

# NORTH OF CENTER

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VOLUME I, ISSUE 7

## Replacing Rupp: the cost to Lexington Corporate welfare and the region's basketball tradition

By Andrew Battista

Every time I watch a home University of Kentucky basketball game that broadcasts nationally on CBS or ESPN, I hear announcers regurgitate the same platitudes about Rupp Arena. It is a cathedral, a sacred space, the epicenter of the basketball-crazed Bluegrass Region. Glory, honor, and heritage ooze out of every nook and cranny in the arena. Rupp's rafters bear witness to an unparalleled tradition of excellence, and its court has been graced by college basketball's all-time great players and coaches. Such reverence from these announcers makes it seem as if Rupp Arena is Lexington's most functional building, or at least a space good enough for its rabid fan base.

Oh, were it that simple. Lexington taxpayers should be suspicious next month when the London-based sports marketing and branding firm IMG and its subsidiary, International Stadia Group (ISG), releases a feasibility study to determine whether or not Lexington can replace Rupp Arena, which is now 33 years old. The study, authorized by the Lexington Center Corporation and endorsed by the University of Kentucky, will detail the logistics behind financing and building an arena that, for many people, seems to be superfluous. Worse, it smacks of corporate welfare, an all-too familiar scenario in Kentucky where politicians divvy out tax breaks, subsidies, and preferential treatment to profiteering entities that by no means need a helping hand.

IMG/ISG is interested in eliciting private financial investments for a new Rupp Arena because the payoff could be huge. The firm, which has already refurbished London's Wembley Stadium, claims on its website that it specializes in the "segmentation of seating into defined product categories."



The Lexington Center Corporation operates the Convention Center and Rupp Arena, which underwent \$50 million renovations in 2004.

In non-corporate parlance, IMG/ISG funds sports venues and profits from luxury suite revenues, personal seat license agreements, and advertising. The firm could fund Rupp, which would be the first NCAA venue to be financed privately, and make money by raising the price for UK fans.

The prospective new Rupp Arena raises several questions for Lexington, a city whose leadership has shown itself exceedingly willing to spend public money in ways that benefit private enterprises. Each year, taxpayers in the United States spend over \$2 billion on privately-owned sports stadiums and arenas. How much public money will go toward building a new arena in Lexington? Who will profit from a

new arena? Can the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG), which faces a multi-million dollar budget deficit for the upcoming fiscal year and is obliged to provide its citizens with infrastructure upgrades, justify contributing any money toward a new basketball arena?

The answers to these questions are complex, and since IMG/ISG stands to profit from a new arena with luxury suites, more seats, and top-notch amenities, the company's feasibility study may not address these issues directly or honestly. IMG/ISG's feasibility study prefaces a project that could impose a financial burden on Lexington's citizens, so it is a classic example of a conflict of interests. UK Athletic Director

Mitch Barnhart and Lexington Mayor Jim Newberry have already said that tax dollars will not support a new arena if it were built; instead, the arena would be financed by private investors. However, that promise, and the prospect that corporate investors will make good on their verbal financial commitments, may be fleeting as we continue to languish in a global recession.

To me, building a new Rupp Arena seems like a profound misappropriation of public energy and ingenuity, if not money. Lexington has many problems that take precedence over upgrading its basketball arena, so in anticipation of IMG/ISG's feasibility study, I

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## Cricket Press The story behind the storied printers

By Nick Kidd

Looking at my collection of Cricket Press posters makes me nostalgic for many Lexington concerts and events I've attended over the years: two Animal Collective shows, a recent Bonnie "Prince" Billy concert, The Avoid Busters series (for which my old band played twice), WRFL's FreeKY Fest, two Rempis Percussion Quartet shows, The Ride of the Living Dead (last Halloween's Alley Cat bike race), and many others. These posters are mementos that stir fond memories of some choice nights I've had out on the town, whether attending free-jazz, folk, or psychedelic concerts, racing across town on my bike dressed like a zombie, or playing music in my former favorite watering hole, the old Buster's. Still, I've sought and collected many other Cricket Press posters from events I didn't attend, like concerts by Jolie Holland, Mogwai, The Sun Ra Arkestra, The Six Organs of Admittance, and Man Man. These I proudly display for their sheer beauty and artistry.

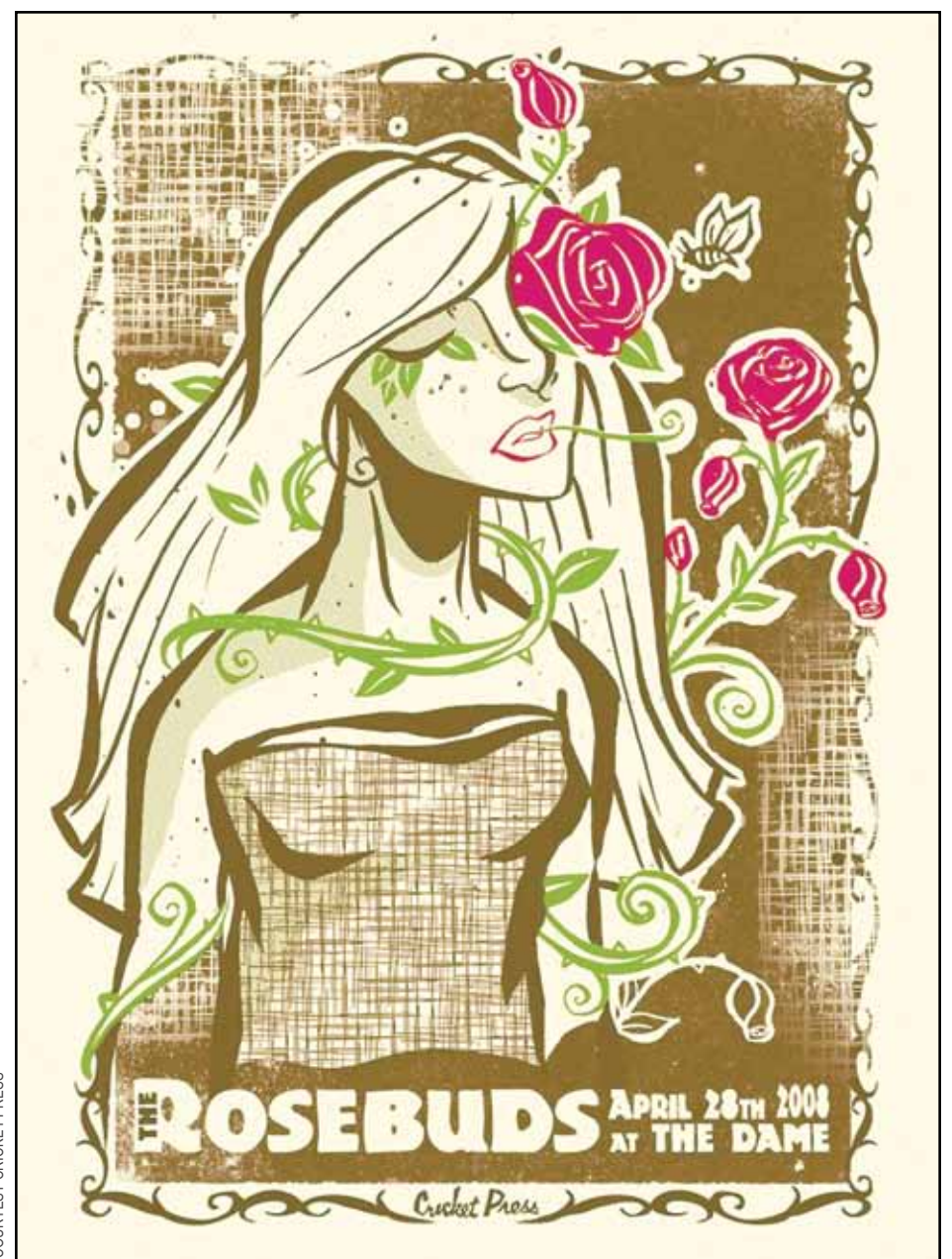
Cricket Press' posters have caught the attention of many Lexington music-and art-lovers who regularly go out of their way to nab a Cricket

poster from a telephone pole or storefront window—often before the event it promotes has taken place. But many outside of Lexington are familiar with Cricket's high-quality work, too, something I learned firsthand when I saw their works displayed at Flatstock during the Pitchfork Music Festival in Chicago back in July.

Flatstock is an event organized by the American Poster Institute (API), a "non-profit corporation dedicated to furthering public awareness and appreciation of the poster art form." Through four annual events—all at concert festivals—Flatstock presents "poster artists collectively while showcasing the breadth of individual styles they represent."

Having collected more than fifty poster artists from around the world, Flatstock Chicago showcased a stunning trove of artwork akin to what you would expect to find in one of Chicago's premier art galleries. Its artists shared the poster medium for creative expression, often to promote well-established bands like The Rolling Stones, The Who, and Queens of the Stone Age, though most of the posters I saw were for lesser-known bands

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One of Cricket Press' classic posters for a show last year at The Dame in Lexington.

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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

Earlier this summer, my husband and I went up to Cleveland to visit his parents. When I moved to Cleveland after college, I loved the city for its grittiness (what's better than smog from a steel plant, the gruffness of working-class people, and old ladies who only speak Serbian?). As has been its destiny, Cleveland has again been hit very hard by the recession, changes in manufacturing, and the housing crisis. People who were born and raised in Cleveland, especially my in-laws' generation, are tough. They can't bend everything to their will (the city is tougher than they are), but they can—and do—bend their neighborhoods to their liking. There are all kinds of lines drawn in the suburbs, lines that have to do with race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion.

In the working-class suburb of my husband's childhood, yards receive the benefit of the iron will of Clevelanders. On my in-law's street, the tidiness of one's yard is a mark of moral character. (Remember in *The Miracle Worker* when Helen Keller's parents say the line "cleanliness is next to godliness"? Yep, that holds true for East Meadowlawn Boulevard.) This is a street on which people (my mother-in-law) cut down trees instead of having to sweep up whirlybirds.

Naturally, I feel morally superior to property owners who cut down trees because they like tidiness, are getting older, and need to scale back on their yard work because of health problems. After all, I'm a renter whose husband generally rakes the leaves and cuts the lawn—why shouldn't I feel superior?

I was feeling especially enlightened when my mother-in-law started complaining about the compost bin that her neighbors, a younger couple,

had just put in. She was less than keen about having to look at it, although I assured her it was the nicest looking composting structure I'd seen. Truly, it was—if she hadn't told me it was a compost bin, I would not have guessed. Then she said, "Well, I hope it doesn't get a bunch of flies." Feeling sure that my nominal support of "being green"



*The effects of the dastardly squash vine borer.*

made me a better person (as well as my possession of an unused compost pot on my kitchen counter), I smiled and silently dismissed her protests.

Fast-forward to Saturday before last when I was at the London Ferrell Community Garden. My task for that day was to help pull old collard and cabbage plants, delivering them to the compost piles near the fence.

Guess what I found there? Flies, not copious amounts, but enough to be kind of repugnant. The pile didn't stink tremendously yet, but it was turning in that direction. And, since we all know that the summer heat has arrived

late to Lexington this year, I'm sure August will only ripen the fragrance.

I wasn't fully grossed out because the pile's attributes were fairly mild, and I wasn't the one stirring the compost. (That was a young guy with earphones on.) To my credit, my smugness toward my mother-in-law did come back to me then, and I felt a tinge of humility. Just a tinge, though; obviously, I am still super-green because I spend Saturday mornings at an urban garden. I still got my green cred.

However, totally-nasty, turn-your-stomach, really-did-I-just-have-to-see-that? was about to arrive at my feet, courtesy of Ryan, Mr. Seedleaf himself. One thing I really value about Ryan is that he is willing, in his laid-back and congenial way, to help educate people like me about stuff like plants. So here's how the gross-out happened:

Ryan: (with a hippie drawl) Hey Beth, can I show you something?

Beth: (trustingly) Sure, Ryan.

[Ryan brings a pattypan squash plant down to the ground, grips it by its throat, and slices open the stem. Surgery, right then and there.]

Ryan: We've had problems with this squash vine borer. I cut open some other squash plants, took the bugs out, and taped the stems shut again, and we think they're going to make it. This one, though, will probably have to go in the waste can.

[Ryan keeps talking as Beth is riveted to the grodier-than-anything sight of slimy white wormy bugs embedded in the stem of the plant. Beth can't hear Ryan's words anymore; she is nauseous.]

Sorry, Grace Manke, I owe you an apology. Nature is messy and gross.

Read Seedleaf's squash vine borer trilogy at <http://seedleaf.org>.

## A statement against the death penalty

By Alicia Keith

My cousin Meg called me around nine o'clock that Saturday morning. Unusual for her; she normally didn't get up until nearly ten. When I heard from her at an early hour, it was usually not good. It wasn't. "Reggie was shot last night. He's dead."

I can't remember any more of the conversation. I only remember that it wasn't long, just the essential message. Reggie was her nephew, her sister's son, married and father of four. Dead.

What I remember first is my reaction of shock, disbelief. A young relative, in good health, dead. Suddenly. By a violent act. It took a while to comprehend. For some time, the world spun in confusion and unreality.

As I began to understand that this was true, my response was outrage. A man is dead for no known reason, leaving four children. How dare anyone do this? How dare anyone kill this person, one of ours, violate the sacredness of our family? For it was the entire extended family that was wounded by this, along with Reggie's wife, children, mother, siblings—all his cousins, aunts, uncles. I remained in a state of shock and rage all that day and for some time after, separated from my closest relatives by nearly 1,000 miles.

I spent most of that summer day sitting at my kitchen table, in a state of near paralysis, phoning relatives when I could summon the effort to do so. Neither Reggie's mother nor his wife was able to talk on the phone, but some of my cousins were. Gradually I pieced together the horror of the events from the night before. Two of Reggie's children had witnessed the shooting, 15-year-old Katie and 10-year-old Sean. I tried to contemplate what that must have been like—the terror, the horror of seeing their father shot and watching him die in a matter of minutes. My outrage grew.

The family, as always, found support in each other in shared grief. There would be investigations but no resolution. No one knew, nor shall we probably ever know, why Reggie was the target of a madman. For almost immediately after, the madman killed himself.

Too frequently, in response to murder, the family of the victim and/or the general public will demand the death penalty for the perpetrator. But, of course, that was not an option here. At least some of my relatives support the death penalty. I cannot speak for the rest of my family. Yet, despite my outrage at the deed, and my love and compassion for my relatives, had the killer lived, I would not support his execution. I don't believe that would

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bring real consolation or satisfaction to any of us.

I have been against the death penalty for many years. In fact, I cannot remember when I first held that conviction. I do remember when, as a young child, my father came home and said that Bruno Hauptmann was dead, executed for the murder of the Lindbergh child. My father would have deplored the murder of anyone, especially a child, but as I remember, his eyes spoke something of the stunned feeling that I experienced at hearing of my cousin's murder. I never discussed the death penalty with my father. But that early memory of an execution and the feeling I got from my father's expression certainly played a part in my anti-death penalty stance.

I hold all the usual reasons against the death penalty. Innocent persons can be—and have been—executed. The death penalty discriminates against the poor and minorities. Execution is more expensive than keeping murderers in prison for life. The death penalty does not prevent violent crimes.

Much needs to be said and done for the families who experience the murder of one of their members. It seems that society owes them something other than an execution for their pain. But an aspect little discussed is that of family members of death row inmates and the grief they endure. I have two friends with family members on death row. These are innocent

persons anguished by the possibility of execution of one of their loved ones. They have lived for years in anxiety, through trials and appeals, hoping, while hardly daring to hope. The death penalty punishes them although they have committed no crime.

There is still another reason for my stance. Faith is central to my life, my motivating force. Faith entails love, and love demands forgiveness. Love and forgiveness can be pretty difficult in circumstances in which a beloved family member has been murdered. It seems beyond reason. Yet, in examining why there is support for the death penalty, the overriding purpose appears to be vengeance. Vengeance brutalizes society. It damages our humanity. And the simmering anger and bitterness, like corrosive acid eating away our compassion and peace of mind, are more destructive to individuals than the wounds of sadness and grief that accompany the murder of a loved one. Vengeance is incompatible with love and forgiveness. So, we may ask: Is lack of vengeance some form of love and forgiveness?

Sadness and grief will be part of Reggie's family's memories for all their lives, and the hurt will be most acute in his two children who witnessed the brutality of his death. But life gradually brings healing in some measure. There can even be new growth of peace from the scars of those wounds. That is my hope for them.

# Seedleaf

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## Rupp (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

offer a tale of three cities: New York, Seattle, and Lexington. Each tale provides a radically different example of how a community can decide to treat the relationship between sporting venues, corporate profit, and public assets.

### New York

Those who want to fund sports venues with public money have long argued that new stadiums boost local economies by providing jobs and fostering business. This logic, which has been proven false, dictated financial policy in New York over the past several years, when the city financed two new baseball stadiums. The New York Yankees and Mets, the two wealthiest baseball corporations in the world, demanded public support for building new venues, and George Steinbrenner, whose Yankees franchise was worth \$1.2 billion in 2007, even threatened to move his team to New Jersey if New York didn't pony up tax dollars to defray the cost of a new stadium.

After much political posturing, city officials, led by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, approved New York's stadium projects. The Yankees seized land in the South Bronx and began construction on a plot where Macombs Dam Park once stood. The park, a recreational area where many of the poorest residents in the Bronx played tennis, basketball, and baseball, was sacrificed so the Yankees could benefit. The stadium construction project included plans to replace Macombs Dam Park, but when the city announced that a lack of funds would delay the park's relocation, Mayor Bloomberg downplayed the hiccup by telling reporters that "you don't have progress unless you inconvenience a few people."

It's hard to see the progress in New York, though. In the end, the New York Independent Budget Office calculates, city and state taxpayers contributed over \$528 million to the new Yankee Stadium and at least another \$234 million for the Mets' new park, Citi Field. A good deal of that money comes from tax exempt bonds and other inscrutable subsidies programs, which means that the Yankees and Mets can take the city and state taxes they'll owe New York and use that money to pay off their construction debt instead. Because of the stadiums, the city and state will not receive millions in much-needed tax revenue over the next decades, and so far, New York Democratic Assemblyman Richard Brodsky claims in an investigative study, the new stadiums have generated little to no new jobs or economic growth in the city. Meanwhile, Steinbrenner and Mets owner Fred Wilpon reap the profits that come with their new digs. The entire New York stadium episode shows how far a city will travel to assist

private corporations that do business in it, regardless of the economic and social cost to the community.

### Seattle

In Seattle, a much different ethos has prevailed over time. There, the NBA's Sonics played in the under-sized KeyArena (built in 1995). When Howard Schultz, the billionaire team owner (and co-founder and CEO of Starbucks), could not procure tax funding for a larger arena, he sold the team to other local investors. Voters denied Schultz because they were already frustrated that the Seattle Legislature had committed over \$800 million to new baseball and football stadiums during the 1990s. So when the Sonics came looking for money, Seattle residents formed Citizens for More Important Things, a task force that turned public opinion against subsidizing billion-dollar sports corporations.

Finished with doling out money to already-wealthy sports franchise owners, Citizens for More Important Things focused efforts on getting funding for healthcare, education, and affordable housing initiatives. On their website, they ask a compelling question: if city officials can pay for stadiums, why can't they pay for the things Seattle needs? Today, Seattle's ethic of separation between sports and public money is so stringent that the city recently passed a federal rule forbidding its publicly-funded Metro Transit from running direct shuttles to and from baseball and football games. Seattle citizens hardly blinked in 2008 when the Sonics, under new ownership, asked for money once again and threatened to leave if they did not get it. When taxpayers refused to subsidize a new hoops arena, the Sonics packed up and moved to Oklahoma City.

### Lexington

Lexington is not like New York or Seattle because its team, the Wildcats, is a collegiate franchise, not a professional one. The Wildcats are not privately-owned like the Yankees Mets, and Sonics, and Big Blue fans do not have to worry about the team relocating to another state at the whim of greedy entrepreneurs. However, in many ways, Lexington parallels New York and Seattle. We stand to learn a great deal from how these cities financed sports and entertainment venues. Lexington faces, like most U.S. urban areas, significant financial challenges and social inequalities, so stories like what happened in New York and Seattle may be able to help us hold our leaders accountable as we try to figure out how they spend public money.

My tale of three cities is complicated by an entangled web of allegiances and financial interests that links UK basketball to Lexington's government and businesses. UK is not unique

among top-tier college programs in that it lets external corporate entities profit from its most lucrative product, athletics. Television companies generate billions from advertising revenues, clothing outfitters make millions from merchandise licensing agreements, and the list goes on. However, UK is virtually unique among colleges in that it does not own its own arena. Most universities own on-campus venues, where they play the majority of their games, but UK pays rent to the Lexington Center Corporation, a non-profit 501 c4 corporate agency of LFUCG.

through the LCC.

If private investors were to balk in their support, the LCC would presumably have to implement a program called Tax Increment Funding (TIF), a decision that would deprive the city millions of dollars over the coming decades. In 2007, when rumors surfaced that a new Rupp Arena is on the horizon, Mayor Newberry suggested that the project would be funded by TIFs. When Kentucky Legislators approved the TIF model for all counties within the Commonwealth, they intended to legalize a funding mechanism that



BRIAN CONNORS-MANKE

*Traffic cones seem to send a message to those who would tear down and build anew.*

Until the mid-1970s, UK played in its on-campus arena, but downtown merchants, in search of revenues, strong-armed the university administration into signing a lease at yet-to-be-built Rupp Arena. As Betty Boles Ellison claims in her book, *Kentucky's Domain of Greed, Power, and Corruption*, "The practice of protecting downtown Lexington at the university's expense is so ingrained and incestuous that it continues today. Few people ever give it a thought, and if they do, surely ask no questions." Ellison estimates that since moving into Rupp Arena in 1976, UK

allows cash-strapped municipalities to revive blighted urban areas and decaying infrastructural systems. TIFs offer the illusion that we can create money out of thin air; they are breaks that excuse businesses of the tax they would owe if the value of their property were increased.

Too often, when TIFs are used to fund sports and entertainment venues, they essentially become tax breaks for corporations. TIFs are a ruse, a way that politicians and arena proprietors can claim that the public won't have to pay for a new arena. The truth is that

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has lost millions of dollars in advertising and concessions revenue.

It's almost impossible to tell whether or not citizens of the Commonwealth are getting screwed over because UK rents space at Rupp Arena. Basketball revenues are funneled into the Athletics Association coffers, not general education funds. Ellison's bombast journalism notwithstanding, it's likely that UK's arrangement with Rupp is mutually beneficial—the city and its non-profit corporate arm make money they wouldn't otherwise generate, and the university doesn't have to worry about maintaining its own facility.

Similarly, it's almost impossible to say who benefits from a new arena, and to what extent. Rupp Arena is currently backed by the Lexington Center Corporation, the Downtown Development Authority, the Downtown Lexington Corporation, and other abstruse hierarchies who benefit financially from UK basketball. And if IMG/ISG has its way the University of Kentucky would become the first major collegiate program to have a privately-financed stadium. IMG/ISG therefore stands to become the next foreign corporate conglomerate that makes money off of Lexington.

It could be that the cost of a new Rupp Arena should be measured in what would get ignored in Lexington, not how much tax money (if any) gets spent. I've found that such an opportunity cost analysis is much easier to work through than tracing the trail of public and private dollars that currently pass

the public does pay, often for 20-30 years after a new arena is completed because local governments lose out on tax revenues.

Until IMG/ISG releases its feasibility study, we won't know whether TIFs will be part of the new Rupp Arena equation. But we can wonder, however, whether a new arena is the most appropriate implementation of the TIF model. Like Seattle's Citizens for More Important Things, Lexingtonians can persuade the county to spearhead funding initiatives for an affordable housing trust, an investment in communal stability that Mayor Newberry refused earlier this spring because he said that the county lacks money. Should we not use our collective imaginations and energies to establish a project that addresses problems more immediate than replacing the county's aged but highly functional arena?

### Sources:

For estimates of the amount of public money spent on stadiums and arenas, see Neil deMause and Joanna Cagan's *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money into Private Profit*. I obtained information on the LFUCG budget deficit. The worth of the Yankees and Mets is as reported in a 2007 *Forbes* story. Mayor Bloomberg's comments on the stadium come from a report by ESPN's *Outside the Lines* reporter Jeremy Schaap. All information about IMG/ISG's involvement in Rupp Arena comes from press releases that are posted on their company website.



BETH CONNORS-MANKE

*First District Councilmember Andrea James speaks at the East End Artstop dedication*

On Sunday, August 2, Art in Motion held a dedication ceremony for the new bus stop at the corner of Elm Tree Lane and Third Street, across the street from the Lyric Theatre. The East End Artstop features "Lyrical Movement," a sculpture by UK Art Professor Garry Bibbs. The bus stop also includes exhibit panels for murals that will be spotlighted on a rotating basis.

First District Councilmember Andrea James spoke with emotion at the dedication. James recalled resistance from naysayers who asked about the project "Why here? Why the East End?" Affirming the value of the project in the often-ignored East End, James asked the audience, "Is there any other place [the Artstop] should have been?"

For more on Art in Motion and the East End Artstop, visit [www.art-in-motion.us](http://www.art-in-motion.us).

# Bluegrass Film Society: Fall '09 schedule

By Michael Dean Benton

Even though the history of film-making as an art form is barely past the century mark, the amount of films made and their impact on our culture is immense. No one semester film course could ever hope to cover the history of film, or its various genres, or the global scope of cultures represented through film. Facing this problem as a film professor, I created the Bluegrass Film Society (BFS) as an outgrowth of my international film courses at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. The films serve to supplement my film course, but, in the true sense of a “community” college, they are also available to the Lexington community to help develop interest in film, filmmaking, and global culture.

The rationale for the scheduling of films for the BFS is that each film explores a different culture in our global community. Watching contemporary international films can produce a deeper awareness of filmmaking as an art form, as a political forum, and as a business. International Film Studies promotes cross-cultural awareness through the viewing and discussion of films that represent unique perspectives from around the world. Engagement with the stories from multiple cultures is a valuable skill; in fact, organizational theorists David Boje and Robert Dennehy in *Managing in the Postmodern World* (1993) state that the ability to understand cultural texts, to decipher the stories used to make meaning, and to communicate effectively (to tell a good story), is a vital skill for succeeding in the contemporary world. According to the Global Film Initiative “In recent times, no medium has been as effective

at communicating the range and diversity of the world’s cultures as the cinematic arts” ([www.globalfilm.org](http://www.globalfilm.org)).

## August - October 2009 Bluegrass Film Society schedule

Main Auditorium, Oswald Building,  
BCTC Cooper Campus

Wednesdays: 7:30 P.M. Free.

[bluegrassfilmsociety.blogspot.com](http://bluegrassfilmsociety.blogspot.com)

**August 19:** (Special showing at Al’s Bar on 6th and Limestone at 7 P.M.) *Repo Man* (USA: Alex Cox, 1984)

The second film from iconoclastic British filmmaker Alex Cox has been claimed by many to be the greatest punk film. Cox, who would later make other punk classics like *Sid and Nancy* (1986) and *Straight to Hell* (1987), fully embraces the “punk” ethos in *Repo Man* with “no-future” youths, desolate Los Angeles landscapes, dangerous science running amok, and a morally bankrupt consumer society.

**August 26:** *The Castle* (Austria: Michael Haneke, 1997)

Austrian director Haneke’s adaption of Franz Kafka’s classic novel of bureaucratic absurdities and human alienation. The film was originally produced for Austrian TV.

**September 2:** *The Taste of Tea* (Japan: Katsuhito Ishii, 2004)

A surreal comedic look at the daily experiences of the Haruno family. As one character says: “We were all watching the sunset, at the edge of the universe.”

**September 9:** *Sans Soleil* (France: Chris Marker, 1983)

Chris Marker is revered as a seminal documentary filmmaker and a

visionary artist. Although he is best known in the USA for his short film *La Jetee* (an homage to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* and inspiration for Gilliam’s *12 Monkeys*), many critics consider *Sans Soleil*, a documentary meditation on time, history, travel and images, to be his true masterpiece.

**September 16:** *Dracula: Pages From a Virgin’s Diary* (Canada: Guy Maddin, 2003)

A true original, no one makes films like Guy Maddin. This is Maddin’s film version of the Winnipeg Royal Ballet’s production of the classic horror mythos of *Dracula*. This visually stunning, silent film was originally made for Canadian TV (CBC), but critical acclaim led to an American theatrical release.

**September 23:** *The Drummer* (Hong Kong/Taiwan: Kenneth Bi, 2007)

The rebellious son of a Triad boss has to hide in the countryside from a rival boss’ vengeance. While in hiding he is introduced to the rigorous life and practices of Zen drummers and he develops a new sense of the world. His new life eventually comes into conflict with his old life.

**September 30:** *Pusher* (Denmark: Nicolas Winding Refn, 1996: 105 mins)

*Pusher* is notable for launching director Nicolas Winding Refn’s career, but even more importantly, for me, it brought the great Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen (star of Susanne Bier’s *After the Wedding*) onto the international scene. A dark, naturalistic exploration of Copenhagen’s drug underworld; *Pusher* was a huge success in Denmark and internationally.

**October 14:** *Battles Without Honor & Humanity* (Japan: Kinji Fukasaku, 1973)

Fukasaku is probably best known in the USA as the director of the controversial dystopian *Battle Royale* (2000). In Japan, though, he is revered for his crime film epic *Battles Without Honor & Humanity* (released in the USA as the five-DVD set *The Yakuza Papers*). This stand alone first film in the series is shot documentary style and explores the criminal organization of ex-soldiers in post-War Hiroshima. The film was based upon a series of journalistic articles by *Koichi Iiboshi*.

**October 21:** *24 Hour Party People* (United Kingdom: Michael Winterbottom, 2002)

Winterbottom is a jack-of-all-genres in the film world. From film to film, his style changes, and perhaps this is why he is not as celebrated as some of his British peers. In this film he struck gold with an exploration of the creative madness of the Manchester music explosion (1976 - 1992) unleashed in the aftermath of the 1976 Sex Pistols concert in the Lesser Free Trade Hall.

**October 28:** *Bab’Aziz: The Prince Who Contemplated His Soul* (Tunisia: Nacer Khemir, 2005)

A true feast for the senses, this film takes us into the stories and culture of Tunisia. A blind dervish grandfather and his curious granddaughter wander the stunning desert landscape seeking out a grand reunion of dervishes that happens only once every 30 years. To occupy their time, the grandfather tells his granddaughter a magical story and as more people join them, they add stories of their own.

# A classic cult classic: *Repo Man*

By A. G. Greecs

Feeling broke? Disaffected? Isolated? Worried about the economy? The environment? World peace? Would it comfort you to know that nothing has changed since 1984, when *Repo Man* chronicled the lives of poor, amoral people living in a hopeless urban death trap?

Probably not. But it is impressive how well Alex Cox’s grim indictment of Reaganomics and the hyper-consumerism of the eighties applies to our lifestyle today. (It isn’t a coincidence that the oft-discussed sequel to *Repo Man*, *Repo Chick* went into production eight months ago.)

*Repo Man* follows Otto (Emilio Estevez), a disaffected punk in Los Angeles who travels the fringes of L.A. with a posse of other repo men, encountering robbers and gangs, extraterrestrial enthusiasts, government agents and a mad scientist driving across the country with... something in the trunk of a Chevy Malibu. The film is gritty and seedy, a bleak portrayal of a city that has always had a dark side. It’s also very funny.

Both in setting and in soundtrack, *Repo Man* highlights the punk community that Alex Cox was a member of in the early 80s. In fact, much of the film is autobiographical. Cox drew much of the dialogue from his own experiences shadowing an actual repossession agent.

*Repo Man* is one of those movies described as “genre-busting,” though “genre-hoarding” might be slightly more accurate in this case. The film constantly shifts from a road-trip movie to a spaghetti western, a buddy movie to science fiction. These aren’t effortless transitions; sometimes you can hear the plot creaking a little as it changes direction once again.

The tragedy and greatness of classic cult films lie in their ability to carry all kinds of weighty-sounding cockamamie theories about their meaning and import. *Repo Man* definitely falls into this category. It’s morally ambiguous and incredibly detailed, a constantly

self-referencing interaction between dialogue and set dressing.

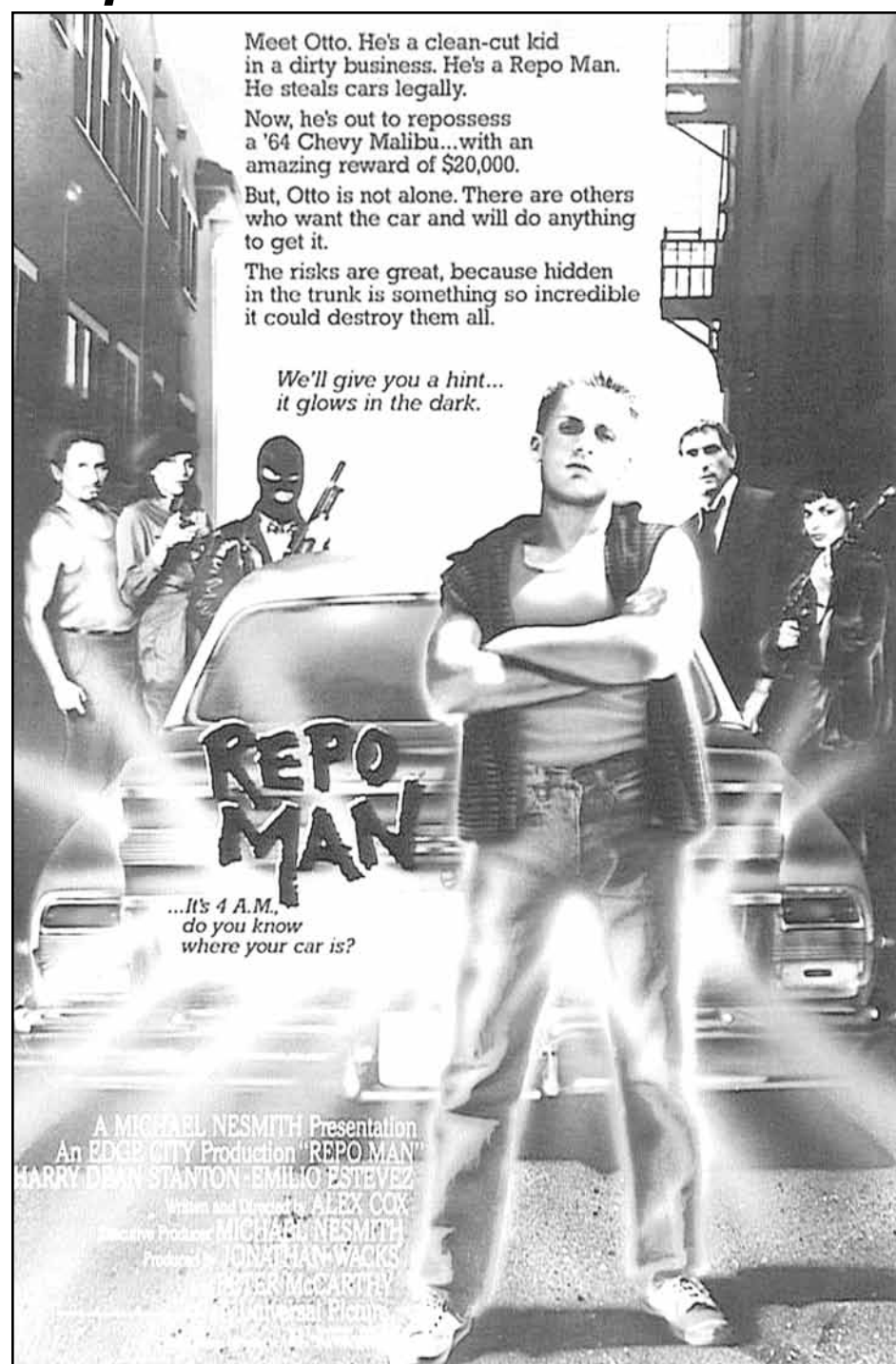
All this makes *Repo Man* the victim of much pontificating and theorizing. Some of it is academic, lots of it is decidedly less so. (And some of it pretends to be academic. There’s at least one 14,000 word article—“Structural, Semiotic Analysis”—that posits that *Repo Man* doesn’t have a beginning, a middle, or an end. Not exactly sure how that would work. *Repo Man* is a great movie, but it doesn’t have Christ-like abilities as far as I can tell.)

And all of this material, every article I read, disagreed with the others on what *Repo Man* is about and what exactly is in the trunk of the Chevy Malibu. (Something the movie makes pretty clear, so I’m not sure what all the debate is about.) Oftentimes, the articles are pretty hilarious.

For instance, I’ve read that the film’s somewhat arbitrary ending is a post-modern commentary on structural narrative. I’m not entirely sure what that means, but I’m pretty sure that it isn’t true. The end of *Repo Man* (one of the thirteen versions contemplated) was written half-way through production by the producer, after studio executives at Universal had put the kibosh on the original ending to the film, which involved the destruction of Los Angeles by neutron bomb, (an ending, in my opinion, that would have made a great deal more sense than what they came up with on the fly).

Which isn’t to say that *Repo Man* doesn’t have interesting things to say, or that it doesn’t present those things in an interesting way. Movies about people on the fringes of the status quo will always be worth watching. As with *Repo-Man*, they can be worth watching twice.

*Repo Man* is one of those movies where the story of how it got made is almost as interesting as the movie itself. The stories of on-set blow-ups and wrangling with the studios have become the stuff of legend. Fox Harris, who played the driver of the Chevy Malibu and inventor of the



neutron bomb couldn’t actually drive, and wrecked the car into a gas pump. That car was actually the second Chevy Malibu on set. The first had been stolen outside of Alex Cox’s house, when he was using it to get home from the set one day.

The iconic generic “food” and “drink” labels on the cans were actually only decided upon after Cox and the producers couldn’t get sponsorship from beer companies. The one sponsorship they could get was from

makers of the Christmas tree air fresheners that hang in the numerous cars of the film.

Like any respectable cult film, *Repo Man* has virtually endless detail and memorable quotes. If it’s been a few years since you’ve seen it, it’s screening as part of the cult film series at Al’s Bar on Wednesday, August 19 at 7 P.M. There you can enjoy it again along with beer and fellowship. If you haven’t seen it, attendance is mandatory.

# Culture

## Nick's piece (cont.)

*continued from page 1*

like The Black Lips, Silver Apples, Built to Spill, and thousands of others, many of whom were performing at Pitchfork Music Festival that very weekend.

Seeing Cricket Press among many of the world's premier poster artists was an eye-opening experience. My personal fixation with Cricket's art had led me to collect their posters as intricate keepsakes and beautiful decorations. But I'd never really considered the thousands of artists around the world doing exactly what Cricket does, nor had I realized Cricket was among the best in the business. Flatstock showed me that poster-making is an art form much more comprehensive than I'd once considered and it allowed me to better appreciate the quality of Cricket's work. After returning to Lexington from the festival, I caught up with one half of Cricket Press, Brian Turner, to learn more about Cricket and poster-making in general.

Brian and his wife Sara are the duo behind Cricket Press, its only employees. The couple met at UK in 1998 as Art-Studio majors specializing in Fine Art and Photography and married in 2000. When asked what inspired them to start Cricket, Brian recalled the mutual affinity he and Sara shared for the posters of a Chicago-based husband-and-wife team: Jay Ryan (who works under the name Bird Machine) and Sudyka.

"They were making posters for some of our favorite bands, and we admired and started collecting their stuff. Not long after, we became interested in making our own posters and started playing around with screen-printing. We hadn't even made our first poster when our friend Will Burchard asked us to make one for his band de Janeiro, who'd just gotten a couple gigs in Cincinnati. After we did the de Janeiro posters, some other friends' bands started asking us to do posters, and then we sought and developed a relationship with the Southgate House and, next thing you know, we were doing posters for some of their bigger shows."

Cricket Press' poster art quickly blossomed from a one-off local experiment to being sought for events across America, including places like New York, Nashville, Portland, Boston, Chicago, and Austin. They've created posters for well-known bands like The Decemberists, Mission of Burma, Guided By Voices, and even Pearl Jam. ("Sara was invited to do that one as part of a series," Brian said, defending the Pearl Jam poster. "It's not one we normally would have done.")

After Cricket hit the ground running, they kept their momentum by aggressively seeking out events to promote. Now people far and wide recognize the quality of Cricket's work and the couple is constantly flooded with requests for artwork.

"When we started in 2003, we had no preconceptions of doing this for a living," Brian said. "We were looking for an excuse to design things with a process and printmaking was

the medium we were dabbling in; we didn't have any notions it would get much bigger than that."

The Turner's use a common process, screen-printing, for their DIY artwork, though most of us are familiar with the process because of its commercial applications. People regularly use the process to smack artwork, logos, and labels across T-shirts, coffee mugs, cardboard boxes, balloons, and just about anything else you can imagine. So what makes screen-printing so ubiquitous? And why did Brian and Sara choose it over other forms of printing?

"It's a really fast and efficient way to do multiple prints of the same image," Brian answered. "And it's pretty easy to do, in terms of you don't need a lot of space, the materials—the ones we use—are safe, (water-based, non-toxic), and you can do it out of a basement or a bedroom or anywhere that has a sink and enough room."

Cricket typically makes only 50 to 150 posters for each "run", three-quarters of which are typically displayed in prominent locales for promotional purposes. Cricket keeps the remaining prints for archiving or to take to events, like Flatstock, and sell. I asked why they didn't make more posters per run, since several on their website are sold out.

"To put it crudely, in terms of supply and demand, if there are only 50 of something in existence, that'll ever be made—like for an event—then its value goes up because there are only so many of them. That idea, of a limited edition, is a cornerstone of printmaking. It's an idea that keeps us constantly moving from one print to the next, which forces us to be creative and gives us a lot of opportunities to come up with different ways to represent events. It has the added benefit of keeping us on our toes constantly coming up with artwork."

Having designed and printed posters for hundreds of events ("I've lost count," Brian admits), Cricket has certainly stayed on its toes since it began six years ago. So, just what about printmaking has kept them engaged as artists?

"One reason is that our art gets out in front of a lot of different people, since it's put in so many different places for so many different things. Unlike, say, a painter who gets their stuff put in a gallery to a limited audience, our stuff is put up in the street in front of everybody. It's a democratic art form in that respect, because it reaches a lot of different people; it's out there where everyone can see it, meaning our audience is much bigger."

So much bigger that Brian and Sara can never be sure who gets to see it, nor how strongly it might be admired. When I asked Brian if he and Sara had ever gone somewhere and been surprised to find their artwork displayed, he said they're more surprised bumping into strangers who have Cricket artwork tattooed all over their body.

"That's happened more than once, and that's more flattering than seeing your artwork hanging somewhere. For someone to go that far, for them to have it permanently put there, it's pretty cool."



Sara and Brian Turner of Cricket Press demonstrating screenprinting at Zag's Boutique and Art Gallery on August 8.

## In brief: Tanya Morgan's *Brooklynati*

By Landon Antonetti

Tanya Morgan began their career as a hip-hop group in a way that may have been a stretch in the rap game of yesteryear, but in the age of the internet doesn't seem like a far-fetched story. The trio, comprised of Cincinnati MC's Donwill and Ilyad and Brooklyn producer Von Pea, began collaborating after meeting on a message board on the popular tastemaker site okayplayer.com. Prior to releasing their debut album *Moonlighting* in 2006, the trio exchanged beats and vocal audio files via AOL Instant Messenger. *Moonlighting* would go on to receive 3.5 out of 5 mics in *The Source* magazine and became an underground smash, gaining coverage in *XXL* and *Wax Poetics* magazines respectively.

In May of this year Tanya Mo released their second full length LP, *Brooklynati*. The album features production by in house beat maker Von Pea as well as past collaborators Brickbeats and Aeon. The record also

features Little Brother front man Phonte and up and coming song bird Carlitta Durand. *Brooklynati* is both an aural train ride through the tunnels running under Brooklyn and a casual stroll down the streets of the Nati. The smooth wordplay throws the seriousness of today's conscious hip-hop game to the wind and brings the art back to the blueprint with fun, carefully crafted lyrics. "Hardcore Gentleman" provides a serious laugh as the group imagines a love song performed by M.O.P and Onyx. The beats are stellar as well; Von Pea's heavily sampled soundscapes provide the neck exercise from the roota to the toota.

On Friday, August 28, Tanya Morgan will be bringing Brooklynati flavor to Lexington's Red Mile Round Barn along with some Lexington home grown, including Loose Change, Devine Carama, Kuntry Noiz and DJ Tench. The all-ages show, sponsored by WRFL 88.1 and The Album, is \$4 for students and \$7 for general admission. Doors open at 8 P.M. with the first record spinning at 9.



Hip-hop trio Tanya Morgan comes to the Red Mile on August 28.



In spite of the broad interest in Cricket's work, the Turner's are happy living as just another Lexington couple. They work out of a spare bedroom they've converted into a studio workspace in their Chevy Chase home. I asked why, considering the success of Cricket, they've stayed put in Lexington.

"I like the people here," Brian flatly answered. "And the size of Lexington makes it very conducive for being creative. The creative community here is very tight knit and very open to things. I don't buy into the idea that you need to be in a big city, even if there's more culture or art going on, to 'make it.' I think everyone needs to be a part of a community, going out and taking part in it. I think that's really easy to do here."

One doesn't have to look hard to find Brian and Sara's community interests reflected in their artwork. Their strong involvement in the local bicycling community, for example, has yielded several posters over the

years. And some of the Turner's newest posters shed further light on their ideas and interests, like a teaser poster made for the re-opening of Buster's (a bar Brian and Sara patronized in its previous incarnation), Empty Bowls (a Moveable Feast charity event), the Ballet Under the Stars at Woodland Park, and an art show called The Fine Print held at Zag's Boutique & Gallery on South Limestone in which Cricket did a live screen-printing demonstration.

Brian and Sara have grown as artists over the years just as Cricket's standing has grown in the local community. For, nowadays, a Cricket poster is more than just fancy artwork hanging around town; it's an authoritative source for information about can't-miss events. While in Chicago at Flatstock, I also realized this: As Cricket's talents have earned them an increasingly global set of admirers, we in Lexington are fortunate enough to enjoy their talents right in our very backyard.

KET is searching for short films for a second series of "Reel Visions: A Spotlight on Kentucky Filmmakers." Next deadline for submission is October 1, 2009. Short films must not exceed 27 minutes in length and must include contact information on your submission format. Acceptable formats include DVD, DVCAM, DV, Mini DV, DVC PRO. Feel free to send art films, experimental films, documentaries, narrative films, animations or student films. *Send film submissions to:*

Reel Visions: A Spotlight on Kentucky Filmmakers, KET, 600 Cooper Drive, Lexington, KY 40502

# Recreation spending in Lexington, pt. 2

By Keith Halladay

Lexington has a spectacular array of municipal recreational facilities. I have in my hand the latest edition of the Lexington Parks & Recreation *Fun Guide*, the seasonal listing of city-sponsored athletic and recreational programs, and gazing upon the two-page chart of parks and their amenities (courts here, fields there, restrooms yes, etc.) on pages 10 and 11, one cannot help but feel a quick twinge of civic pride: *this is an impressive offering, and I'm proud to live in a such a city*, you might think. We do well in setting aside undeveloped spaces for ourselves and out fellow citizens.

Out of curiosity I plotted the locations of each park with a baseball field on Google's mapping page, and I was left with a field of blue markers, evenly distributed across the whole of Fayette County. Likewise the basketball courts, and for every sort of amenity listed in the *Fun Guide*.

So far, so good, but in terms of preventing criminal behavior in youth, which some scholars suggest is possible through proper implementation of recreation programs, do these amenities work here in Lexington? And by what measure shall we gauge their effectiveness or lack thereof?

The theory behind recreation programs as a means of reducing youth crime, roughly, is based on the idea that sports and recreation are socially inclusive activities, and that social inclusion is what many young offenders lack. Furthermore, simply diverting youth into programs means the time they spend there can't, one hopes, be spent in criminal pursuits.

However, it's difficult to evaluate success or failure in these areas without extensive empirical observation; one might observe a change over time in

the crime rate in a particular neighborhood where a recreational facility and/or program exists, but that data would provide only an incomplete picture, for what we'd really like to know are kids' answers to questions such as, "do you feel more socially involved now that you've joined the football squad?" and "if you hadn't been at practice, would you have gone and played with gasoline in the abandoned building?" and then to follow up with some kind of longitudinal study that aims to answer the question, "are you gonna knock over a Speedway in five years?" Enough of those studies, and you have some real data.

Unfortunately, not much yet exists (much of the research is of too-short duration and/or methodologically dubious), and generating it locally would cost many more hours and dollars than the city budget provides for.

Still, the theory is sound, for we do know that sport, as a form of play, promotes inclusion and the development of social skills. Of course, the relationship between theory and actual and crime prevention is complicated—some scholars have noticed that recreation programs may decrease the incidence of crimes such as petty theft and spraying graffiti, while rates of armed robbery and assault remain unchanged, which suggests that recreation may prevent crimes of boredom, but not necessarily those of desperation.

But that's a different discussion; back to our fair city. I mentioned in the last issue that while 30 municipal parks have baseball field, only three also host youth baseball leagues. And while it's worth comment that two of these parks, Castlewood and Douglass, are located within or adjacent to lower-income residential neighborhoods (for example, the average assessed value of the homes on Greenwood Avenue, immediately across

Georgetown Street from Douglass Park, is about \$40,000), what about the great mass of Lexingtonians who live nowhere near Douglass, Castlewood, or Idlehour Park?

This is a big deal for two reasons: first, because the ability to sign up for these leagues depends, in many cases, on the parents' ability to transport the child to the field, and second, because the presence of a baseball field *without*



an accompanying baseball program does not necessarily mean games of baseball will spontaneously occur there, or that any sort of social-group building will ensue. To bastardize W.P. Kinsella: just building it does not ensure they will come.

To the first: I was lucky in that my father earned enough salary to allow my mother to work only part-time, if at all. Hence she was available to transport me and my brother in one of the family's two cars to a constant stream of sports activities; something was always in season, and we played everything. But what about a family in which both parents work, or a single parent who works two jobs? What about those in Lexington without reliable car access? Shall we send our seven-year-olds to teeball via the Byzantine bus system? Great to have baseball fields in north Lexington, but what if you live off Lansdowne?

The second issue is perhaps more troubling. It's difficult to criticize the

city for showing off its parks and amenities in a comprehensive two-page graph, but the showiness is a bit of a diversion from the fact that most of the 90 parks listed host no athletic programs at all, despite the presence of facilities adequate to the task. Since the recreational programs that *do* help build social bonds between children are those which are structured and supervised in ways that actively promote cooperation and teamwork, with adult supervision to that end, the presence of a park facility lacking such programs means the facility, and the funds required to build and maintain it, is not fulfilling its potential social worth—it's an unnecessarily low return on the civic investment.

Nor do many parks host the sort of cultural events that, for example, Woodland Park hosts. The various and recurring festivals and concerts help make the park a neighborhood center of activity, instead of just a place to walk the dog. There's a social commitment to certain parks that others don't enjoy, and again, access to those parks depends on the availability or time and transportation.

I realize a city this size needs only so many baseball leagues; there are only so many kids available to play, and plenty of private organizations (Babe Ruth, school leagues, etc.) to pick up the slack. But what about the Equestrian program? In the horse capital of the world, have we provided access to everyone we can? Are we even encouraging everyone to look into it?

So let's push for more—not facilities, for we surely have those, but for more of the programs that make the facilities socially useful, and in more places. The money is there, especially if we're willing to value prevention as much as we seem to value arrest and incarceration.

# Pennington races to Keene Cup victory

## Inaugural DIY disc golf tourney a "grueling event," says participant

Sunday, August 2, 2009  
Keene, KY  
NoC Sports Desk

Mike Pennington pulled away from Mark Hobbs over the course of the final eleven holes to win the inaugural Keene Cup disc golf tournament with an impressive 2-over par 136 for the entire 44 holes of tournament play.

The tournament, held at Feed the Beast Farm and Canoe Livery on the outskirts of Keene, KY., featured a field of ten players. Field favorite Hobbs and local pro Pennington quickly separated themselves from the pack as temperatures soared into the 80s throughout a championship weekend that saw four participants score "dnq" (did not qualify).

"The rest of the field never got close. I was really just worried about Hobbs," noted Pennington about the relative lack of competition,

As players dropped like pawpaws out of the tourney, and as qualifiers like Mayer and Marchman wilted under the intense early summer sunshine, Hobbs and Jessamine County resident Pennington dueled to a 1-over par 101 after the first 33 holes of action. It was here that hometown hero Pennington used his improved conditioning and superior knowledge of the course to soar his way to a four stroke victory by scoring an impressive 35, or one 1-over par, on the course's back eleven.

The Keene Cup is unusual among disc golf tournaments in that it's not officially sponsored by the Pro Disc Golf Association since participants throw at trees, fence posts, and rusted cistern tops rather than at baskets. Among tourneys held at Feed the Beast (FtB), the Cup is also unusual in that it requires participants to throw the entire 22 hole course *twice* in order to score an official entry. Combined with soaring temperatures typical of early

August for this part of Keene, the additional 22 holes typically create playing conditions that many disc golfers describe as "triathlon-like" in its need for a special mix of mental and physical endurance.

It was only fitting, then, that Pennington won pulling away. Exhibiting both the stamina and stub-



Keene Cup winner Mike Pennington boists his trophy aloft. Pennington was one of only six competitors to complete all 44 holes

born commitment to work of an old, not-quite-spent, dumb ox, Pennington actually threw 33 holes on Saturday of the tournament, only to be disqualified when player Mayer talked him into an afternoon canoe trip up the Dix River. By the time Pennington returned early that evening after six hours in the sun paddling up and down the Dix, it was too dark for Pennington to complete the final 11 holes to qualify on that day, and thus he was forced to re-throw the entire 44 holes on Sunday. It was truly a championship effort worth of the Keene Cup.

### Notes

#### *The rigors of playing*

With the intense, relentless pressure imposed on both body and mind throughout the entire 44 hole event, it is no coincidence that in this year's Cup, not a single player passed a substance test. Not one. Among this level of elite amateur comradely disc golf competition—where the difference between a 15- and 20-over par is razor thin—to gain an Edge players will often stuff themselves with any variety of herbal supplements, salty porks, brewed ales, raspberry pies, flax seed oils, pharmaceutical pills, steaming teas, and fiber gel caps they can get their needy little hands and mouths on.

#### *Dream Crusher nets another*

Though several holes play tough on the 22 hole course, perhaps no other hole has caused more fits for players of all shapes, genders, and sizes than hole 11, nicknamed "The Dream Crusher." The 350 foot final hole of the front 11, Dream Crusher angles right through an arch of low-hanging trees before doglegging left up T-Bone's driveway, leveling off for 50 feet and sloping an addition forty feet down to the pin. The hole has often been the site of miraculous

melt-downs—double, triple, and quadruple bogeys.

The hole once again claimed the tournament dreams of several players. Runner-up Hobbs was on pace for a course record 5-under on the front 11 before double-bogeying Dream Crusher that set the tone for a disappointing 39 on his final back 11.

"Everything was going fine until I got 'Mutumbo-ed,'" said Hobbs, referring to the frustrating act of having a shot swatted from the air by the highest-reaching branches on the highest-growing trees.

#### *Halladay succumbs*

While conditions led to a number of dnq's, only NoC Sports Editor Keith Halladay's withdrawal affected the leaderboard. Halladay completed the first half of the tournament with a 2-over par. However, the bruiser withdrew after throwing his tee shot to begin his second round of scoring. Halladay's agent later cited "non-specific muscular fatigue" as reason for the withdrawal.

Halladay was a darkhorse favorite to compete for the Cup, but many questioned whether the grueling tournament format would suit his skill and endurance set. As it turns out, they were right.

Keene Cup, August 8-9  
Keene, KY

	Round 1		Round 2		Overall
	In	Out	In	Out	
Pennington, Mike	-1	+4	-2	+1	+2
Hobbs, Mark	-1	+6	-4	+5	+6
Mayer, Danny	+5	+3	+1	+6	+15
Marchman, Michael	+1	+9	+3	+8	+21
Bone, T.	+11	+9	+8	+13	+41
Stone, Gary F.	+16	+14	+6	+9	+45
Halladay, Keith	-2	+4	dnf	dnf	-
Van Outer, Lyle	E	+7	dnf	dnf	-
Locken, Young John	+9	+8	dnf	dnf	-
E. Bruce	+9	+9	dnf	dnf	-

# Opinion

## Perspective: what I keep doing this summer

By Ryan Koch

A couple of months ago I noticed that I couldn't sleep past five a.m. I would wake up with the birds, the morning air still, ready to be in a garden. Before the summer solstice there was this anticipation in my life, a waxing. Something was looming, almost calling me. I was doing my best to get ready, to have the garden beds planted up and watered. I didn't want to miss anything growing.

Now I am on the other side of that. I sense the days shortening again and I don't mind. I noticed how dark it was this morning at six o'clock. And in the cool rain I almost thought I smelled wood smoke, autumn's signature. This is part of the same deeper change I have been undergoing over

the past few years as I have made gardens my full time job. This is part of my conversion.

I used to be able to almost completely ignore the weather. I paid close enough attention to wear a jacket when appropriate, but that was the extent of it. Rain was a bother that kept me off my bike. And seasons had more to do with holidays and the school calendar than they did with food or soil. I ate potatoes because they were a great pairing with cheese. And I ate tomatoes whenever I wanted to—these were not just the summertime treat that they have come to be for my household.

Having a garden has changed all that. I direct Seedleaf, a non-profit organization that is using ten gardens here in Lexington to inspire the

imaginings of eaters throughout the city. I have come to know that to eat a sun-warmed tomato, or to hand the year's first tomato to a two-year-old and enjoy it vicariously...these are my best arguments for a local food economy. The gardens have me caring anew about food, soil, and the weather. I care about the rain now. I get seriously irritable if we don't get rain for four or five days. I can feel my breathing come easier when the rain begins, when the streets get wet and steam with the first drops. I feel the seasons coming on, and passing, and I don't have the regret I used to have about all these days getting behind me. I like the next part too, the dry leaves, and a garden bedded down.

Some volunteers and I used a dry Saturday morning at the London Ferrell Community Garden to pull out some collards and cabbage that hadn't done as well as I would have liked. We sowed lettuce and greens and covered that with a thin layer of compost. This is one of the things about gardening that touches me so and teaches me so much: I can clear a row and plant something else. Some things don't do well some years. I get to keep trying.

I'm seeing what neighbors can do together. A handful of faithful volunteers keep showing up on Saturday mornings. I remember what a slog it was at times last year to maintain this space. This year I almost never work alone. The garden is an occasion to remember how much work a group of people can do. Even if this effort does not change the world, one little bit of earth is being changed one summer at a time. And as we finish the work in stages, week by week, we are changed (somehow).

I am also seeing that my answers don't come as easily as they did. When Seedleaf started we wanted to make food available to those in need. Last year it was easy: grow a bunch of food and give it away. Our early success at the London Ferrell brought a number of new gardeners into the story. While some of our forty plot-holders are hobby gardeners, many are apartment dwellers living on Elm Tree Lane or Campsie Place, folks who are counting on the food that they grow. When

our plot holders reported that they were not seeing the fruit of their labor, and that they were discouraged from learning the craft of gardening, not to mention being threatened in their home economies, we knew we had to do something.

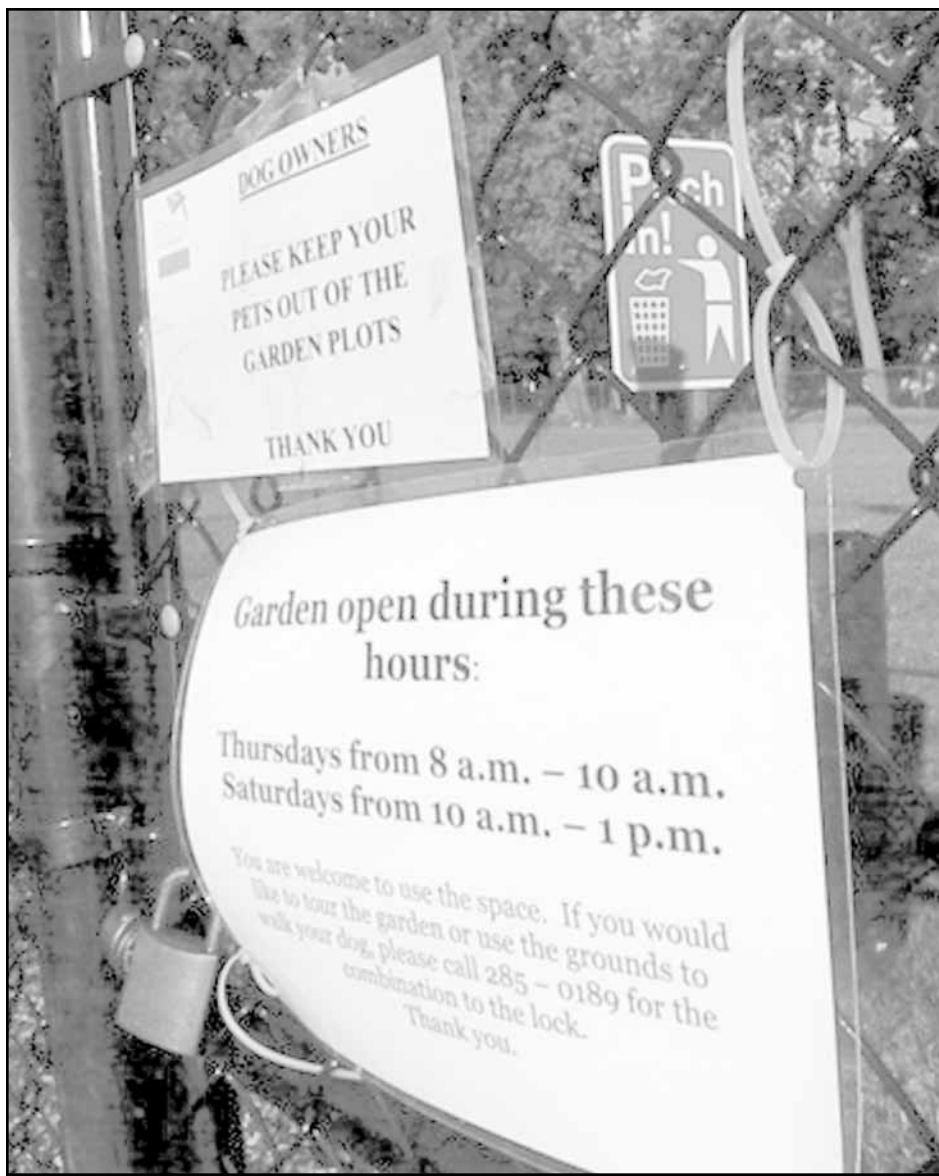
Seedleaf exists to nourish communities, and an important part of our mission is to grow gardeners. In the interest of honoring the efforts of this community of gardeners, and allowing them to share their harvest at their discretion, we locked the gates. This was not an easy choice. Time will tell if it was the best choice. I do hope that our critics will be patient with us as we work to find a solution that is equitable to all the stakeholders in this effort.

The loveliest thing about this conversion to gardening is that it is ongoing. It is new every morning. I know that the garden has much to teach me about disappointment, disease, erosion, pests and on and on. I have so many mistakes left to make. It is bittersweet to hope that I may be allowed forty more summers to get it right. It reminds me of a scene from a Wendell Berry story in which a community of men finish a meal together and linger for a moment while the work awaits them:

*Abh! Dessert is finished. They have smoked. There comes a long moment of suspension between the conclusion of the meal and the return to work. An ancient anguish builds among them now, especially among the older ones who know best that it is inescapable. Old Jack can feel it. Here they are, out of the sun, at rest, drinking for the pleasure of it the trickles of water melted from the ice in their glasses. And outside the sun is blazing. Not a breath of wind stirs. The loads wait. They are again at the gate of Eden looking out. Again they must resume their journey: the long return of dust to dust. And then Matt pushes his chair back. "Boys," he says quietly. "Let's go hit it."*

—Wendell Berry, *The Memory of Old Jack*

Ryan Koch is the director of Seedleaf, an organization dedicated to nourishing communities by growing, cooking, sharing, and recycling food. Contact Ryan at [seedleaf-info@gmail.com](mailto:seedleaf-info@gmail.com).



The locked gates of the London Ferrell Community Garden.

## Letters to the Editor

London Ferrell: Locking up garden has community interests at heart

The London Ferrell Community Garden has been just that for my wife and I—a community. Our investment in the garden goes well beyond the \$5 fee for our plot. We have spent many hours working in our section and in the community section and through this work have come to know many people who are our neighbors.

I know it was a very difficult decision to lock up the garden but it was one that had the community's interests at heart. If we don't feel safe in our own backyard, what does that mean for community? I know many people had stopped going to the garden not because there were homeless men simply hanging around but because they were being harassed by people hanging around, homeless or not.

Another issue was the theft of food from personal plots. When our first tomatoes were taken I told my wife, "I hope someone took them who really needed them." As someone who has worked with the homeless and has many friends in that community, I know Lexington offers many opportunities to get a hot meal. In fact, most friends of mine have a regular schedule they keep to and are able to get meals twice a day every day. If any of them were to ask me for some veggies from my garden I would gladly give them, the same as if someone I didn't know asked. But the truth is I don't know who has been stealing my veggies and if it was done out of need or greed. No one does. And how can a community survive without openness and trust?

Allowing gardeners to be harassed and work with the knowledge that they might not get to enjoy the fruit of their labor, not knowing who will, does

nothing to foster community. I would much rather have a place where people can go and feel safe and learn to love the land, its produce and each other. That's what we want for our children; why not for the garden community?

The garden lock has so far been successful in keeping theft down and making it a safe place to be and the combination is freely given to gardeners. It has encouraged people to continue work there and no one that I know has yet been unable to enjoy this space who wanted to. Let's build from this haven and make the London Ferrell community a place of trust so that one day we won't need the lock.

Justin Millikin, Lexington

### Editor's response

We agree on a good many things. London Ferrell is a wonderful place, people should feel secure in their surroundings, picking vegetables and herbs is a right accorded every gardener, and the decision to lock up London Ferrell was no doubt a difficult one to make. We also agree that a community cannot "survive without openness and trust." We diverge, however, on assessing who bears the burden of that openness and trust.

Over the past year and a half, the London Ferrell Garden has done nothing but grow. More private plot-holders, greater public exposure, an increasing volunteer force, and ultimately an abundance of divergent uses. All this growth has happened, apparently, despite tomato thieves and intrusive loud-mouth no-goods. Can we find other solutions to the problems of theft, hunger, and belligerence that doesn't use locks to seal in the openness and trust of the London Ferrell community?

Don't quit your day job: bike polo corrections

As Commissioner of Bike Polo for the recent Bluegrass State Games Tournament, I had a few corrections I wanted to offer regarding the coverage. Comosexual Charlie's last name is Hill, not Hall. I think you actually have it both ways throughout the article, but Charlie Hill is the correct one.

My team, No See Ums (Kyle Hord, Drew Combs and myself), actually placed 6th overall and not 4th. It was the team from Cincinnati (Mangé Polo) that knocked us out of the tournament in the only other match besides the final championship match that ended in a sudden death joust. Cincy ended up taking 4th, right behind their 3rd Place Ohio compatriots, Dayton. No See Ums finished just behind fifth place finisher Team Awesome from Cleveland.

I'd also like to correct and add to the larger story surrounding Lexington Bike Polo's rumored "injury curse", particularly in the case of Lexington's "A" team, Tripple Lxxxx. While it is true that Alex Brooks did break his wrist shortly before last year's NACCC tournament in Chicago, he was originally slated to be on a team with Grant Clouser and myself... and not the Tripple Lxxxx team. Alex has just recently made his triumphant comeback to Lexington Bike Polo after taking nearly a year off. He played on team "Toxic Onslaught" with Boyd Shearer and Jakub Toborek in the recent BGSJG tournament.

Adding to Tripple Lxxxx's injury deja vu is the fact that Brad Flowers broke his finger after an accidental collision with a truck while riding his bike home - mere days before the Chicago Tournament. Again, Tripple Lxxxx had

to scramble for a replacement, which they found in goal defense extraordinaire, Matt Burton. Tripple Lxxxx's problems did not end there, though... during the first day of Round Robin play in Chicago, Shane Tedder was checked up against a chain link fence and snagged his hand, causing a hyper-extension that took him out of play the next day. Tripple Lxxxx soldiered on with Patrick Garnett pulling

double-duty as a replacement to go along with his own team duties.

This is all just trivial backstory, though...is Lexington's "A" Team really cursed with injuries or is it just a symptom of the intense level of play here in Lexington? I guess time will tell.

Brian Turner, Lexington

### Author's response

In addition to the errors alluded to by Bluegrass Games Bike Polo Commissioner Brian Turner, I should also add one more correction and a big apology. The person pictured on the cover of issue six was not, in truth, Chris Sullivan. Sullivan, as many Northsiders know, is a fine musician who plays with the Swells, the Swells Brass Band, and the Big Maracas (among other projects). He is, though, a fairly pathetic bike polo player. The athlete featured on the cover of issue Six is instead Chris Simpson of the second place finishing Tripple Lxxxx.

And finally, a big apology to Alex Brooks for stating that he did not play in the Bluegrass Games tournament (in two separate articles), and to his team, Toxic Onslaught, for completely dismissing one of their teammates from the record books.

Danny Mayer



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