry cited two reasons for restricting access to the garden space: (1) a number of paying plot holders complained that their produce was being picked without their consent; (2) the recent “presence of men in the garden drinking, sleeping or gathering” unsettled some gardeners going to the space. By locking the gates, the proprietors of London Ferrell hope to ensure that everyone will “feel safe and...be confident about growing and harvesting food.”

The issues of food theft and vagrancy that the closing of the garden to uninvited outsiders seeks to address is of course very real, particularly in a place like London Ferrell. Plot holders, who live both inside and outside the Ferrell neighborhood, certainly should be able to reap the bounty of their work, and nobody should feel threatened when they're out walking anywhere in public—particularly women, who are generally at more risk. If, as Sherry has noted before in these pages, the main role of the garden is to act at the “level of the imagination,” it can't do that work if plot-holders have vegetables stolen and feel threatened when they enter the grounds. Putting up a fence enforces good behavior, so the ones putting time into their plots aren't negatively affected by bad citizens.

The London Ferrell plot is unusual among community gardens in that it sits at the center of a high density area with high levels of homelessness, is situated in an urban food desert, and is fast becoming one of the hotter real estate spots in the city, which in these past years has brought in an influx of new, generally more affluent residents. Additionally, the garden has a noticeable number of volunteers and plot-owners who live outside the neighborhood. Accordingly, the people who use the garden are diverse: two formerly homeless friends dropping by for some cabbage, a preacher from nearby RoseTown Apartments, a writer for *NoC* living in Chevy Chase, a business student from Georgetown. And while London Ferrell presents itself as a public community garden, it is nevertheless located on private property owned by the Episcopal Diocese.

So Sherry, Ryan Koch, Bob Voll and the rest of the people who help

coordinate and run London Ferrell are juggling a number of competing interests, and their decision to lock up London Ferrell was borne out of these interests. Though we may like to think of community gardening as harmonious—and articles in papers like ours often contribute to that perception—they require a lot of hard work and give and take by the individuals who come together to contribute to the space. So while community gardening can teach various sorts of harmony (community, ecological, agricultural), it can also develop a familiarity with discord, uncomfortableness, and the ability to work and play and laugh and produce with people who we might not really want to be around otherwise.

With this in mind, we want to ask whether locking the London Ferrell gardens is a solution to the problems it addresses. We want to question what we gain and what we lose in locking a place that calls itself a “community” garden. What does this word, community, mean alongside issues of food theft and vagrancy, homelessness and gentrification?

For instance, how do we determine food theft within a community garden context? The proprietors of London Ferrell have long made known the garden's importance in helping to address urban food insecurity. Unless we imagine the trespassers as out of town food thieves riding in from the suburbs under the cover of night, we can presume that those taking from private plots are probably members of the immediate Ferrell community—most likely traveling to the garden on foot. Unless they're selling that produce, we can also reasonably assume that they're eating it.

In other words, if we set aside momentarily the concerns of whatever percentage of gardeners felt wronged out of their \$5 investment, another way to view the taking of food from private plots is as a vivid example of the increased need for freely acquired fresh produce from this garden by nameless people who apparently live nearby. We find this less an instance of theft than it is of demonstrated need.

The decision to lock out those takers of food ultimately places a greater value in the private plots of forty people who paid for their sites than it does in the anonymous public that filters through during the week. In other words, it implies that the interests of the plot-owners are more important than those who take and eat food from those plots.

So what do we lose by this ordering? For one, it sidesteps the very real question of need: does everyone who has a plot *need* the food grown there, irrespective of it being “their” plot that someone picks from? While no doubt some plot owners do really need, we suspect the general answer for most is no, the food isn't needed for most

of the forty private plot gardeners. The question, for us then, is whether their demands, based on private plot ownership, supercede the needs of anonymous unlanded people filtering through? Our answer to that question is also no, though the food needs may at times overlap. If London Ferrell is to be a community garden that gives food away both to the community and to community organizations needing food, then the concept of building and locking fences to prevent food theft seems pretty odd.

It's also not particularly conducive to building a robust vision of community. Fences rarely are. Holding the concerns of individual plot holders over others creates a skewed sense of ownership, an assumption of who does and does not belong. The second reason driving the decision to lock down involved a fear of men drinking, sleeping, and hanging out nearby the gardens. The description is of course of the homeless, and it assumes that the state of homelessness makes one potentially dangerous. It certainly could. But it could also make one cold, in need of food or a place to crash for the night or part of the morning. In keeping out the few potentially dangerous homeless, the fences thus limit interaction with the vast majority of not-dangerous people, homeless and housed alike, who (1) might be hungry and (2) might want to stay for a while at an out of the way place, mostly free from the homeless hassles of living your entire life in the very visible eye of the public.

And of course the assumption that congregating, drinking men are dangerous at all could be completely false. *NoC* editor Danny Mayer and staff writer Michael Benton, for example, both live in nearby homes and have both had several late night drinks in the garden while pulling out a lot of rotten vegetables sill on the vine in private plots. They've also both napped there. They did these things because London Ferrell was a wonderful place to visit in the dead of night or under the heat of a mid-day sun. They were not dangerous and they were not stealing vegetables, though they may have appeared so—incorrectly—to an

outsider's eyes.

We hope that the London Ferrell Garden reconsiders its decision to lock off the grounds. Although we disagree with the locks, we recognize that Sherry, Ryan, Bob and others, like we here at *NoC*, are learning as they do. The problems they're experiencing are part of the increasing growth and importance of the garden, and this is something that they're still figuring out. And so, with that in mind, we hope that they seek out alternative solutions to the problem of food distribution and homeless congregation.

We understand the purpose of a community garden to be for the community. Like it or not, London Ferrell is a known entity; it's not only visible in the community, but it's also become a major selling point of the area. When a formerly open space gets transformed into a radically open community garden, it sets expectations. And when that same space, in two short years, is gated off, it sends a message to people. Here's the current message the locks send: stealing and vagrancy will not be tolerated; this place is “ours,” whomever that may be. The gate becomes a bubble, a safe spot to separate us from them—even if “them” can still get charity food sent out of the locked gates earmarked for them, even if “them” were probably congregating and drinking and sleeping there before London Ferrell became a community garden, even if “them” are still hungry and need to “steal” food, even if the idea of getting rid of “them” is an illusion. The garden can't solve the greater issue of homelessness and hunger, but it can think of ways to help overcome the stigmas of homelessness and the pangs of hunger.

A homeless man just in from Miami wandered by the *NoC* headquarters last July 4. We sent him straight away to London Ferrell to grab some food, and he thanked us profusely. We wonder what he would think now, looking at a locked fence. Would he feel accepted in the space, even if he had the combination? We suspect not. The locked fence would send a pretty strong message: you are not welcome. And that message has seemed to have gotten lost in the rush to lock off London Ferrell.

Letter to the editor

“The problem, then, with the professionalization of youth and amateur sports is that in our rush to extract every last shred of performance from our sports heroes, whether they be all-stars from the American League or the tee-ball league, we've begun to forget that sports is for all of us. That's the problem we'd like to help solve.” You wouldn't know it from his latest article bemoaning the fact that Lexington's Woodland Skatepark isn't filled with future Tony Hawk wunderkids who work tirelessly throughout the year to fulfill their latent goals of becoming professional skaters (“A challenge to skateboarders,” July 1), but the above passage was written by Keith Halladay less than six weeks ago as he outlined *NoC*'s approach to sports reporting. *That* Keith Halladay called for a move away from such a need for “professional” perfection and a subsequent return to “the sandlot”—vacant lots, parks, and other places where “[t]he equipment is usually cheap, the dress code is always casual, and the vibe is refreshingly *amateur*.”

Except, it seems, when those things might apply to skateboarding. When it comes to this truly amateur sport—no high school teams, no kiddie rec leagues, little to no college club teams, and a professional circuit smaller than surfing but larger than water-skiing—you must work towards perfection and professional success. So while sports is for all of us, for the skateboarders at the Woodland Skatepark (a collection of people ranging from pre-pubescent kids all the way through 20-something grad students playing around) it's important to note that they “aren't especially good” because “they don't

work very hard at it—not even as hard as the kids in your average Little League practice.”

And what might the hard work get you? Does the reward for skating entail getting a little exercise? Reveling in being outdoors? Perhaps laughing and goofing off with friends? Nope. Halladay seems to know better. According to him, for those Lexington skaters who do want to take it seriously and work very hard at it, the reward for skating is to become a professional like Tony Hawk—to get their “very own HP commercial.” How refreshingly amateur.

All this leads me to ask whether Halladay expects amateurs playing amateur sports to strive for perfection and well-paid professional status like their professional counterparts (in which case his essay on the sandlots was pure BS), or whether that rule just applies to the skaters that he calls dorks, nerds, and anti-athletic? Either way, it smacks of elitism to me. Who is he to say what's good and not—what the participants in the activity of skateboarding want to get out of it—when I have yet to see him pull off an Ollie, much less a 720. You want professional perfection in amateur sports, head to Rupp.

Danny Mayer
N. Martin Luther King Blvd.

Author's response: *Mr. Mayer, unsurprisingly, appears to have missed the point entirely. My target was, and is, the counter-culture pose that skateboarders assume en masse, when there is nothing remotely counter-culture about them—skateboarding is just as saturated with corporate backing as any “mainstream” sport.*

LeBron James (cont.)

continued from the previous page

We do forgive, of course. Muhammad Ali, once sent all the way down to Circle 9 of PR hell (for those treacherous to country), has been sanctified and subsequently deified, and Kobe Bryant (Circle 2) is once again available for commercial work. The only sin LeBron James committed was being Jordan Crawford to jam on him; surely we'd have paid that no mind at all.

In fact Summers and Morgan's research suggests that minor transgressions, such as posterization, have little to no effect on the purchasing habits of fans, so the Nike executive had nothing to worry about.

Did LeBron? Would our seeing the fabled video forever alter our perception of him and his gifts? As LC speculated, did James “get smashed on, kicked in the chest with both feet, fall down on his face, scream like a girl, then piss himself?”

Of course not, but James was caught in a Catch-22: by having the

tape confiscated, he's definitely bitch-made; if Jordan Crawford made him eat leather, he might *also* be bitch-made. What's a young superstar to do? Protect his persona or his masculinity? Ten years from now, with maybe a title or two under his belt and legacy cemented, maybe he lets the tape go. Right now, the ego may still be too fragile.

Can we accept that? Well, as Summers and Morgan found out, we can and we can't. We'll still buy tickets and merchandise, but not until we check the blogs for the latest punch line. Build 'em up, and tear 'em down, and at the same time, if possible. We want it both ways.

Nike has the ability to give it to us in just such a fashion, ironically. As Philly Moe suggested when we'd finished off the last of the Beck's, a commercial featuring the footage of the Crawford dunk could both exalt and humanize James; even the King gets yammed on now and again, and isn't he the greater for it?

We'd buy that.

Michael Bay (cont.)

continued from page 4

to see *White Chicks*, the terrorists have already won.

Actually, the Wayans brothers are responsible for far more bad movies than those explicitly crediting them. If Keenan and Damon hadn't left the *Scary Movie* franchise when they did, Aaron Seltzer and writing partner Jason Friedberg would never have been able to take it over, and we might have been spared *Date Movie*, *Epic Movie*, *Disaster Movie* and *Meet the Spartans*. Curse you, Wayans brothers...

1) Zack Snyder

Sorry fanboys, but Zack Snyder is incredibly lame. I understand that Snyder taps into the id that's obese, obsessed with World of Warcraft, and living in a basement subsisting entirely on Spicy Cheetos and Mountain Dew. I get that, I really do. But that doesn't make him any less creepy.

Who would have thought that "visionary director" could be an epithet? Snyder manages to hit every single bad director archetype. His movies consist almost entirely of pimp shots and are in slow motion about half the time. He's never met a special effect he can't flog to death.

When the budget for *300* allowed him to CGI everything, he became a one-man champion of things that float. In almost every scene of that movie, there is some sort of crap in the air. Seeds, dirt, blood splatter, hair, incense, fabric, saliva, arrows. If you can think of it, Zach Snyder would be more than happy to have it fly slowly past your field of vision.

He's relentlessly misogynistic. He swings wide of the casual sexism of most action movies and settles for

"Seeds, dirt, blood splatter, hair, incense, fabric, saliva, arrows, if you can think of it, Zach Snyder would be more than happy to have it fly slowly past your field of vision."

straight up brutality. Remember the part in Snyder's remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, where the pregnant woman is tied to the bed so that she can give birth to the infant zombie? You can't fake class like that.

He's also stupid. The bloated, campy action style that Snyder likes really only works for directors who have some kind of self-awareness. Say what you like about Michael Bay, but it's pretty clear that he understands the effects he's achieving. Snyder doesn't seem to have a clue. He was genuinely surprised when people pointed out that *300* was kind of fascist.

But Snyder is not only completely lacking in a sense of humor; half the time he doesn't seem to understand his own source material. The combined homophobia/homoeroticism of *300* might have been more compelling if Snyder hadn't so obviously intended the ham-fisted gay bashing to disguise the fact that he had basically made two hours of blood-soaked, soft core gay porn, a la *Spartacus*. Because we wouldn't want someone to think there was anything homoerotic about either comic books or ancient Greek culture.

Watchmen had virtually the identical problem. Despite Snyder's obsessive homage of the novel, he didn't seem to understand it all that well. He littered the internet with mind-numbing video updates on how the set dressers got every street sign and magazine cover

letter perfect, but somehow seemed to gloss over everything that made the *Watchmen* novel compelling. Put another way, it might not have been such a good idea for a comic book fetishist to direct a movie based on a comic book about fetishists.

But Snyder has a lot of defenders. No one can deny that he's a genius

at special effects, and he deserves credit for the seriousness with which he approaches his source material. Furthermore, many critics point out that Snyder's movies are so lightweight that criticizing their ideology is giving them more weight than they were intended to carry.

This isn't an argument I find especially compelling. Anything as widely consumed as a Hollywood blockbuster is to some extent a mirror for all us multiplex patrons. For all their flaws, the studios are egalitarian: they'll make anything we'll pay to see.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to see *Dance Flick*.

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