

Free market scales at State U.

By Danny Mayer

The first thing you should know is that UK’s Top 20 bonanza, paid for by students and their families, taxpayers and athletic supporters, and janitorial staff and adjunct armies, represents a fairly large redistribution of wealth, a quiet ho-hum moving of public money into private individual coffers. There have been a number of ways this has been done, but the exploitation of scale—moving from local and regional to national and global scales to deflect blame or increase importance and value—has been a much-used, yet little-discussed ripoff tactic.

Take the example of Mitch Barnhart’s new 10-year, \$6 million contract, which UK CEO Lee Todd offered to his buddy without even informing the UK Board of Trustees. The \$600,000.00 per year contract represents a \$125,000.00 yearly salary increase for the UK Athletic Director. (Editor’s Note: Making just the salary increase alone would place Barnhart in the top 10% of wage earners in this poor state, and somewhere around the top 15% nationally.)

CEO Todd’s main justification for the giant salary increase was, lamentably, one of efficient markets at work. The inflated salary simply reflected, the *Herald-Leader* reported,

the reality that Barnhart needed to be “closer to the market rate for SEC athletic directors.” Later, in other media outlets and in a response to *NoC*, Todd noted that the market rate was set not by the SEC AD market, but rather via a national market of all major conference ADs. (Todd made other claims, which you can read on our website, but offered no evidence to corroborate them (despite being asked), so we will not publish them here.)

As I told Todd, choosing the national rather than SEC market was a mighty good stroke of fortune for his buddy Mitch. As it turns out, Barnhart in 2009 was already the SEC’s third-highest paid athletic director. Four months earlier, the University of Georgia, which has an athletic program that consistently outperforms UK and generates a greater profit, set the market rate for SEC AD’s with the hire of hot shot University of Florida assistant AD Greg McGarity for \$425,000 a year (or \$50,000.00 less than Mitch’s old salary of \$475,000.00). If the UK CEO was going for market rate in the SEC, his better course of action should have been cutting Barnhart’s salary—not raising it.

Luckily for Todd’s buddy Mitch, though, the correct free market to troll was not the SEC market, but rather the more efficient and better valued

national AD market, which, as it happens, is comprised of a wealthier pool of athletic directors. Suddenly, Todd’s buddy Mitch went from being over-valued on the SEC market, to appearing under-valued on the national (big conference) market.

The national market has also allowed Todd to tell a different story about his buddy Mitch. Todd used the national story to highlight Barnhart’s shepherding of the UK athletic program up the rankings of the Sears Cup, an annual ranking of colleges nationwide that stresses athletic achievement across all sports in a given school year. Under Todd’s buddy Mitch’s stewardship, UK athletics have placed in familiar Top 20 territory—comfortably outside it. Last year UK ranked 29 in the Sears Cup (UK’s best showing!, Todd notes); the year before, #34. Before that, 36, with a bullet. The school currently ranks 98 in this year’s race, which concludes in the summer.

The present year excepted, the Sears Cup numbers sound good until you re-scale them back to the SEC market—the market that UK circulates most regularly within. Here in the SEC, UK’s highest ever 29 ranking in the 2009-2010 national Sears Cup competition was only good for seventh best among SEC schools. The previous two years, the Top

30ish rankings were good for eighth best among SEC peers. This year the school sits at sixth best.

Not only did Todd’s choice of a national market make his buddy Mitch significantly more money, but it also allowed the school CEO to spin the raise more effectively. When it came time to measure—benchmark—Barnhart’s value to UK Athletics, Inc., the national market obscured the UK AD’s regional over-valuing. In the SEC market, at least, Barnhart’s above market salary is difficult to jive with his middle of the pack athletic program results.

The trick has been to re-scale Barnhart’s benchmarks as a means of (1) inflating Barnhart’s value; and (2) minimizing Barnhart’s less than stellar performance among his real peers.

(I speak here strictly in terms of business markets. While Barnhart comes off to me, personally, as a vile human being whose main interest, professionally, involves destroying the sports I used to love in a Quixotic quest to win the race to the profitably corporate athletic bottom, all in all a genuine scumbag, my personal views have no bearing on the economic argument put forth here. That’s fodder for a different article.)

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In-Feed preps new growing season

NoC News

“We plan to expand the hard scape and beds, mulch the entire lot, plant more flowers, and put up some educational signage,” says In-Feed’s Jennifer Baricklow of the vacant lot garden on the 500 block of North Limestone that she helped cultivate last year.

Located across from the old Spaulding’s building on the property of James Maxberry, who runs the liquor store on the corner of Sixth, the garden is one of several established last year by In-Feed. The group is one of a growing number of local gardening activist organizations that have formed over the past several years. In-Feed uses gardening as a tool for making under-used land more productive.

“We encourage people to think... about the spaces in which they live and work, to see possibilities for growing food and saving seeds. These are things that will ultimately make them less dependent on store-bought food. You don’t have to have half an acre to grow something for your family. Every little tomato helps.”

In-Feed’s does not aim to promote community gardens (though they acknowledge the community building that may occur), but rather to offer offer productive models for small scale gardening in the midst of urban and suburban waste. Their garden spots are more about giving residents tangible ideas for putting all that waste—private residential green space, vacant lots, business properties, church grounds, alleyways, sidewalk easements and city parks—back into use.

Faith Feeds

During the winter season, In-Feed assessed what worked and what needed improvement from the year before. They realized they’ll need rain barrels

at several of the plots that lack access to running water. For the time being, they’ve decided to abandon their market garden to better focus on their other spots, which like the North Limestone garden, provide food free of charge to anyone happening by.

Through connections with other local gardeners that arose partially through their work last year, the group was invited to join Faith Feeds, an umbrella group of different gardening organizations. The groups—Lexington Urban Gleaning Network, Seedleaf, the Lexington Farmer’s Market, Reed Valley Orchard—share a common mission: to address hunger by harvesting or collecting excess produce and distributing to those in need throughout the community.

In-Feed’s mission to encourage the creative use of space for growing food fit in well. “We have a program that they want to see grow,” Baricklow notes, calling In-Feed “the gardening arm of Faith Feeds.” (Somewhere Wendell Berry is smiling at the economics of it all: In-Feed encourages growing food for public gleaning; Faith Feeds encourages citywide gleaning efforts.)

Being connected to Faith Feeds has helped the small start up growing group in other ways. Baricklow and Bob McKinley are the organizational structure and mule-horses of In-Feed. Establishing, weeding, watering and harvesting at the different lots left little time for organizational work, particularly since both lead full-time lives doing other things.

“Faith Feeds has access to human and capital resources that would have taken us a lot longer to develop: a board of directors with lots of community contacts, 501c3 status, even a

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Food, uprisings, and government Park markets at city hall

By Danny Mayer

On December 17 in front of a local government building in the rural Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire and ignited an uprising in the Mideast with reverberations felt as far away as Madison, Wisconsin. Bouazizi, a twenty-seven year old college graduate, sold produce as a street vendor to support his family. On the day in question, police confiscated Bouazizi’s vegetables, which he had procured on \$200 credit, because the Tunisian lacked (or didn’t) a proper permit to sell food.

Bouazizi set himself on fire after the governor refused to hear his grievances. *The Nation’s* Laila Lalami described the immolation as “an act of desperation that inspired the country’s thousands of unemployed [college] graduates to take to the streets in protest.” The rest is still living history: Egypt, Bahrain, Iraq, maybe Saudi Arabia. The list goes on.

Clearly a number of factors have played into the Tunisian and subsequent uprisings in the Mideast, but the entwined problems of unemployment, food security and unresponsive government have played a central role in several. The global food crises of 2008 saw rice, wheat, corn and soy prices skyrocket, in some cases doubling in price over a two year period. Sudden inflation led to food riots in (among other places) several North African countries, Egypt among them. Bouazizi’s death by fire resonated in large measure with citizens because he was an indentured seller of produce. Indeed, many of the first concessions imperiled Mideast rulers have made is to increase food subsidies for the

people—to increase public access to food. One might argue that the recent Tunisian and Egyptian sparks for change were a continued reverberation of the food riots of 2008.

In the last year, as corporate capitalism has roared back, the world has seen a near return to 2008 food crisis levels, with everyone from *The Wall Street Journal* and Alltech to Democracy Now acknowledging that this year should be worse than last.

Though Kentuckians spend significantly less of their income on food than nearly anywhere else on Earth, the inflationary creep of higher food prices has begun to set in. On Friday, January 28, the *Herald-Leader* business section reported that Cincinnati-based Proctor and Gamble, which “counts Pampers diapers, Gillette shavers and Crest toothpaste among its major brands,” announced the likelihood of price increases to combat a number of fast-rising costs brought on by the increase in oil.

A January 3 *H-L* article reported a 2.5% increase in retail food prices between September and December, with fruits and vegetables experiencing the greatest price jump. Another article, titled “Americans face price increases on most consumer goods,” notes that “[p]rices for corn, sugar, wheat, beef, pork and coffee are soaring” again this year.

Oil, if you aren’t aware by now, greases just about every economic transaction of significance throughout most of the known world. Imagine how many oiled up transactions—mining of raw materials, transport, refining, transport, assembling, transport, distributing, transport, selling—it takes

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Still more on the UK search

Still more on food and parks

LAMA

The Neighborhood

Grocery shopping for ninety-niners Gleaning the waste lands

By Rachel Leatherman

As Friday afternoon shoppers entered the front of a nearby discount grocery to shop, my husband and I parked at the back of the store, up a small hill in an adjacent lot, to ‘shop’ in the dumpster for food. We took grocery bags and trekked down the hill. Tracks in the snow indicated that we were not the first to do so. A loaf of bread perched on top of the dumpster lid, placed there by someone with a sense of humor, appeared to be an obvious invitation and advertisement.

I went to one side of the dumpster, my husband to the other, and we opened the side doors. This was the very same dumpster that just last week delivered stew beef, way too much for us to handle, so we took four packages, all a full week prior to expiration, all priced between five and six dollars each, and brought them home to make yet another delicious series of crockpot meals, supplemented with rice procured from a different dumpster.

Today, some fifty loaves of bread, all prior to expiration, sat on top of a

large pile of stuff. I took eight loaves of bread and two packages of hot-dog buns while my husband handed me lemons, blueberries, strawberries, apples and bananas from the pile. (I could just kill myself because just the day before, I actually bought a loaf of bread, and we fought about it because we did not really have the money for a loaf of bread.)

Next was time for the vegetables: two heads of lettuce, two 8-packs of Roma tomatoes, two packages of 4 each of yellow and green squash, and two packs of yellow, red and green peppers, plus a ten-pound bag of potatoes and a package of fresh mushrooms. I was thirsty so I took five cans of fruit punch and opened one for the road. We did not have enough grocery bags, so we procured an additional large box from the dumpster and loaded it as well. Before we closed the doors I picked off a few slices of cheese.

As we trekked back up the hill through the snow to load some hundred dollars worth of groceries to the truck, shoppers wheeled their baskets and purchases out the front of the very same store, minus their money.

Meanwhile, on the scrapping front, it was lamp day at the Salvation Army dumpster, so I picked off eight or ten lamps, two of them, turns out, yellow brass. Got my first laptop computer... was wondering when laptops were going to hit, cut the cords from several TVs and got another vacuum cleaner, then left the rest for my buddies, because it is rude to be overly greedy at a dumpster. Went to the furniture pile where they purposefully destroy furniture and dicked around cutting cords from an enormous leather three-seat recliner. Then I spoke to my buddies, including the one that showed up one night in a lighted miner’s cap and said, “You oughta git ‘ya one of these...”

On the way home we stopped off at family services dumpster and picked up another comforter and some more clothes, then drove up and down some alleys, picking up those really heavy bass enhancer things, two beautiful metal patio chairs and a file cabinet. Swung by the car wash for cans and almost missed my first two perfectly working flat screen monitors. I was wondering when those were going to hit the trash. One is a 19 or 20-inch HP, the other looks to be a sixteen

inch HP. Had I not accidentally moved some paper I might have missed the both of them.

I wonder about the car wash people. You are at the car wash, taking out cups and napkins, and then you say to yourself, “You know what? Fuck it. I’m throwing away these flat-screen monitors.” The big one was really nice for watching Al Jazeera; it arrived just in time for the Revolution, which we watched on the 19-incher.

Still hoping to get a little junk-hauling business going, maybe “Two Guys and a Truck” (not taken here yet, I checked) but it is not easy when you are this poor. The food thing is crazy. Hell, if I had money I am not sure I would shop when food is so readily available. Perhaps I forgot to mention the delicious barbecue that we get consistently from a dumpster near a gut-wagon barbecue vendor that cannot afford his own rolloff service. Sometimes it is still warm.

Hope this helps upcoming ninety-niners and future Freegans. Insulated copper is up to a dollar fifteen a pound now folks. If you are willing to strip the cords, clean copper is around three dollars a pound. Go get those cords!

Announcements

EConsulting seed sale

On Saturday, March 5, 2011, EConsulting will be selling heirloom/heritage seeds from 11:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. at Third Street Stuff and Coffee (257 North Limestone, across from Doodles Restaurant).

We’ll have cool (Broccoli, Kale, Mustard Greens, Lettuce, Beets, Spinach, etc.) and warm weather (Tomatoes, Bush Beans, Watermelon, Basil, Okra, Popcorn, etc.) heirloom seeds you can purchase for your edible garden.

In addition to the seeds, you can obtain information on heirloom seeds, companion planting, healthy living, and recipes using produce from the garden. For more information, check out www.EConsultingllc.org/seed_sale.

The Coal War at Natasha’s

On Wednesday, March 9, 2011 at 7 P.M., Natasha’s Bistro and Bar will host The Coal War: An Evening With The Arts to benefit the making of the docu-

mentary *A Thousand Little Cuts*, directed and produced by Chad A. Stevens. The documentary tells the story of Coal River Mountain, under attack by Massey Energy permits to destroy it to get at the coal buried beneath it. A teaser for the the documentary may be found at: www.thecoalwar.com.

Woodland Christian Church is located at 530 East High Street in Lexington, across from Woodland Park.

PeaceMeal spots still open

This is year #3 at Bluegrass Community and Technical College’s



Beans from PeaceMeal gardens.

community garden, located adjacent to our Leestown Campus, just past New Circle Road. Would you like to be involved in the garden this year? There are still some plots available. The usual size is 10’ X 10’. The cost is \$10 for the year for low-income and students; \$20 for everyone else. The small fee helps purchase gardening tools and supplies.

We would love to have groups sign up for work parties during the summer. If your scout, church, or organization would like to have a day at the garden, please let us know. Also, if you would like to work in the garden and be paid in produce, let us know.


In-Feed seed sale

On Saturday, March 12, In-Feed will hold its third annual heirloom

seed sale at Woodland Christian Church. The sale will run from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. and will feature more than 70 varieties of heirloom seed. Many are certified organic, and a few are even supplied by local growers. In-Feed found Bob McKinley emphasizes offering varieties that have grown well around Lexington.

In-Feed encourages the use of small or temporary spaces to grow food – mowing strips, vacant lots, even sidewalks and parking lots with the use of containers. The organization has helped plant small plots at businesses, residences, and houses of worship in various locations around town. For more information, visit infeed.wordpress.com.

Our next work party is Saturday, March 12, noon until 4:00. You are invited. Contact Rebecca Glasscock at Rebecca.Glasscock@kctcs.edu.

in-FEED 
[closing the fresh food gap through
the utilization of urban in-fill.]

For more information about our programs, email us at
nytefist7@aol.com

ADVERTISE IN *NoC*: NOCEDITORS@YAHOO.COM

Slow Flow Yoga

Wednesdays at 7 P.M.

Lexington Healing Arts Academy

272 Southland Drive

www.lexingtonhealingarts.com 859-252-5656

497 West Third

Harry and the Green Lantern



A Transy graduate, Harry agreed to sit on the old chair even before he knew that we teach at Transy. He wanted us to feel welcome in his bar, the Green Lantern, and he listened to us telling him about our artwork with a smile on his face. When he found out our connection to Transy, he showed us the back room of the bar: a place he would like used for community events.

Image and text by Kurt Gohde and Kremena Todorova. The Discarded project is on display at Land of Tomorrow (LOT) Gallery, 527 East Third Street (just past the intersection of Race and Third). The gallery is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 2-4 P.M.

Free market (cont.)

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Cosmic scales: Fracking for Superman (or woman)

I arrive just in time for Tom Harris to begin his moderating duties in the morning’s faculty open-forum on the presidential search. Up front, hidden behind some members of the UK CEO search committee and a few generally suited sycophants hunched into the front two rows, Jim Stuckert of the UK CEO Search committee and Jan Greenwood of UK CEO corporate search firm Greenwood/Asher face the twenty-five strong crowd (media included), ready and waiting to deflect any serious questions. It’s a Friday morning in January and it is cold. Few faculty are in attendance. As chair of the presidential search committee, Stuckert addresses the crowd first by referencing the “sacred mission” entrusted upon his search committee: to find the best man for the job. Stuckert doesn’t elaborate much, but he doesn’t need to. Over the past decade the UK CEO gig has gained added importance across the state as the college has presented itself as the prime economic asset for leading the Commonwealth into the new global economy. UK, so the argument goes, provides the necessary research and trained academic workforce to attract capital, creative people, and resources to an otherwise poor state. Because of this immense perceived importance to the state’s well being, the default assumption is that UK must aim high and mighty.

How high and mighty? Stuckert says “we want somebody between God and Superman.” Some people laugh. It’s a joke, but the meaning behind it is not. UK must find someone special, and they will search the universe and the Ivy Leagues for that person.

Following Stuckert, Jan Greenwood of Greenwood/Asher addresses the crowd and explains how things have changed in the last 10 years since she hired Lee Todd for UK. Greenwood explains that “the market has changed dramatically” for university CEO presidents. Slowly, patiently, she explains all the reasons why the upcoming presidential search will be conducted entirely in private, by her own private search company, which has been designated by the UK search committee’s outsourcing wing to make their “sacred mission” happen.

She begins the list, all of which describe conditions for making the candidates’ life easier; none refer to the needs of the public to take part in the candidate selection process. Top notch candidates expect privacy. Top notch candidates come from top

notch schools who look down on the UK brand. Top notch candidates can lose their jobs if they don’t get the UK job. Donors don’t like it (at the candidate’s school); neither do legislators (in the candidate’s home state). The words “complex” and “complexity” are used often as justification for Greenwood/Asher’s paid involvement. So too is the need to find the very best. To ease faculty minds, Greenwood assures the assembled that her search firm does extensive, even if private, research. She refers to the intensive vetting process of candidate’s backgrounds at Greenwood/Asher as “deep drilling,” an unfortunate but telling metaphor. My mind races to black and brown globules floating through the Gulf, deadly shit best left low, then settles on an image of a giant Jan Greenwood fracking God and Superman for natural gas, her hand fisting their innards, her eyes waiting expectantly for a tainted water spout



to shoot out their mouth, eyes, nose. I pull myself together in time to hear a UK business and economics professor take apart Greenwood’s assumptions. “Deep drilling,” as Greenwood calls it, inevitably means serious candidates can expect a certain public to be aware of their candidacy, so to call the search “private” mainly applies to the public at UK. What’s more, the professor tells an unreceptive Greenwood, it is highly suspect for a firm that makes money conducting university searches to shut off public access. Creating more “complex” presidential hires allows the corporate firm to capitalize upon the complexity and secrecy that it’s selling.

I think to myself, *And who is to say that Greenwood/Asher’s private search will be objective? They gift-wrapped Lee Todd, an increasingly despised president who, it’s starting to come out, has done a remarkably poor job stewarding the university. Is Todd a benchmark for success? Are there preferred candidates already in the pipeline of Greenwood/Asher, perhaps candidates who lost out on other searches?*

The professor continues. On the free market, truly good candidates

are not fired for looking for other jobs—they are met with attempts by the home institution to *retain* the candidate. He could have cited any faculty search ever, but instead cites John Calipari, who if he decides to look for another job, will inevitably be met with a vigorous UK attempt to retain him here. Public searches, the professor suggests, actually attract better candidates. They are better vetted precisely because they are public. None of the professor’s comments make it into the *Kernel* or *Herald-Leader* reports. The forum isn’t a forum at all. It’s public relations, performed admirably by a search firm from Florida. In the long history of capitalist free markets, exceptions have always been made for important people and industries—for Supermen and their lucrative business. Free markets also have a tendency to scale up, as they do when production moves offshore—globalize—to exploit living conditions in

Top 20 business plan that laid out, erroneously, the statewide benefits for being home to a Top 20 research university, pushed through a unique solution. Both staff and faculty would receive a raise, but unlike previous raises, the two groups would receive differently sized increases: faculty would receive a 5.5% raise, while staff were eligible for a 3% raise. Todd justified the raise based on different labor markets. Faculty, and in particular Top 20 faculty, circulate on a national market, Todd argued, while staff are paid according to a local market. Todd’s market-based solution to/justification of the differing pay raises was endorsed by the faculty. Todd’s solution was also sold to students, who with no objections from faculty had experienced three straight years of tuition increases ranging between 9 and 12 percent, as a sound investment in their Top 20 education. It was made to appear pretty clear, and faculty did not protest the notion, that paying more money for Top 20 faculty was worth both the increased tuition paid by students, and the smaller raise received by local market staff. Last week in the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Linda Blackford continued her series looking into the state of UK. The article, titled “Doing more with less,” focused on the low pay of faculty, who have not received a raise in several years (and who, by sheer coincidence, are now becoming restless with the CEO architect of the Top 20). The article offered two tables of salaries. In the bigger table, of UK Top 20 benchmark institutions, UK faculty salaries scored dead last, between 26 and 40 thousand dollars less than the top 3 benchmarks (all University of California system schools). The second table, smaller, showed UK’s position alongside its regional partners in the SEC. Unlike the nationally focused Top 20 table, the SEC salary table did not show UK faculty salaries to be a problem. They did not show that faculties were “doing more with less.” In the SEC market, UK faculty are well compensated. They have the third highest salaries in the conference (excluding Vanderbilt, whose numbers were not given). On average UK faculty make between 10 and 14 thousand dollars more than their Mississippi school comrades, the two lowest paying SEC faculty gigs. Scaled even more close to home, that \$80,000 average faculty salary is a figure that is nearly double the state’s median income of \$43,000. In the past five years, UK faculty have seen their average pay increase sixteen percent, in part because of the belief that nationally admired Top 20 (aspiring) faculty are economic boons to the state. Back in the real world, one survey I’ve seen shows that real median income for Kentucky households statewide had fallen fourteen percent over the ten year period between 1998 and 2008. So much for national educational solutions to local and regional problems.



In-Feed (cont.)

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financial donor base. Bob and I are now more free to focus on the programming aspects of what we want to do, knowing the nonprofit infrastructure we need to support our work is in place or in process.” In addition, the group helps connect In-Feed with a needed market. Faith Feeds’ established connections with citywide emergency food agencies offers the vacant lot group “a distribution network to which we can both contribute and direct folks who garden with us.”

“We can’t address food system inequities at any level,” Baricklow observes of her work, “but we can make a difference for individuals on a day-by-day basis. Showing people what they can do, making them more aware of the food-growing potential around them, gives them more options.” *In-Feed will be hosting a seed sale on Saturday, March 12, at Woodland Christian Church, 530 East High Street, across from Woodland Park. See Announcements on page 2 for more information (and other seed sales and urban agricultural opportunities). For more info on In-Feed, visit infeed.wordpress.com/*

Coda: A trip to 2006 Five years ago, when UK faculty were still solidly behind Lee Todd’s nationally-praised Top 20 business plan to make the state university a national player among research institutions, UK experienced yet another funding crisis. The college did not have enough money to grant both faculty and staff the raises all sides acknowledged they deserved. Lee Todd, fresh off the publication of his

MARCH 2, 2011

Music

Live music you might like if you weren't so stuck in your ways: 3/3 - 11

Thursday, March 3

Shawn Mullins
Natasha's; 112 Esplanade. 8:00.

There's a great deal of fun to be had with Google's search suggestions, those phrases that pop up as you type your query into the search box. Evidently the suggestions reflect the most popular searches associated with whatever topic you're exploring. For instance, it's well known in certain circles that typing "Lars Ulrich is" summons a variety of entertaining expressions, including "Lars Ulrich is a douchebag," "Lars Ulrich is a terrible drummer," and "Lars Ulrich is a tool." Good times.

Sometimes, however, the fun turns mean, such as when you type "Shawn Mullins one." You only get the one suggestion in this case, and it's "Shawn Mullins one hit wonder."

Which isn't really fair. Yeah, you couldn't get away from "Lullaby" back in '98, but the fact that that song exploded doesn't mean the rest of them suck. In fact, they're actually pretty good. Really, really good, in many cases. Plus the absence of sustained commercial success means he hasn't turned into an insufferable prick like his pal John Mayer. Should be a good show.

Casey Abrams & Mick Reed
Cosmic Charlie's; 388 Woodland. 9:00.

No, it's not the guy currently on *American Idol*, and if there's any justice in the world, that bearded doofus will be booted straight off and back into the oblivion from whence he came.

This Casey Abrams—the real Casey Abrams—is a master of the pop-folk idiom, in the same vein as James Taylor and Simon & Garfunkel. He's touring with Mick Reed this time around, who sounds like a New England version of Robert Earl Keen. Together, they sound like...well, I have no idea what they sound like together, but whatever it is, it'll surely be better than *American Idol*.

Friday, March 4

The Payback
Cheapside; 131 Cheapside. 9:00.

I know a guy whose taste in music is the opposite of mine. He loves the Stones; I say the Faces were the better band. I've always despised hair metal;

he adores Def Leppard. He can't stand pristine studio production; I say Steely Dan made the greatest records of the last 40 years.

Yet the Venn diagram of our musical likes and dislikes intersects at one point: James Brown. Because James Brown was the shit, and that's undeniable truth.



The Payback make it funky at Cheapside Friday and Saturday, March 4-5.

Since the Godfather is no longer with us, we have to settle for the next best thing. For a few years the next best thing was D'Angelo, but since Mr. Archer has yet to emerge from his self-imposed, drug-fueled exile (get it together, brother!), we can't drink from that well anymore either.

Lucky, then, Lexington has The Payback to feed our need. No, it ain't *quite* the real thing, but it's everything you deserve. And you deserve a lot, you sexy thing.

Sunday, March 6

Prince Rama
Cosmic Charlie's; 388 Woodland. 9:00.

I gotta be honest: I can't stand this music. But I like WRFL, and since they're sponsoring the gig, I'll recommend it anyway.

It's psychedelic trance stuff, and if you still fool with hallucinogens, this show will probably be world-shattering. If not, it might be world-shattering anyway. I mean, I just listened to about 30 seconds of one of their tracks, stone sober, and now I have the gnawing compulsion to decorate my navel and experience lucid dreaming.

So should you go see Prince Rama? Well, in the words of John Bender: I don't know. Give it a shot.

Tuesday, March 8

As I Lay Dying *with* Winds of Plague, After the Burial, & Society's Plague
Buster's; 899 Manchester St. 7:30.

Ah, metalcore. A couple of nights ago I ran into a fellow metalhead I know, and I asked him, "so, you think

and full-throated growling seem to amount to something less than what it should. It's like, I banged my head, but I'm not sure I wasn't kind of bored.

The real treat at Buster's might be local opener Society's Plague, who work the same side of the street as the older bands on the bill, but possess enough of an experimental bent and facility with their instruments to break out of the confines of their category. Get a copy of their full-length debut release, called *The Human, The Canvas*, and form your own opinion.

Friday, March 11

Dead Kenny G's
Cosmic Charlie's; 388 Woodland. 9:00.

Hippies know Skerik from Critters Buggin. Alt-rock types know Skerik from Mad Season. Tweakers know Skerik from various Les Claypool projects. Jazz heads know Skerik from Bobby Previte's records. New Orleans cats know Skerik from his work with Stanton Moore. Now you can know Skerik too.

500 Miles to Memphis
Green Lantern; 497 W. Third. 9:00.

According to Mapquest, Cincinnati is actually 488 miles from Memphis, if you take I-40 most of the way, and even shorter (but slower) if you take the Western KY parkway. This of course does not diminish this band's musical achievement, but is perhaps a testament to the enduring appeal of rounding. After all, would you go see a band called 488 Miles to Memphis? No. But if you dig "cowpunk," as they call it, then close enough will be just fine.

—Buck Edwards

A thought in three parts

By Buck Edwards

With apologies to Wallace Shawn, I have a few things I need to get off my chest.

1. The music staff at North of Center will extol, to the point of embarrassment, the virtues of your band/club/venue/agency/label if you only tell us what you want us to say, and/or give us free stuff.

The defining characteristic of this department, as currently constituted, is laziness. While we twice monthly wade through a series of Myspace pages and event calendars to figure out what we want to write about, what we really want is to be *banded* the information we need—not to have to look for it. Scouring the web is drudgery, and we can hardly be bothered to, like, email anyone.

Therefore, what we need is for somebody else to do the work for us, and that somebody is *you*, you band manager, booking agent, club owner, label rep, or bassist (who ended up having to do publicity because nobody else in the band could manage it without screwing it up).

Basically, if you tell us such-and-such band is playing such-and-such club and want us to say nice things about them so more people come to the show, get drunk, and buy things, that's exactly what we'll do. Likewise, if you send us a CD or a download link, we'll tell people how great the new album is, and to rush right out and get their copies today. Put us on the guest list, and we'll tell everybody what a wonderful performance you gave. And if you're a fit, athletic female between the ages of 18 and 35 and you send us a pair of your [Deleted. —Ed.] rendezvous anytime, with no strings attached.

2. Speaking of Myspace, would you please get rid of it and switch to something else?

Facebook is fine, Bandcamp is nifty, and of course your own web site is the way to go, if you do a decent job with it, but please lose the Myspace page for good. Even with the recent redesign, it's the most unpleasant browsing experience the web has to offer; after the update the site went from unstable, slow, and outrageously outdated to even-less stable, yet slower, and marginally more contemporary. I have twice witnessed Myspace pages not only crash the browser, but take down the entire operating system. It's just...it's just horrible, man.

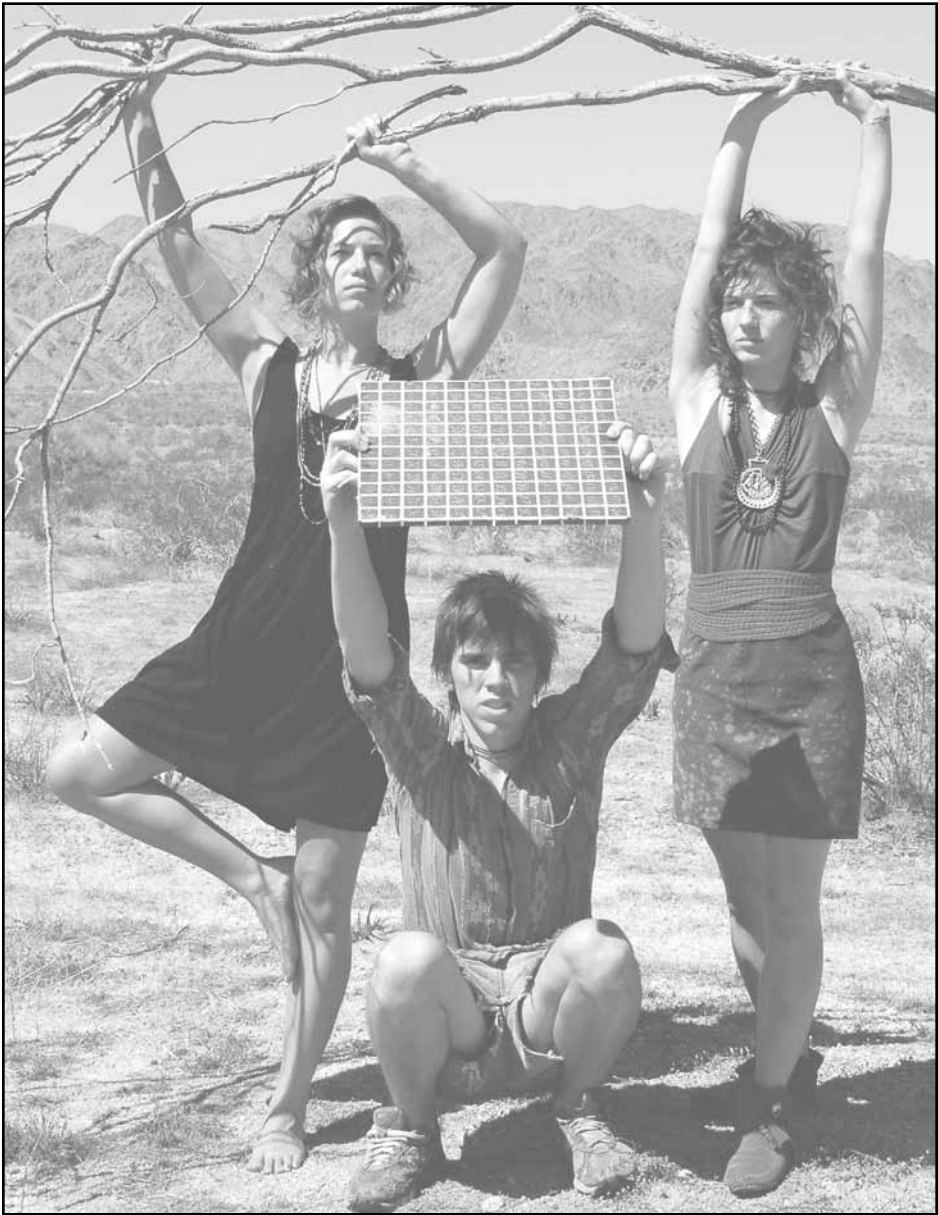
And no, you don't *have* to have one anymore.

3. Whatever web presence you choose, keep the damned thing updated.

The phrase "web presence" seems very last-decade, but I can't think of anything better, and anyway, the point is that since your band or venue found the wherewithal to establish your little corner of the internet, you ought to find it in you to keep it current. I know it's a pain in the ass, but how seriously are you taking your enterprise? I don't care if you're a slave to the dream; if your home page has a splash graphic of an album you released three years ago and the show dates stop last August, everybody's gonna think you're defunct, or at least heading that way.

It's even worse for venues, especially those that nobody really likes to visit (you know who you are) unless somebody good's playing there. Right now, in fact, there are two established clubs in town whose online calendars suggest that *nobody* is playing there in the month of March. Hence one can only assume that these venues are closing for good. No? Still alive and well? *Then update the calendar, dummy!* I mean, I don't want to tell you how to run your business, but...well, yeah—yeah I do. Run it better.

Thanks for listening.



Prince Rama distribute transcendence at Cosmic Charlie's on March 6.

Film & Media

Review: *Gasland*

By Dave Cooper

In 2009, eastern Pennsylvania resident Josh Fox was approached by a natural gas-drilling company to purchase the rights to drill under his property. Fox was offered \$100,000 for his gas rights, but he was concerned about rumors of problems with natural gas drilling in other communities. Armed with his suspicions, a wry sense of humor, and a video camera, he set out to investigate.

A little bit of Chemistry 101 is in order here—but feel free to skip to the next paragraph. Hydrogen gas (H2) is the cleanest burning fuel because the only byproduct of its combustion is water (H2O). But we don’t yet have a plentiful supply of hydrogen available to us. Natural gas, primarily composed of methane (CH4), may be the next cleanest source, and it is abundant. Unlike coal, natural gas burns without releasing mercury or sulfur dioxide into the air. Natural gas emits about half the carbon dioxide (CO2) pollution as coal because a molecule of natural gas contains only one atom of carbon bonded to four atoms of hydrogen. Burning one ton of coal releases four tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere since coal is primarily made of carbon.

Pockets of natural gas have been drilled safely in America for decades. But rising demand for natural gas has drillers looking to less easily-recoverable sources. A new process called “hydraulic fracturing” is being used by companies like Cabot Oil and Gas and Chesapeake Energy to extract natural gas that is bound up in the rock of a geologic formation called the Marcellus Shale, which stretches from New York and Pennsylvania through West Virginia, Ohio and into eastern Kentucky and Tennessee.

Hydraulic fracturing—also known as “fracking”—injects enormous quantities of water and a witches’ brew of toxic chemicals (including benzene and glycol ethers) under extremely high pressure to break up the underground shale formation and release the natural gas from the rock. The gas is then pumped to the surface where it is processed, compressed, and then piped away. Some of the water and toxic chemicals used to fracture the shale are pumped back to the surface

and stored in open pits. Thanks to the “Halliburton Loophole” passed in 2005 during the Bush-Cheney administration, natural gas drilling is exempt from the Safe Drinking Water Act.

In the film *Gasland*, filmmaker Fox travels to Pennsylvania, Colorado, Wyoming, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas to visit communities that have been impacted greatly by natural gas exploration and document the prob-



Mike Markham lights his tap water in *Gasland*, available now.

lems there. A scarcity of clean water is one of the greatest problems in arid western states, so pumping millions of gallons of water underground is a huge concern. Water contamination is another.

Fox visits several people who have problems with contamination of their well water, allegedly due to the fracking. Hair loss in pets, headaches, and brain lesions are reported. In Dimock, Pennsylvania one resident says “our water was perfectly fine and then, right after they started drilling, (there was) propane and stuff like that.”

In one of the most startling moments I have ever seen in a documentary film, Fox visits the home of a Weld County, Colorado resident named Mike Markham, who claims that he can light the water coming from his kitchen faucet on fire because the fracking near his home has allowed the underground natural gas to infiltrate his well water supply. Markham holds a butane lighter up to the faucet, then slowly turns on the water. The flame flickers, but nothing happens. “Just give it a second here,”

he says. Seconds roll by slowly, and still...nothing. It looks like a big anticlimax, then suddenly WHOOM!! The kitchen sink explodes into a ball of fire. Markham staggers back, laughing and brushing his forearms. “I smell hair!” he says.

In one of the film’s most touching moments, Fox visits Wyoming cattle rancher John Fenton. Fenton, the son of “old-time cowboys,” is eloquent and

evokes all the ideals of the American West. His property is surrounded by 24 gas wells. Vapors from the condensate tanks are sometimes so bad that they surround his house in a brown cloud. His wife, Kathy, suffers from headaches, dizziness, and a loss of smell.

Fenton shakes his head as he looks at his herd of cattle. He calls his water “the damndest-smelling stuff. (It) comes out different colors all the time...I don’t know how (the cattle) even drink it...We want to raise the best, most natural clean product we can raise...but if you’re breathing in dirty air and drinking water that could be tainted, what’s coming out in these cows? You gotta be sure that what you’re putting in ‘em is as pure as it can be. Cute as they are, in a year or two they’re going to be on someone’s dinner plate...We need to speak in a unified voice and stand up to these assholes.”

I highly recommend this film. Fox uses his sense of humor—and his banjo-playing—to make what could be a highly depressing film enjoyable and even funny.

Local film happenings

One World Film Festival continues its 13th Season

If you haven’t caught any of the amazing movies presented by this year’s One World Film Festival, there is still time to do so! The festival runs until March 17 with a carefully programmed selection of acclaimed works that provoke both thought and discussion. Screenings are held at the Kentucky Theatre and the Central Branch of the Lexington Public Library and are free of charge. For a full list of films and their showtimes, please visit www.oneworldfilmfestival.org.

The Lexington Film League presents its 2nd Do-ers Video Showcase

Join the LFL on Tuesday, March 8 for a screening program of short films made by Kentuckians about Kentuckians. Films from this year’s Do-ers Competition showcase people and organizations who are making a positive impact in our community. The event begins at 8 P.M. at Natasha’s, is free of charge, and gives attendees an opportunity to both celebrate local filmmakers and learn about local organizations.

The screening program will be followed by a short awards ceremony during which cash prizes, provided by LexArts’ Creative Ventures Fund, will be given to the winning filmmakers. Please visit lexingtonfilmleague.org for more details.



Fundraiser benefiting documentary film A Thousand Little Cuts

Join director Chad A. Stevens for a night of entertainment at Natasha’s on Wednesday, March 9. Proceeds from the event will benefit the completion of Stevens’ important new documentary on the coal crisis in Appalachia. Scheduled for the evening are a performance by Coralee and the Townies, readings by the Affrilachian Poets, a screening of the film’s trailer and discussion with Mr. Stevens, and a silent auction. The event costs \$10 at the door. See thecoalwar.com for more about the film.

Review: *Exit Through the Gift Shop*

By Michael Dean Benton

Despite the fact that there were many worthy and politically important documentaries nominated for Oscars this year (in particular *Gasland* and *Inside Job*), I was rooting for *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. Here are the reasons why:

How much of our everyday life is colonized by corporate sponsored vandalism and socially engineered marketing prompts? Never mind the obvious mediatized experiences. Take a walk across your nearest urban landscape and look deeply at the signs—explicit and implicit—that seek to influence our actions. Observe how the environment increasingly is demarcated, bordered, limited, controlled and monitored. Why do so few people think about our “society of control” or its soft bargaining through manufactured desires, marketing prompts and mindless distractions? (Hard bargaining occurs when your Governor threatens to call out the National Guard on you for exercising your democratic rights.)

The distinction between private and public space is becoming increasingly blurred. The average urban dweller is now estimated to absorb—mindfully or not—2000+ ads a day. Advertising dominates our internal mindscapes and our external landscapes. Unless we desire to isolate ourselves like the technophobic Unabomber, we are unable to escape these corporate marketing intrusions. What, then, is our defense?

Street Art/graffiti artists

The colonization of personal mindscapes and public landscapes is part of a privatization of the commons in which limitations are put into place through walls and barriers. Extending



Banksy in his studio.

this metaphor further, corporate colonization delimits the artistic creative imagination as well as the civic imagination of what is possible. Extend this even further and it is as if we have been culturally framed and put on the wall of a museum. Our world becomes comprised only of the narratives that “they” state “we” should pay attention to.

Street Art/graffiti artists—intentionally or not—through their desire to repurpose and reconceive their urban landscapes, positioned themselves against the logic of mass production,

herd mentality, and creative uniformity in the traditional art worlds. Eventually, they extended their random tagging into more direct critiques of the branding, limitations, conformity, surveillance, and control of our

everyday lives.

Humans are narrative creatures, homo fabulans, who seek meaning and are open to narrative constructions. We all laugh at the person who is unable to perceive that their favorite TV star is not the character they play, but is this all that different from those of us who are unable to perceive the surreality of the infotainment with which we are presented 24/7? When it comes to more important political and social issues, how does this play out in our perceptions of what is right

and wrong? Do most people investigate for themselves and use their knowledge to produce their own meanings, or do they sit back and allow talking heads to tell them what to think?

Banksy, a British street artist, announced his artistic intentions through the development of the expanded concept of “Brandalism” in his book *Wall and Piece* (2005):

People abuse you everyday. They butt into your life, take a cheap shot at you and then disappear. They leer at you from tall buildings and make you feel small. They make flippant comments from buses that imply you’re not sexy enough and the fun is happening somewhere else. They are on TV making your girlfriend feel inadequate. They have access to the most sophisticated technology the world has ever seen and they bully you with it. They are The Advertisers and they are laughing at you.

He goes on to say that the unfairness of this psychological and material struggle is that we are not allowed to “touch them,” to deface their constructed environments, because of corporate invocations. “[T]rademarks, intellectual property rights and copyright law” act as mystical barriers protecting their worlds.

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A little more maintenance goes a long way

Shootin’ n’ Snaggin’ with the Frugal Fisherman

When I was kid I used to go fishing regularly at a small, local pond with my babysitter Miss Grubbs. I could hardly contain the excitement each afternoon as she would hand me the hoe and an old coffee can and say “go dig us up some worms.”

I learned a ton about fishing and life from those outings with Miss Grubbs. Most everything she taught me still holds true today. Everything but how she handled the maintenance of her fishing reels. Whenever one of her reels would tighten up or act funny she would hold the rod by the tip and dip the entire reel and rod handle under water and hold it there for about 30 seconds. Once removed, she’d turn the reels handle a few times to work the water around and say “good as new.”

Well, not exactly. The reel would turn a little better for a short while but she’d have to dip it again eventually. Bless her heart, but what Miss Grubbs was actually doing was more damaging than good for those old school Daiwa and Zebco reels.

A fishing reel like most any mechanically inclined tool needs lubricants, not water, to ensure it works properly. A little oil or grease here and there and you’d be surprised how much better your reel retrieves.

But if you’re anything like me you have no clue where to start. You could refer to your owner’s manual. You know ... that paperwork they give you when you made your initial rod and reel purchase. What? When? Exactly, those things are long gone.

You could try to go online and find a PDF version of the manual. If you can’t find the PDF you can use a more generalized maintenance outline found via a general Google search of your reel. If all else fails use some good old fashioned common sense and at the very least hit the areas you know could use a squirt of oil or two. Something’s better than nothing.

Different reels require different maintenance. Some professional grade baitcasting reels are so complicated and high tech you might want to consult a specialist. But for those do-it-yourselfers, you can use the outline below as a general guide for both a baitcasting and under spin reels. Follow all the relative steps for your model and at the very least you’ll get better performance and life out of your reel.

Spinning Reels (Under Spin)

1. Gather any necessary tools such as flat head or Phillips screwdrivers, as well as cotton swabs, a clean rag, isopropyl alcohol and oil / grease. Some new products I’ve fallen in love with lately are these molecular bonding greases and oils offered by today’s modern lubricant providers. These lubricants form a permanent bond to any metal they come in contact with and last as much as ten times longer than traditional lubricants. I recommend LBT’s Lightning Lube which comes in Reel Grease Power, Reel Power and High Speed Oil.
2. Remove the spool assembly by turning the drag adjustment knob counter clockwise. On reels equipped with a rear drag, spool assemblies likely release via a push

- button and handle assembly.
3. Inspect the spool assembly for damage. Pay special attention to the spool lip, as damaged or chipped spool lips will consequently cause premature wear on fishing line.
4. Clean the exterior of your reel with cotton swabs and isopropyl rubbing alcohol. Clean off any excess oil, grease, deposits or debris.
5. Inspect and clean the line roller assembly. Use a cotton swab to “feel” if the line roller bearing or bushing needs to be replaced. A rusted or worn bearing will be most noticeable during line retrieval.
6. Lightly oil the line roller assembly. Regular oiling (after every fishing trip or two) will greatly increase the life expectancy of the line roller bearing.
7. Oil the drive gear bearing(s). Bearings are visible with the handle removed. Some reels also have an additional drive gear bearing on the right hand side opposite the handle close to the reel’s body. Make sure to lube both left and right drive gear bearings.
8. On reels that are equipped with maintenance port apply one or two drops of oil. Do not use a degreaser such as WD40; it will cause premature wear and tear on the internal parts of your reel.
9. Oil the bail arm assembly to maintain smooth and consistent bail operation.
10. As I stated prior each spinning reel has its own lubricating needs. As a general rule lubricate anything that moves. Following that rule alone should help immensely.

Baitcasting Reels

Baitcasting reels are far more complicated than spinning. They have many more moving parts. If you aren’t completely confident in your mechanical skills I highly recommend you allow a specialist to maintenance your baitcaster.

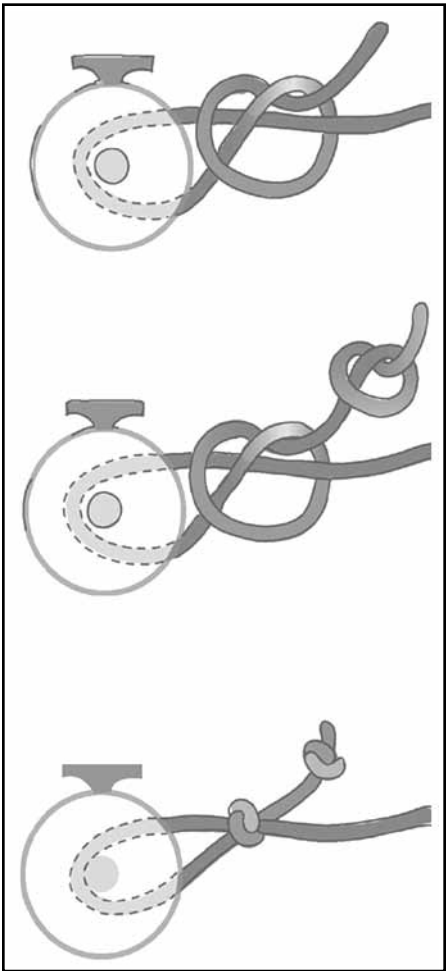
1. Once again gather any necessary tools such as screwdrivers and a general wrench set, cleaning supplies and oil / grease. As stated prior I highly recommend LBT’s Lightning Lube which comes in Reel Grease Power, Reel Power and High Speed Oil.
2. For most reels, you can access the spool assembly via the turnkey dial located opposite the handle. Remove the spool assembly. Clean any visible dirt and debris from the exterior of reel using a cotton swab and isopropyl rubbing alcohol.
3. Clean the inside of the pinion gear with a cotton swab for optimal freespool and casting performance.
4. Clean and oil each brake collar to maintain quiet, efficient casting. Replace the brake collars if any appear worn or excessively dirty.
5. Inspect and clean the spool assembly. Clean the spool shaft and oil spool bearing or bushing if applicable. Do not grease the spool shaft, as it will cause the reel’s freespooling to become slowed and clogged.

6. Clean and oil the brake case and spool bearing, lightly oil the support bearing and drive shaft bearing, and clean and oil the level-wind system.
7. Remove the handle assembly and the handle nut below the assembly.
8. Remove the star drag, spring and washers. It’s a good idea to use an old egg crate to keep each of the numerous parts separate and organized.
9. Remove the side plate screws and side plate, making sure to not loose the yoke springs which can fall out very easily.
10. Remove the drive gear, drag washers, pinion gear, yoke, yoke springs, drag spacer and drag plate.
11. Clean and grease each of the teeth on the drive gear, clean away any old grease on the drag washer and reapply grease, and clean the inside of the pinion gear.
12. Reinstall the drive gear, drag washers, yoke, yoke springs, drag spacer and drag plate. As well as the side plate, side plate screws, star drag, washers and handle assembly.
13. Lastly, oil the line guide bar.

Your baitcaster should be ready to go at this point.

Now that you’ve lubricated and readied your reels for another successful fishing season, it’s time to reline each reel. Here’s a great knot making relining a snap. It’s called the arbor knot and is hands down the easiest knot to learn to tie.

Basically, pass your line around the spool making sure to pull out about six to eight inches of extra line. Tie an overhand knot around the incoming line opposite the other side of the spool. Then tie another overhand knot



Arbor knot.

at the end of the line. Pull tight and reel away. Make sure you don’t overfill the spool. Overfilling will cause the reel to tangle and will drastically decrease casting distance.

I hope the above can get another year out of your reels and ensure that when you’re on the water the least of your worries will be your equipment. Now all we need is some sunny weather and a day off to spend on the water.

If you have any questions, concerns or advice please contact me at frugalfisherman1@gmail.com.

Warm day at Frozen Iron Ice Bowl

NoC Sports Desk

It isn’t often disc golfers get the chance to don short sleeves in the middle of February in Kentucky. Especially considering how much snow and cold blanketed the state for much of this winter. Yet this year’s 70 participants of the WCCPR Frozen Iron Ice Bowl II at Ironworks Hills in Winchester did just that, playing in some of the warmest weather on record for an ice bowl.

“The weather was incredible,” said Lewis Willian. “Our first ice bowl that many of the veteran players have ever seen where the most important accessory was sunscreen.”

And Willian would know. He’s long been an active member of the

Winchester cashed in his ticket and took home the prize.

Hall wasn’t the only golfer to get more than he’d wished for from the day’s events. Allen Johansen of Cincinnati netted his own basket in the form of an ace on hole #1 in the morning round. It was arguably the shot of the round considering the hole plays 235 feet uphill. And if acing a tough hole wasn’t prize enough, Johansen pocketed nearly \$100 for the superb shot.

Not everyone on the day shared Johansen’s exhilaration. Many had the opposite luck, especially when it came to hole #7.

“It’s a tough hole with an island green and out of bounds on all four



A strong turnout at this year’s Frozen Iron Ice Bowl.

Bluegrass Disc Golf Association (BDGA) and has seen his fair share of ice bowls. Last year five inches of snow carpeted the Winchester area and nearly buried the 36-hole event. This year it was in the 60s.

Such rare warmth allowed the BDGA to get the most out of the charitable occasion.

“We raised over \$600 and 401 pounds of canned goods for the Clark County Community Food Bank,” said Willian.

Most of the monies raised came from entrance fees ranging from \$20 for recreational players to \$50 for the pro division. The rest resulted from the raffling of an INNOVA travel basket provided by the BDGA. Greg Hall of

sides,” said Willian. “I heard tales of people scoring 11s and 12s on that one. One player had an 8 on my card. I was very happy to get just past with a 3 and a 4 on the day.”

When the golfers weren’t scrambling for par or earning the occasional bird they bellied up for some fine food in the form of an “Italian feast.” It’s just one of the many perks that come with a BDGA event. Others include T-shirts and tons of disc golf swag. Most everyone who attended left with something on the day.

Up next for the BDGA is an Adoption Benefit on March 19. The non-sanctioned, non-payout tourney is set up to help a couple from Harrodsburg.



Baitcasting reel, left, and spinning reel.

Opinion

WEG legacy: the Bahrain tent Lex goes berserk for Mideast horsey dictatorships

Lexingtonians—and eventing horse fans the world over—will be happy to know that Bahrain has been in the news recently. A small island country located in the Persian Gulf not far from the western banks of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain is a major supporter of the horse industry that our city hopes to attract.

The island kingdom, which since the 1800s has been ruled by the Al Khalifa royal family, was the only nation to sponsor a tent at last fall’s failed World Equestrian Games. In addition, Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the fifth son of Bahrain ruler King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, was one of the “government leaders” cited by the *Herald-Leader* who planned to be in attendance at the Games (“Security for WEG will be tight,” Sept 5, 2010). As president of the Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation—a position he achieved at age 20 in 2009 upon graduation from England’s Sandhurst Royal Military Academy—Sheikh Khalid presumably traveled to Lexington to compete as a member of the Bahrain Royal Team, which he has been a part of since age 11, serving as Vice-President from age 14 until his recent promotion to President, and to represent his country’s sports interests.

Four months after having a sizable WEG Lexington presence, Bahrain has experienced a recent up-tick in democracy as its citizens have caught the Egyptian demonstration bug. Politically, Bahrainis demand that the ruling Sunni Muslim Al-Khalifa family relinquish its 200 year stranglehold on power as heads of an absolute monarchy. Bahraini democracy advocates have also called for economic reform in a nation where Shiite Muslims, which comprise about 70% of the population, are regularly, the *New York Times* reports, “discriminated against in jobs, housing and education.”

Our local rag, the *Herald-Leader*, has done a bang-up job keeping area readers informed about our Bahraini democratic compatriots. Updates on the country have appeared on both the front page and the editorial page. The paper has reported, for example, on the 200,000 strong protest of February 25—“staggering numbers,” it noted, “for a population of just 500,000.” The protesters marched “in two huge, roaring crowds from the south and from the west, converging at Pearl Square, which has become the center of the call for change.”

The Bahrain uprising has also been featured on the editorial pages, in the guise of a February 20 Nicholas Kristof column titled “Brutal crackdown shocking response in wealthy nation,” in which the syndicated columnist called for the ouster of King Hamad. After noting that the “pro-democracy movement has bubbled for decades in Bahrain,” Kristof proceeded to describe the ruling family’s response to demands for economic and political change: attacks on “peaceful, unarmed demonstrators” with rubber bullets, tear gas and shotgun pellets; execution style murders of civilian protesters; and targeted police beatings of doctors and ambulance drivers who arrived to treat the many civilians injured by the attacks.

Not reported in the *HLL*, Bahrain initially served as a base of operations for other ruling monarchies—Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates—to convene and present a unified message against the Mideast uprisings. Writing in the Bangalore paper *The Deccan Herald*, Michael Jansen reported that the meeting was intended “to demonstrate solidarity, urge the kingdom’s hereditary rulers to take a firm line against protesters, and warn their own subjects not to follow the bad example of the Bahrainis.”

“There is little doubt,” Jansen concluded, “that Saudi Arabia, the

heavyweight of the Arabian Peninsula, convened this gathering with the aim of preventing people’s power from spreading to other countries in this strategic oil-rich region.”

The recent *Herald-Leader* coverage stands in stark contrast to the paper’s previous coverage of Bahrain, last October during the WEG. With what it claimed were the eyes of the world watching, the paper told a very different story of the rich Gulf country, and of the other obscenely wealthy Mideast royal family rulers traveling here to compete in, and enjoy, the Games.

On October 7, across from an article reviewing the triumphant success of actor John Lithgow’s one-man show “Stories by Heart,” the *HLL* gave above-the-fold space to cover the wonders of the Bahrain tent, set up to sell the country as “an open, progressive place for business development” (“Kingdom comes to park: Bahrain spreads the word—and freebies—to advertise itself”).

The article began by stating the obvious: no WEGers visiting the tent knew anything about the country, but they mightily enjoyed the expensive gifts given out for free to visitors passing through.

The article did note, obliquely, that the progressive, business-friendly country did have a history of discrimination against Jews. But it also allowed Bahraini spokesperson Farra Duff, a marketing officer for Bahrain’s economic development board, to quickly dismiss the claim by noting that things are “different than what you see in the media.”

Different indeed. Since the country is home to a huge U.S. naval base that allows us to stage our wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Yemen, there is a good bet that more than one Jewish family resides in the area, the number of Jews living in Bahrain cited by Duff. And since

the *Herald-Leader* chose not to follow its journalistic duty of informing area readers about the country, future events have also shown that Bahrain is, in fact, very different from what we have read in our local media: it’s essentially a dictator country.

We noted just after WEG’s closing ceremonies that our local media did an astoundingly poor job of covering the Games. We wrote that coverage had turned into boosterism, and that this made us all the poorer. At the time, our critique was mainly leveled at the incomplete assessment of the massive city funding and energies that went into pulling off the little-watched Games.

But Lexingtonians, as it turns out, also lost out on other coverage. When city leaders got behind WEG, they did so on the grounds that horsey events would be an economic boon to the region. They never told us, nor did our media care to inform us, that the economic course they chose would require us to party with, and cheer on, the same obscenely wealthy families who, along with their benefactors in the U.S. government, have been the major source of unrest in the Mideast.

The roll of WEG participating countries reads like a roll call for undemocratic Mideast oligarchies. Egypt? Participated. Bahrain? Paid Pearse for a tent to sell WEGers on its progressive national benevolence. United Arab Emirates? Quatar? Jordan? Saudi Arabia? Check, check, an Equine Federation presidential check, and you betcha!

Lexington was a ruling Tunisian horse family away from scoring the elusive Pick 7 of Mideast dictator nations coming to our fair city, and not a fucking word was wasted on that fact. But hey, Bahrain does give out some killer free treats. It’s so...progressive. What a great sport our city leaders have chosen to spend our money supporting.

Food and uprisings (cont.)

continued from page 1

to buy a disposable razor. Now think of it in terms of agriculture: oil for pesticides, oil for the tractor, oil to bring to refineries or shipment stations, oil for packaging, oil for cooling in the store.

Complex businesses like Proctor and Gamble or Kroger, who I assume have many economic relationships with factories and markets located throughout the globe, require a lot of cheap grease. When oil goes up--and whether you attribute it to higher global demand, speculation or peak oil, it’s going up-- things start to add up.

Big picture: food is going to be a more overtly political issue in Kentucky (as in the rest of the country), as out-of-employment 99ers and debt-stricken college graduates, among others, are forced to pay more for basic staples on less and less money.

In the last issue, I wrote a 1500 word piece calling on the city to “allow, encourage, and if necessary organize small weekly farmer’s markets” at five city parks located throughout

Lexington (“Maximizing our park yields,” February 16). The article offered a brief economic rational for the park markets, and it suggested ideas for how such markets could be nurtured and grown through a more diverse use of city park land. It also provided a list of city council members who might have mutual or overlapping interests: parks and rec folk, locavores, River Hill Park supporters.

But at its heart, I wrote a 1500 word article on why it would be a good idea for the city to actively support five small weekly farmer’s markets on city park grounds. Except for George Meyers (incorrect email), I sent the article to each council person with the following message:

Dear Council:

This was written and circulated to the community. We need better distribution of markets throughout the city. I intend to continue advocating publicly for this, particularly as the city starts discussing expensive plans for Rupp Arena. Feel free to continue to update me with specific plans for how you plan to address the community’s food needs.

Sincerely,
Danny Mayer
Lexington citizen
Editor, *North of Center*

Of the thirteen council people receiving the article and email, only one (1) responded back, to inform me that while not a single person on council was looking at food as a central dynamic informing city decisions, my thoughts would be added to the other good ideas generally circulating around in the ether. The council member also suggested that I presented difficult problems with unreasonably easy solutions, that big problems necessitated “looking for opportunities and working on related issues as they arise.”

I responded by asking the following question: “Are you suggesting that having public markets at 5 locations on public city park land is too big a problem for City council to address?” Four times I asked this question and never got a response. I’m left to assume that either park markets are too difficult for council to take on, or that council members don’t see the value in expending the energy required for putting in such parks.

With that in mind, consider the lesson of the Mideast uprisings as argument one for value: self-preservation.

We are not oppressed politically here, but the U.S. has greater inequality than Egypt; we are not close to food riots, but around 15% of the population in this region are food insecure. As Tunisia and other places show, the downtrodden citizens of oligarchies see food as a primary responsibility of government. Eventually, the hungry and poor and disempowered do rise up and get heard, no matter how much they are ignored.

Our city council would do well to remember that and to use food initiatives--relatively inexpensive but

equally useful to all demographics--as a way to build trust and solidarity in its leadership.

Email Mayer.Danny@gmail.com if interested in offering specific contributions to beginning a park market. Growing season is upon us. Plans must be made.

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

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Fierce Company (Part 4) by Kenn Minter

UNHAND HIM TROLLOP!

FEHZ?

MITTS TO YERSELF!

YAY!

MILK OF MAGNESIA!

SPIP

HOLY!

RAY OF ENLIGHT-ENMENT!

THEY'RE MY FRIENDS!

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SQUIRE'S TAVERN

FRIDAY 3/4

GENERAL DALLAS : THE EXORCISM OF BOB SEHLINGER BY: WESTERN

LET'S GET BACK TO THE BOATS, BOYS. I'VE GOT A FUNNY FEELING.

WALT DISNEY!?! WHAT THE HELL...

I THOUGHT THAT BOB GUY WAS ACTING KINDA CREEPY.

LOOKS LIKE BROTHER BOB'S BEEN POSSESSED BY THE SPIRIT OF WALT DISNEY. TUNE IN NEXT TIME WHEN THE BOYS PERFORM THEIR FIRST EXORCISM ON THE RIVER AND BOB GETS A VISIT FROM YOURS TRULY.

RIGHT ON, NORTHRUP HEY, WHAT'S THAT STENCH?

YEP. ARE THOSE MOUSE-EARS OR... HORNS?

SMELLS LIKE... SULPHUR AND POOF!

I KNEW WALT WAS A SICKO, BUT THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS TOO... GEEESH! WHAT DOESN'T HE CONTROL?

DID HE SAY SOMETHING ABOUT CIRCUMCISION?

HUH?

Gift Shop (cont.)

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Banksy's response, in the spirit of Street Art/graffiti, is "Screw that!... They have rearranged the world to put themselves in front of you. They never asked for your permission, don't even start asking for theirs."

Asymmetric artfare

So, in a sense, this is semiotic warfare in the form of guerrilla resistance against a dominating force that could wipe you out if you tried direct confrontation. Military theorists call this asymmetric warfare, and it is notoriously difficult for monolithic, high-technology, invading forces to deal with because guerrilla forces strike and disappear into their environment. This long has been the tactic of street artists.

What do you do, though, when the populace has been colonized so heavily by the invading forces? How do you get them to recognize their enslavement or to begin to imagine something different? How do you deal with the lackey art world that supports the dominant structure of passive consumption, corporate branding and obsessive collecting? What does an artist do, when they know their art depends on a critical audience to respond as co-creators, to wake people up? Especially when all of their direct actions of defiance and critique are immediately repurposed and delimited for safe consumption in the 24-hour titillation news cycle.

This is not a new dilemma. As Monty Python so humorously demonstrates in *The Life of Brian*, graffiti most likely showed up wherever the first empires sought to control societies. Critical artists of all types have a heritage of challenging controlling narratives through defiant rejection of the forms of the dominant culture: medieval carnival culture, dada, 'pataphysics, punk, Guillermo Gomez-Pena's performative dioramas, Luis Bunuel's films, Situationist detournements, and so on.

Documentaries generally adopt an authoritative voice and are very manipulative in their traditional structures. Documentary films from the very beginning have problematized and/or been implicated in this cultural problem. From the questions of whether *Nanook of the North* restaged its anthropological observations of Inuit life, to Orson Welles' playful mocking of truth, art and property in *F for Fake*, to Errol Morris's restaging of torture scenes in *Standard Operating Procedure*. What then is the filmmaker-artist to do when attempting to critique dominant, controlling narratives through the form of documentary film?

I can't say that until you have seen the film

Exit Through the Gift Shop reminds me of a favorite critical reflective essay that I use in my writing-argument courses. It is Douglas Rushkoff's "Introduction" to his book *Coercion: Or Why 'We' Do What 'They' Say*. The

power of the piece is that he does not just tell us about these tactics. He demonstrates their process by initially weaving a narrative that constructs a web in which we quickly become entangled—agreeably or disagreeably—and when he has us where he wants us, he then begins to walk us through his narrative web that constructed a controlled way of knowing.

As much as I admire Rushkoff's disentangling of his controlling narrative, I equally admire Banksy's *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. Much like how we walk through our urban landscapes and forget we are walking through a heavily coded, artificial environment, we also travel through the typical documentary (or corporate news show) expecting it to tell us the truth —we allow them to create meaning for us without questioning the form and facts. This is why I vigorously defend Errol Morris' restaging of scenes from various viewpoints to create a documentary environment where we need to forensically create our own understanding of the evidence, and this is why I celebrate *Exit Through the Gift Shop* as an exemplary documentary that challenges our passivity.

Banksy's last statement is chilling and can be interpreted in many ways. Perhaps you might watch it and, if you do, I'll gladly discuss it with you. If you disagree, that is ok. Construct your own narrative of what you see and engage other interpretations in an open dialogue. Better yet, oh...wait. I can't say that until you have seen the film.

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