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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010

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VOLUME II, ISSUE 5

Kent State at UK: a look 40 years later

By Richard Becker

Editor's note: This will be the first of a four-part story that looks back at the unfolding events of May 1970 at the University of Kentucky, when students and faculty voiced opposition to the destructive actions of their national and campus leaders. When all was said and done in Lexington, the National Guard had set up base on the university campus while, at the same time, students were banned from going on it; an aging former governor was made into a state folk hero for punching an unsuspecting student; and an unoccupied ROTC building was mysteriously burned to the ground.

This May will mark the fortieth anniversary of the killing by members of the U.S. National Guard of four students at Kent State University. On a local note, it will be the fortieth anniversary of the University of Kentucky's response to the events at Kent State. For several days in the spring of 1970, UK, a bastion of political conservatism and, at times, simple apathy, was effectively shut down by students and community members who were moved to demonstrate against the United States' illegal escalation of the Vietnam War into Cambodia and, later, the violent response of the State to university demonstrators in Ohio who protested the escalation.

Most Lexingtonians know little about the events that took place at UK forty years ago, and yet anyone associated with UK—whether they are a faculty member, a student, an alum, or a



COURTESY UK SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Kentucky National Guard set up camp in front of UK's Patterson Office Tower in May 1970.

local resident—must learn more about these events if we as a community are to take the appropriate lessons from this chapter in our history. In the span of a week in early May at the University of Kentucky, the Air Force ROTC building had been burned to the ground, faculty and students had been arrested, and many more demonstrators and passers-by were temporarily debilitated by the authorities' indiscriminate use of tear gas and pepper spray on campus. Eventually, UK President Otis

Singletary, in concert with Kentucky Governor Louie Nunn, established a curfew on campus, enforced by armed National Guard troops and state police, and called off final exams and commencement events.

To understand the events at UK in May of 1970, it is important to first establish the basic context—the Vietnam War—in which these events took place.

While it is impossible in this space to fully provide a background

on the Vietnam War and the various responses to it, a basic history is necessary. In the early 1960's President Kennedy continued the policy of the Eisenhower Administration by sending military advisors to Indochina. Following Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Lyndon Johnson took power and escalated the war to a level previously unseen. While his efforts were initially met with support from the

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Taking a little RNR

By Captain Commanokers

I spent a lot of hours playing the tennis racquet when I was a kid – not a lot of tennis though. The racquet was my weapon of choice in trying to replicate numerous Angus Young riffs as I stomped about the garage in a mad fury of exuberance that rock 'n' roll can provide a young set of ears.

A group of people in Lexington is trying to take that racquet and replace it with some full-fledged, joyous racket.

"It's important for kids to see that music isn't just a product but a means of expression," said Neil Bell, one of the board members of Lexington's new Rock N' Romp undertaking, which is a concert series that showcases local bands and musicians performing daytime shows to kids and parents.

Several other successful RNR's are established around the country that

follow the formula of kids experiencing live music, experimenting with the instruments or just dancing to their heart's content, while parents get the all-too-rare opportunity to see music they love with like-minded folks.

The next Lexington RNR is set for Saturday, March 20 at 1 P.M. at Al's, with performances by Tula, The Swells and Snow Monster, a group led by 6-year-old songstress Mabel, last seen rocking the FreeKY Fest stage in 2008. The only RNR stipulation is that adults need to be accompanied by a child to get in, and vice versa. A suggested donation of \$5 goes toward the artists.

The organizers feel an act like Snow Monster can go a long way toward inspiring other young audience members. "A lot of the time the only young performers children get to see are either adults or Disney-fied musical acts that

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MATT JORDAN / YOUNGTOPICS.COM

Snow Monster rocks FreeKY Fest, 2008.

East Enders march

Residents move on violence and drugs

By Andrew Battista

On Saturday, February 27, Greater Liberty Baptist Church on Chestnut Street hosted a program and protest march in which some fifty people gathered to decry violence, gambling, and drug trade in the East End neighborhood.

Members of the William Wells Brown Neighborhood Association and representatives from the Lexington Police Department C.L.E.A.R. Division (Community Law Enforcement Action Response) joined members of Greater Liberty Baptist Church to renounce violence that threatens to diminish the quality of life in Lexington's East End.

"The trustees were in a meeting here at church one evening, and I was actually speaking to this very issue when we heard three shots ring out, right in front of the church, right across the street," said John C. Lee, the church's senior pastor. "They shot a young man, and we went to his aid. That incident was the first of a series of shootings and related crime in our neighborhood."

In 2009, there were thirteen homicides in Lexington, and over half of them (seven) took place in the 40508 zip code, the neighborhood in which Greater Liberty is located. But homicide is not the only manifestation of violence in the William Wells Brown neighborhood. Last year, 699 assaults, 173 robberies, and 34 rapes were reported, an inordinately high number when compared with Fayette County as a whole.

"We're here to be a partner with you," said Sgt. Brian Maynard, a

Response Supervisor for the C.L.E.A.R. unit. "We're not here to tell you that we're going to solve this issue as the police. This is your issue, your community, and you're going to be the one solving this. But I'm proud that you're getting together as a group and saying, 'we're tired of this.'"

I found my way to the program and march with the hope that Lexington's East End residents could catalyze a renewed sense of obligation to our community. Like many of the people who attended last Saturday, I could not forget a gunfight that took place early on the morning of June 14, 2009. At least twelve shots, piercing and clear, woke me at about 4:00 A.M. I did go back to sleep, but when I emerged the next morning and headed out to the farmer's market on my bicycle, I had to navigate around a police blockade.

Twenty-year-old Dwayne Johnson, who went by the nickname "Man Man," had been shot to death that night in front of the Pak-n-Save Market, on the corner of Race Street and East Third. Over a month elapsed before authorities announced that they had apprehended his killer. According to the U.S. Marshalls, Johnson was murdered over a dispute in a game of craps.

After an hour-long sequence, during which a litany of clergy, law enforcers, politicians, and community leaders spoke, the congregation left and walked around the East End. Singing spirituals, hymns, and songs that have been integral to the civil rights movement, we circled past Pack-n-Save,

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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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East Enders (cont.)

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walked down Race Street, travelled across South Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and eventually returned to Greater Liberty.

Lee, who seemed dismayed by the modest turnout at the march, suggested that many people had stayed home to watch the University of Kentucky men's basketball game, a contest that the Wildcats would go on to lose. People in the East End have to refine an ability to harbor righteous indignation, Lee suggested, and if the violence is to stop, the church has to spearhead an ethic of peace and restitution.

"I think that when we study history, we discover that the church was always more than a place of worship," said Lee. "It was the heart of the community. It became the economic center, the school house. I believe that the time of the church being just a place for worship on Sunday is over. We must offer holistic ministry and attend to the needs of all humanity."

Lee explained that his fervor for social justice is born out of a Christian

ethic that demands we seek justice in the places where we live.

"If you're hungry, can I tell you what salvation is? How about giving me some bread? If I'm naked, how about giving me some clothes. If I'm homeless, put a roof over my head," said Lee. "I'm not interested

in a God that can save me and take me to heaven but can't clothe me on this side, can't put a roof on my head on *this* side, can't keep me safe on *this* side."

To hear an audio broadcast of this march, visit noclexington.com.



Protesters walk down Race Street, near the convenience store where Dwayne Johnson was shot on June 14.

RNR (cont.)

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are so overproduced and driven by market trends, it becomes hard for kids to see that music is an act of creation – that it's a personal process," Bell said.

"It doesn't have to be perfect; it shouldn't be. If all goes well, kids will walk away feeling empowered to go out and create. Kids seeing other kids create and perform music will hopefully show them they can do the same themselves," he added.

Another board member, Amberly Warnke, also emphasized the importance of Lexington's RNR goal to include music of all age groups. "High school bands, 12-year-old singer songwriters, 8-year-old new wavers – our kids need to see someone their own age doing something they love, and they need to be encouraged to express themselves while building self-esteem."

Warnke is also the driving force behind the radio show "Ages 3 and Up!" which airs at 8 A.M. Saturday morning's on 88.1 WRFL here in Lexington. A mom and former WRFL DJ in the 90s, she had the idea to get back on the airwaves when her son was three.

"There really was not much I considered appropriate for him to listen to on the radio. The lyrics of many 'grown up' songs, while not considered 'explicit,' are sexually charged, and glorify violence. I fully support the artists' rights to express themselves in that way, but it's not what I want my kid to listen to."

After seeing the music video "I'm A Little Airplane" by Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers a few years ago on the cable channel Noggin (now Nick Jr.), Warnke was inspired. "The song stuck in my head, and it occurred to me that someone should be playing songs like that for kids on the radio. Since then, my son (radio name: Kid-O) has been helping me do the show. He gets on the air and says hello occasionally and often helps me make musical selections. It's fun for both of us."

The wave of events like RNR, which finds parents and children sharing musical experiences together in a laid back and communal manner, seemed to take flight when founders of college/alternative/indie rock bands matured and became parents.

As they became parents, many musicians put out kids' albums while maintaining an adult career (Medeski Martin & Wood, Robert Schneider of The Apples in Stereo, They Might Be Giants). Others began producing children's music exclusively (Dan Zanes of the DelFuegos, Sarah Shannon of Velocity Girl, Chris Ballew of The Presidents of the United States of America). "These musicians and their fans wanted family entertainment-events they could attend and enjoy with their children," Warnke said.

The same evolution has taken place here, as several members of Lexington's music community sit on the board for RNR. A unified interest in keeping the

series a very local endeavor is also an important factor for the members.

"When we create events for local kids and parents, hold them at local businesses and spotlight local talent it tells other members of our community (and communities nationwide) that people in Lexington care about families," said Warnke.

"It encourages families who live here to stay here, and families who don't live here to move here. Working to build a community friendly to children and families will be a key in retaining those new residents as they grow into parenthood," she added.

Bell hopes that people who used to go out more often before nestling into their homes after having kids will come back out with their kids to see all Lexington has to offer.

"We see it as an investment in the future of Lexington's creative scene," he began. "These young kids will start bands, pursue art or at least appreciate creativity more as a result of being exposed to live music performed by people in their community."

The air-racquet (or broom, or other household objects) is an art form that will likely be preserved for future generations—"Rock Band" and "Guitar Hero" are testaments to that. RNR, though, adds more to the mix, allowing Lexington families the ability to share the irreplaceable joy of experiencing live music together. That's a racket we should all get behind.

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Civic Center (Lexington, Kentucky)

A poem by Chris Green

This is the fourth of four parts; see issues of January 27, February 10 and February 24 for previous parts. This poem originally appeared in Rushlight: Poems, published in November by Bottom Dog Press. Find it at Morris or elsewhere.

XI. For Winburn's Sixth Graders #1

First thing, a young woman proclaimed,
"I hate poetry words!" But after a week,
she let her heart speak and decided
that she liked what it was she heard.
Pushing and joking, playing and flirting,
I saw young poets dare to play
with keeping time and trying rhyme,
transforming pure energy into lines.

I saw young ones bend their ears
over the wall of time, drinking from
their grandmothers' sweet voices.
And I saw a young man dare
to reach through steel bars
and touch the heart of his father.
Mad at a teacher, another
wove a net of words to hunt his anger:
I heard the joyful song young sisters sing.
Their hands picked up the ring
of the telephones that sounded inside,
pencil down the beat of heart-heard words.

At first, poetry seems no fun at all,
but when a young woman tried,

she saw the lights of stars in her mind's eye
and caught them like snowflakes
that dissolved into images on her tongue.

Yes I heard your hands play harp words
and sometimes you heard each other.

XII. For Winburn's Sixth Graders #2

Your poems converse,
beginning the world. When the first rhyme
rose from a young man's lips,
splitting words in the silence of the night,
thunder celebrated and split the air.
He caught the tang on his tongue,
and for a moment spoke with a sun
in his mouth.

*The way is long,
but he is strong & starts off,
singing to The Sky who replies,
Tell me of your life;
tell me of your strife.
Tell me of the heights
from which your voice
has called.
Tell me of swimming
in the sea.*

Now he has begun.

Kent State

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American people, within a few short years, the war had intensified to such a degree that public opinion began to shift against both the president and the war effort.

Students begin to activate nationally

On April 17, 1965, thousands of demonstrators converged on Washington, DC to voice their opposition to the war. The demonstration was the first event of its kind on a national scale. Among the organizers of the rally were the Students for a Democratic Society, an organization of student activists that had begun to spring up in chapters all across America. Founded in the early 1960's in Michigan, the SDS later came to play a role in the demonstrations on UK's campus in 1970.

Later in the year, the SDS called for a second rally—a March on Washington—to follow their well-attended first rally in April. In a leaflet distributed nationally that fall, the SDS wrote that “in the name of freedom, America is mutilating Vietnam,” and that “America is burying its own dreams and suffocating its own potential.” It was not long before the SDS became an influential organization on the American left, organizing anti-war activities across the country during the 1960's.

With many thousands of young men being drafted into the armed forces—many of whom returned dead, maimed or mentally scarred by the war—and with vocal critiques to the war starting to percolate through different types of underground and establishment media, Americans began to question their government's involvement in Indochina.

Anti-war demonstrations picked up speed and the movement grew. In 1968, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, demonstrations turned violent when Chicago Mayor Richard Daley granted security and police forces the authority

large supported Daley's harsh, indiscriminate tactics against dissenting citizens. Later that year, Humphrey lost the presidential election to Richard Nixon, and the stage was set for both the war in Vietnam and the movement against it to escalate to a new level.

Four dead in Ohio

“Tin soldiers and Nixon's comin’
We're finally on our own
This summer I hear the drummin’
Four dead in Ohio”

—Crosby, Stills, Nash
& Young, “Ohio”

In the spring of 1970, President Nixon illegally and secretly expanded the war in Vietnam into the nations of Cambodia and Laos. No American reasonably educated on Richard Nixon's views on Communism could have considered this to be a particularly outrageous move, yet when uncovered it was met with some of the most vociferous opposition to the war yet seen in America. According to an official U.S. Air Force report declassified by President Clinton in 2000, over 100,000 sites in Cambodia were hit, with 3,580 of those sites being “unknown” targets, suggesting that civilians were killed at many of them.

College campuses nationwide erupted in protests—most of them peaceful—against what they saw as the escalation of the Vietnam war into the new territories of Cambodia and Laos. One such campus, Kent State University in Ohio, became the site of one of the more searing, violent acts of repression by the State against peaceful demonstrators in recent U.S. history.

On May 4, 1970, at a demonstration against the war, National Guard troops called in to quell the protesters fired sixty-seven rounds in a matter of seconds, killing four students and wounding nine others. Several of those killed and wounded were not even participating in the demonstration but were merely passing by or

Minter signs new graphic novel

On Saturday, March 20, Kenn Minter will sign his new graphic novel “the Experts,” which was co-written with Clarence Pruitt and recently published by Near Mint Pres. The signing, at Collectibles Etc. in Lexington, begins at 2:00 P.M. and concludes at 5:00 P.M.

Gathered together by the aging super-heroes Frost Queen and the Scotsman, the Experts are a quirky group of adventurers out to toss their hat in the super-hero ring. But the founders of this new team are more interested in publicity, endorsements, and marketing than actual super-heroics.

The new team combines three newcomers: Ninja Witch (a moody, youthful witch-in-training), Free Mary (a spit-fire vixen), and Naked Man (a young, eager buck); with three adventure veterans: Doctor Delta (a mystical apparition), the Emerald Yeti

(a gentle-natured, mechanical, furry giant), and Mr. Elaztik (the obligatory, rubber-bodied, shape-changing comic relief). Each member chosen to fulfill certain demographic appeal and more importantly for their willingness to work cheap.

Ninja Witch soon takes center stage as she and Free Mary are put through their paces on a mission preordained to failure -- and not just due to their ineptness. While the mysterious Doctor Delta is haunted by memories of his past and the one fateful decision that has cast its shadow over his entire life. The Experts quickly reach the brink of collapse as the unpredictable Ninja Witch discovers that the team is being exploited in more ways than they ever realized.

Collectibles Etc. is located at 115 North Locust Hill Drive. Call them at (859) 269-6633.

My Old Kentucky Home

At the University of Kentucky, unrest had already been brewing for some time by the time of the shooting at Kent State. With the election in 1967 of Republican Louie Nunn as governor of Kentucky, state schools like UK underwent a period of rapid overhaul. Already serving as university president at the time of Nunn's election, John W. Oswald had implemented a number of academic reforms at UK during his time in office, including a refocus on academics rather than athletic programs, the construction of Patterson Office Tower and Whitehall Classroom Building, and an expansion of the school's budget.

But perhaps the most important facet of the Oswald administration was Oswald's vigorous support for campus free speech and the creation of a student code. In spite of these reforms (or perhaps because of them), Oswald left the university shortly after Nunn's election as governor. Oswald was replaced as university president by Albert Kirwan, who served a short tenure as interim president. (Kirwan's term in office was later described by student body president Steve Bright as an “unmitigated disaster,” as professors and administrators began to leave the university in alarming numbers.)

In 1968, Otis Singletary replaced the interim Kirwan and became university president, in part because his views on student free speech and activism were more in line with Nunn's thinking than Oswald's. With Singletary's ascent to the top of UK's administration, UK became a breeding ground for anti-free speech activities and anti-administration activities in response. Perhaps more than any other institutional event, Singletary's rise to the presidency engendered the traumatic events at UK that immediately followed.

The news of the Kent State shooting did not take long to spread to UK. On May 5th, just one day after the shootings, the UK Board of Trustees met for their regularly scheduled meeting. This particular meeting, however, was auspicious for two reasons: it was the first board meeting in the newly-minted Patterson Office Tower and it saw the swearing-in to the board of new student government president Steve Bright. Bright

eventually became a vocal defender of UK students during the coming crisis, and even put himself on the line, as he was arrested for his participation in the demonstrations that followed his swearing-in.

A four-part harmony

As students at UK began to express disgust with President Nixon, the incursion of US military forces into Laos and Cambodia, and the shooting at Kent State, the stage was set for confrontation.

This four-part series will explore in more depth the events that took place at the University of Kentucky in May of 1970. It will look into the burning of the old Air Force ROTC building and the arrest of a young female student for that burning. It will revisit the deployment of the National Guard and state police to campus to quell the protests, and it will examine some important actors in these events.

I hope to discuss Pat White, initially a politically moderate UK English professor whose arrest amidst the turmoil on campus is believed to have later led to the university denying his tenure. White, who became radicalized as a result of the heavy-handed government response to the UK demonstrations, stayed in Lexington and continued to teach frequently in the decades following the 1970 protests. He passed away last year.

I will talk with student government president Steve Bright, who was thrust into the spotlight after he was sworn in as a Board of Trustees member at the May 5th meeting. In addition to Bright, I plan to cover several other student leaders whose voices may have been lost to the symphony of history.

The events at UK in 1970 have had dramatic repercussions for UK, ranging from a re-landscaping of campus to more stringent rules governing campus speech. We would do well to be reminded of the unjust treatment of students by the authorities at the time. Furthermore, it is important not to forget the courageous individuals who fought against the administration and the governor as they sought to quash dissent at the University of Kentucky. The events of 1970 have implications for today, and student activists in 2010 can learn from the lessons of this turbulent time in UK history.



COURTESY UK SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Students march past Blazer Hall in May 1970.

to essentially take whatever measures necessary to quell the protests. Taking to the streets during the convention, demonstrators were confronted with one of the largest masses of police and National Guardsmen ever assembled for the purpose of domestic policing. Outnumbered more than two-to-one, the demonstrators were met with violence from security forces almost immediately upon their arrival in the streets outside the convention center.

Television cameras alternated throughout the night of August 28 between shots of the raucous celebrations of Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey's nomination inside the convention hall and the escalating violence in the streets just outside. Out in the streets, tear-gas and mace were sprayed indiscriminately at demonstrators as well as bystanders, to such a degree that guests at the Hilton Hotel, where many of the convention delegates were staying, complained of irritation due to teargas that had wafted through the air and into the hotel.

In the end, however, opinion polls showed that Americans by and

watching the protest from afar.

Within hours, outrage over the killing of the four Kent State students began to blaze on college campuses across America—most of which had already mobilized their own protests against Nixon's escalation into Cambodia. In the week following the shooting in Ohio, some four million students at over 450 institutions throughout the U.S. participated in student strikes, resulting in the closure of most of these schools and, for some, the canceling of final exams and commencement activities. Taken together, it was the largest student strike ever seen in this country.

A week after the Kent State shooting, an estimated 100,000 protestors converged on Washington, DC to protest both the shooting and the American incursion into Cambodia. The demonstrators were met with typical indifference and chilliness from the Nixon administration. Nixon agreed to meet with several anti-war leaders, but essentially rebuffed their demands. The protest continued unabated, and was the largest demonstration in nearly two years.

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Review: *Shutter Island*

Scorsese's next step in his descent into the utterly obvious

By Colleen Glenn

Editor's Note: spoiler alert.

Do you remember when watching a Martin Scorsese film was riveting? When you were transfixed by the intriguing plot and perhaps left stunned at the conclusion? To be clear, I am not suggesting Scorsese is known for surprise or "twist" endings. Rather, my point is that the Scorsese canon is filled with narratives that epitomize verisimilitude to such an extent that we are completely drawn into the world of the narrative, temporarily casting aside our own reality for the one he masterfully creates onscreen before our eyes.

Some have criticized Scorsese for being too concerned at creating (or re-creating) the world his characters inhabit. It's not unusual to hear critics claim Scorsese is more concerned with costumes and set than plot, cinematography or editing, but this accusation has always seemed unjust to me. While it is true that he is notorious for elaborate, historically accurate sets, costumes, and props, these items are only part of the method Scorsese uses to create unforgettable, life-like narratives.

So skillful is he at conjuring this sense of realness that the endings to his films often leave one breathless. When the final credits run, the window to that alternate reality closes, and we are left with the somewhat disruptive feeling of waking from a vivid dream.

For proof, one need only recall the punch-in-the-gut ending to *Taxi Driver* when we are left wondering whether the psychotic Travis truly has been crowned hero for committing murder or if we are merely witnessing his delusions of glory. Or you might remember the unbearable sadness at the conclusion of *The Age of Innocence*, when, in the most crucial of moments, Archer inexplicably chooses the flawlessness

comprehend the story he is telling. But Scorsese, it seems, has lost his faith in us.

Which brings me to *Shutter Island*, Scorsese's latest release from Paramount Pictures. Turning in super performances by Leonardo DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, and Ben Kingsley, the film teases us with suspense and mystery only to unmask the truth with all of the delicacy of a root canal.



COURTESY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

Martin Scorsese's Shutter Island is currently in wide release.

of memory over the imperfection of reality, forever forgoing his chance to be with the love of his life. Both examples illustrate the grace and subtlety that exemplify Scorsese's handling of stories and, perhaps more to my point, his inherent trust in the audience to

Based on the 2003 novel by Dennis Lehane, *Shutter Island* tells the story of U.S. marshal Teddy Daniels' investigation into the disappearance of a female inmate from Ashecliff Hospital, a mental asylum for the "criminally insane." As Daniels (DiCaprio) and

his partner, Chuck Aule (Ruffalo), enter the guarded gates of the institution, they are forced to surrender their firearms.

So begins the accelerated loss of power for Daniels, as he finds his investigation increasingly compromised by uncooperative staff and condescending doctors, who undermine his mission at every step. To make matters worse, the island is under siege by a severe hurricane, making it impossible to leave. Later, they will trade in their "civies" for orderly uniforms after being caught in the storm, yet another step in the transference of power from the marshals to the institution doctors.

In addition to dealing with unexpected obstacles in the investigation, Daniels is battling his own body, and losing. Even before arriving on the island, Daniels has been ill. Initially seasick on the boat, Daniels continues to feel badly, suffering from blinding migraines and nausea. He begins to hallucinate, seeing visions of his dead wife and suffering repeated flashbacks to the liberation of Dachau.

His memories of the concentration camp interrupt his thoughts, the gruesome images piling up in his head like the bodies of the prisoners at the camp. His guilt—for being too late to save many people—and for shooting German prisoners—motivates Daniels to get to the bottom of the mystery on *Shutter Island*.

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The best of the year?

By Edward Mason

Am I the only one that felt more than a little disappointed in the Academy Awards this year? The Academy gave the Best Picture award to Kathryn Bigelow's *The Hurt Locker*, a film that was tantamount to a two-hour army commercial, gave the award for cinematography to *Avatar*, a film that contained less live action than *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, and totally snubbed Wes Anderson's aptly named *Fantastic Mr. Fox* in favor of whatever Disney/Pixar CG animation put out this year.

This is not to say that there were not bright spots though, because there were, but I am not here to address those. People often claim that the Oscars are more about politics than anything else, and this may be true, but let us not forget that this is the awards ceremony that has chosen *Slumdog Millionaire* and *No Country for Old Men* in the past two years for Best Picture. Danny Boyle and the Cohen brothers, respectively, were more than deserving of the award.

I could go on about the quality awards that have been given out in recent years, but I digress; the point

remains that the inequities of this year's awards need to be addressed. As mentioned, *The Hurt Locker* was so pro-Iraq war that I cannot imagine how James Cameron could claim it could become the Platoon of this generation. Oliver Stone demonstrated the futility of war and all its horrors, whereas Bigelow made a failed attempt at showcasing masculinity and heroism disguised as a soldier addicted to the rush of war.

We are supposed to be in awe of the valor of Jeremy Renner's character and how well he serves his country; it truly would be the equivalent of having John Rambo on screen as a paradigm for freedom. Only, we like Rambo because he's fiction, and the thought of adrenaline-fueled soldiers who cannot shut out the war would honestly scare us. Bigelow is not being apolitical here; she has a clear agenda to drum up that old cliché of "support the troops." The film screams, "Look at how intense these soldiers are!" "Look at how brave they are!" "Look at what they are willing to go to for you!" Yet, that is the problem—the film never raises the questions that need to be asked about the war. It never posits that giant hypothetical "Why?"

My complaint with *Avatar* winning for cinematography does not stem from any kind of ideological issue per se, but rather from the fact that it is essentially an animated film. To be perfectly honest, I have not seen James Cameron's latest venture to spend all of the world's money, and I have no intention to. I believe that this explosion of CGI in films, in addition to usually looking horrible, cheapens the cinematic experience. There is no need to be original or creative anymore because you can fake verisimilitude with computers. We would never have seen astounding, imaginatively unique films like *Clash of the Titans* (1981) or *2001: A Space Odyssey* if they had been sterilized by soulless computer-enhanced effects. If *Avatar* would have been made by Michel Gondry and rendered with painted cardboard cutouts and stop motion animation, the world would have been a far better place.

Cameron spent enough money that they had to give the film some award, though. So, in all honesty, my dissatisfaction is ideologically based, but even so, it seems a bit of an oversight to give an award for achievement in cinematography to a film predominantly

made up of animated visuals. Why not nominate other animated films for the award then?

This leads me to my next point. Why not give the award to *Fantastic Mr. Fox*? Wes Anderson deserved to win something for this film, and we all know that Best Animated film was earmarked for *Up* since before the movie was released. I understand that, despite my distaste for CGI, *Up* was not by any means of the word bad, but the Academy should rename the category "Best Disney/Pixar Animation" if it plans on giving the award to whatever sentimental computer-generated movie the studios put out every year. I can already see the people working on *Toy Story 3* making room for the Oscar they are going to win next year.

In all honesty, though, it wasn't a great year for film, really. The only nominee for Best Picture that I even enjoyed was *Inglourious Basterds*, and even then it was only pretty neat. So, maybe we should cut the Academy a little slack. But let's recap what was learned by this year's Oscars: love America and war; don't be innovative; and Disney is your god. Important lessons one and all.

Life, art and *Crazy Heart*: a review

By Ainsley Wagoner

The elements of what makes a movie worth paying to see can be replicated fairly easily: celebrity producers, a couple of Hollywood heavy-hitters to share the spotlight, and an iconic, biopic storyline. But just because you have all the right ingredients doesn't mean the product is desirable. We have all seen movies that should have been good, where the formula was set up correctly but the equation somehow fails. Amelia, anyone?

Crazy Heart's set-up is nothing new; its framework is calculated and practiced. Jeff Bridges as Bad Blake and Maggie Gyllenhaal as Jean Craddock are hardly risky newcomers in the lead roles. Add Robert Duvall and Colin Farrell as supporting actors, paired with a straight-from-a-novel biopic plot of a musician with

a past full of mistakes, and the plot starts to seem familiar.

By now everyone knows about *Crazy Heart's* Oscar nominations, and somewhere between my writing this and press time a little golden statue may indeed wind up on Bridges' mantle. So the point of this can hardly be whether or not this movie is good. (It is very good, if you are wondering.) The point is, rather, what is it that makes a movie formula succeed sometimes, and fail at others? Or perhaps even that question is too large. What is it that makes this movie—despite staying well within the bounds of what has been done in the cinematic art form—so good?

For me, it was immediately evident. The first shot of Bridges' character, Bad Blake, shows the aging former country star emptying a bottle of urine into the parking lot of the

bowling alley where he is scheduled to play that night. I knew right away the kind of honesty and private relate-ability that this movie had in store. These kinds of details fell into place within the larger story, allowing the work as a whole to move beyond cliché and into the realm of relevant: the sweat stains and worn elbows on Bad's denim shirts and the way his accent was at times indecipherably thick; Jean's bra straps beneath cheap tank tops and her hand-me-down minivan.

Beyond the details, the characters struck that brilliant chord of becoming impossibly familiar to the audience. Jean is every smart, cautious, protective mother who has ever taken a chance on something she sees in a man and then wished she hadn't. She is driven and strong but not immune to believing that people can be better

if they are given the chance. Bad is every man with a string of failed relationships and career endeavors that still has a recognizable spark of great talent. When they meet, their characters are in two completely asymmetrical places in life. He is burnt out, and has stopped trying to achieve any goal but still clings to the system of playing show after show for a pittance, spending what little money he has on whiskey. She has built a thick wall around herself to make a stable life for her four-year-old son and works hard to support them by writing at the local paper.

The movie charts the beginning of their relationship at that moment when, against any rationale, it seems that who two people used to be will not matter. A new start really seems

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Music

Awesome Color kicks out Detroit

Tyvek, Babes, and CROSS also play Al's

By Nick Kidd

I recently opened up Elektra's 1991 CD reissue of the MC5's debut album *Kick Out the Jams*. Its liner notes flip out like a map, guiding my eyes to an abundance of American flags, a poem, a handful of old concert posters, and a lengthy passage about how the album was recorded live on Halloween at Detroit's Grande Ballroom in 1968.

It's a convenient two-dimensional time capsule one might expect to find in a reissue, one that boasts, "The cultural circumstances surrounding the creation of this music will never again occur."

In the early '60s, Detroit was seen as a leader in liberal race relations, the place that gave the world Motown and cars, a city the New York Times editorialized had "more going for it than

any other major city in the North." Sure, rock and roll was kicking around in the Motor City's bowels, but Kiss wouldn't make "Detroit Rock City" until '76. So how did Detroit get from Motown to Rock City?

Perhaps the most fascinating part of the *Kick Out the Jams* booklet is a chart of the top 31 songs from Detroit radio station WKNR for the week of February 20, 1969. The chart is overflowing with innocuous psychedelic pop songs (Classics IV's "Traces," Sir Douglas Quintet's "Mendocino"), Motown (The Foundations' "Build Me Up Buttercup," David Ruffin's "My Whole World Ended"), and bland commercial pop (Frankie Laine's "You Gave Me a Mountain," Tommy Roe's chart-topper "Dizzy"). Apart from CCR and Steppenwolf, the chart has almost nothing today's rock fans can sink their teeth into. The most notable exception: "Kick Out the Jams" by the MC5.

I YouTubed (yeah, a verb) every song on that singles chart confident I'd find something similar to the epic brutality of "Kick Out the Jams," some obscure psych/garage rock outfit that history had forgotten. But nothing even came close. I walked away from the undertaking convinced that the MC5 exemplified a total rejection of hippie rock and commercial pop, genres growing dangerously close to one another (see: The Zombies).

The MC5 offered a counter counter-culture, one that found opportunity in chaos, indulgence, and excess instead of peace, love, and happiness. That Detroit simultaneously churned out this nihilistic message, a calling later synonymous with punk, and the seminally sleek sound of Motown is baffling; it's a lasting testament to the

vibrancy Detroit possessed at the time.

Yet there were signs that the Motor City wasn't the shining city on the hill that the NY Times editorialists had once thought.

Riots and disorder were breaking out all across America throughout the late '60s, hitting Detroit with the Twelfth Street Riots in '67. Such conditions, according to the liner notes, contributed to *Kick Out the Jams*' creation: "This record has within it the vision and the violence of a turbulent time in America. This music expresses the frustration and future shock of the soul of the sixties. This is a portrayal of the struggle to create a world that was destined never to be." The Altamont Festival in 1969 marked the de facto end of the hippie era, a free concert marred by one homicide and three accidental deaths. The MC5 were slightly ahead of the times when they dropped *Kick Out the Jams* earlier that year, an album that sought "to make something more significant than the mere product that dominated the charts."

Another Detroit act helped bolster the MC5's evangelizing of raw, back-to-basics rock: The Stooges. The Stooges were the MC5's opening act, though history suggests that they were the more influential band. Regardless of whose side you're on, both bands shamelessly relied more on showmanship than actual chops. The Stooges nightly unleashed Iggy Pop, the nuttiest front-man of all time, a bare-chested freakshow who puked onstage and even rolled around in piles of broken glass. The MC5, like most sentient beings, weren't quite as crazy as Iggy. They riffed on political chicanery,

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STEFANO GIOVANNINI / STEFPIX.COM

Awesome Color.

Coralee and the Townies EP release

By Sunny Montgomery

The air was thick with expectancy as my classmates and I lined up at the front of the classroom, dressed in our freshly starched choral costumes and fidgeting anxiously with our cummerbunds. It was the annual sixth-grade Southside Select Choir tryouts and one by one, Mrs. McVey was going to call out our names and when she did, we would step up onto the small platform and sing the first few lines of our chosen song.

The teacher called another name and I eyed the small blonde girl who'd just taken stage. Her name was Corey Wilson, though we didn't know that then—she was a new student. But by the end of her audition, it was apparent that the Southside Choir had found its superstar.

Now, a decade later, Corey has taken the stage again as Lexington's latest musical darling and front-woman to Coralee and the Townies. She's traded in her grade school choir garb for a pair of cowboy boots and acoustic guitar, united with five of the most respected musicians in town—Johnny Grossman (Get Down Watson), Smith Donaldson (Tall Boys), Scott Wilmoth (Swells), David White (Big Maracas), and Fred Sexton (the Yonders)—and quickly amassed quite a following with her sultry originals and honky-tonk interpretations of tunes by Tom Waits, Kinks, Chuck Berry and various other danceable musicians.

"It had always been my dream to be a backup singer," says Corey. "I love to sing harmony and it's very much against my nature to want to be in the spotlight." After college, she did a bit of backing vocals for some local groups but decided, in time, that if she wanted to keep singing, she'd have to

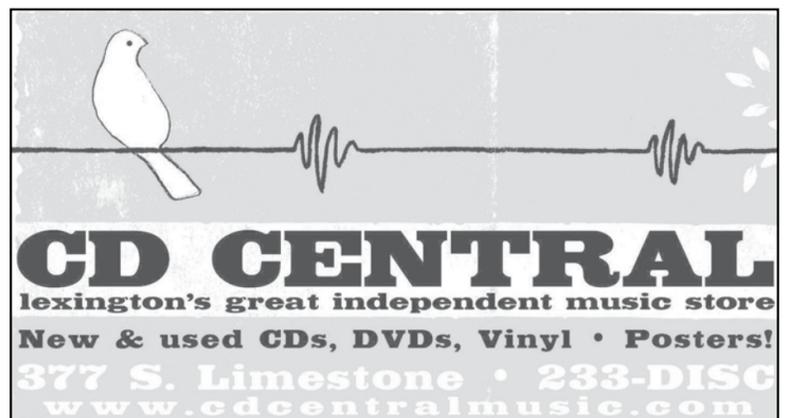
organize a group. "It was just a matter of finding myself a band that was good enough to cover up the fact that I had no idea what I was doing," she says.

But Corey's being modest. Between her big voice—a smoky reminiscence of Loretta Lynn—and her charismatic stage presence, which Smith describes as "both friendly and ferocious," it seems the spotlight is just where Corey belongs.

Presently, the Townies are finishing up a five song EP comprised of Corey's originals. Despite an obvious aptitude for performing, Corey says she lives for songwriting. "The common theme is undoubtedly love," she says of her songs. "I have loved, unloved, reloved and made love," and it is these truths she has versified into a kind of western swing collection due to drop mid March. "These songs are not just stories—they're my stories and I just like to figure out ways to tell them that will make people want to listen." And based upon the packed dance floor at any particular Townie show, indeed, we are listening.

"She's ambitious in what she wants to do and she puts a lot of thought into her music," says drummer David White. "Playing with Coralee makes me feel young. Younger," he quickly adds. But it seems it is this precise sentiment that has contributed to her popularity. Her spirit is contagious, and pretty girls with her kind of raw talent cannot help but dazzle. After all, even in the sixth grade she was a rock star and I haven't any doubt that rockstardom will always follow Corey.

Coralee and the Townies will be performing Friday, March 19 at Cosmic Charlie's where they will also be releasing their self-titled five song EP. The show starts at 10 P.M.



Coralee at Cosmic Charlie's last month.

JOSH SAXTON

ROCK ready to roll

Preseason practice for Lex roller derby

By Troy Lyle

Are you ready? You better be, because it's time for jammers to get whipped, for blockers to lay out the lead, for hammering hip checks and snowplowing packs. And maybe, just maybe, a grand slam or two.

It's once again time for roller derby in the bluegrass. The Rollergirls of Central Kentucky (ROCK) are set to begin their season this coming weekend against the Blue Ridge Rollergirls of Asheville, NC. The bout will be held Saturday at the Asheville Civic Center at 7 P.M..

"We didn't play Blue Ridge last season," said Rainbow Smite, ROCK's assistant captain. "This is our first bout against them, and this is actually their 2010 season opener."

Smite is one of more than 25 skaters who make up ROCK, an all-female

flat track derby league formed in 2007. The skater owned and operated group is entering its third season here in Lexington.

"I think we're better prepared this year than in past seasons due to our longevity as a league," said Smite. "We have more experienced skaters and more consistent training, and a strong batch of new recruits who keep us on our toes."

The new recruits also provide enough live bodies for the team to scrimmage in full during practice sessions, which is "truly invaluable," she said.

ROCK finished last season with 4 wins and 5 losses. This year's team is expanding its schedule to 12 bouts, which includes the East Coast Derby Extravaganza (ECE), a three day, large-scale women's flat track roller derby competition featuring teams from across the US and Canada.



JACK KING

ROCK pumps it up for its 2009 bout with Radioactive City Rollergirls.

With more bouts and more practice under its belt, ROCK hopes to improve even more this season by playing more as a team and incorporating new techniques and styles of play into their already solid format.

"This team is made up of more skaters who work differently together," said Smite. "In previous seasons, we've not always understood the best way to truly play as a team, and we've also had few enough skaters that we were going into bouts with the same 8 or 12 people who worked in familiar ways together. This season has a lot of new faces, which means new plays, new styles, new ways of kicking ass."

Smite said she thinks audience members will notice some of the same teamwork they saw in season's past, but they'll see it executed seamlessly and will begin to recognize signature plays that define ROCK as a league.

Another goal of ROCK is joining the Women's Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA) in the future. WFTDA, which recently formed in 2004, is the governing association for all flat track derby play and provides leagues with the rules of the sport, as well as roller derby tips and advice. In addition, WFTDA disseminates up-to-date news and information about flat

track derby tournaments, and local and national rankings.

"WFTDA is a long-term league goal that we have our sights on, but we need to be cautious," Rainbow said. "As the generally recognized organizing structure for the sport, to become a member would give ROCK the opportunity to do things like play and be ranked in national tournaments, and receive the benefits and guidance of WFTDA. Still, it's a goal we have to work on slowly since it requires letters of support from current WFTDA leagues, an established league history and a record of philanthropy."

This year's ROCK team includes: Abigator Death Roll, Autumn Hutt, Bjoink, Blackeyed Pea, Bitty Bast'rd, Boom Boom, Ellie Slay (captain), Icky Deadgirls, Jessie Maims, Junk Drawer, Kitty O'Doom, Mona Lisa Vile, PammDemic, Paralethal, Ragdoll Ruby, Rainbow Smite (asst. captain), Rebel Red, Ryder Die, Salem Slammmah, Sharon Moonshine, Shirley Psycho, Sissy Bug, Speedy Jenkins, Sugar Shock, SueFure, Two Keys Terror. Referees include: Howie Swerve and Paco Chaos.

If you'd like to learn more about ROCK go to www.rocknrollergirls.com. For more information on WFTDA visit wftda.com.

Rollergirls of Central Kentucky

2010 SCHEDULE

All doors open at 7:00 P.M.. Bouts begin at 8 P.M..

March 13	ROCK @ Blue Ridge Rollergirls (Asheville, NC)
March 27	ROCK @ Hard Knox (Knoxville, TN)
April 10	ROCK @ Lafayette Brawlin' Dolls (Lafayette, IN)
May 8	ROCK @ ROSI (Evansville, IN)
June 5	ROCK @ Glass City (Toledo, OH)
June 19	ROCK vs. Vette City Vixens (Champs Skating Rink, Lex.)
June 25-27	ECE (Philadelphia, PA)
July 10	ROCK vs. Derby City (Champs Skating Rink, Lexington)
July 24	ROCK @ BBRG (Florence, KY)
August 14	ROCK vs. Lafayette Brawlin' Dolls (Champs, Lex.)
September 11	ROCK vs. Black n' Bluegrass Roller girls (Champs, Lex.)
October 9	ROCK vs. TBA

Attacking the NCAA basketball tournament brackets: a regional strategy

NoC Sports Desk

It's no secret that Kentucky will be one of this year's bracket favorites. They will in all likelihood be a number one seed. And having lost only two games all season, they will have a better than average chance of reaching the final four.

Will they win it all? Who knows and, from the standpoint of maximizing your bracket's potential to emerge victorious in your NCAA pools, who cares. Since the brackets have yet to be announced, who could even wager a winning guess at this point. But that shouldn't stop any and all bracketologists from at the very least forming a plan of attack.

You could fill out 50 brackets with any number of combinations of winners, final fours and upsets. And you would have a great chance of winning at least a pool or two with your picks. But who has \$500 to blow these days.

Game Planning

Here's where game planning comes in. At NoC, we usually play anywhere from 10 to 15 brackets annually. A few at various workplaces, a few online, and a few with friends living in states across the country.

Why send a handful of brackets all the way across the country? Because if you're going to pick Kentucky to win it all, then your best shot of winning with that bracket is in a location where few people are likely to pick UK as the winner.

Think of it as regional economics.

Out West in places like San Francisco and Klamath Falls, brackets are full of Utahs, UCLAs, Gonzagas and St. Mary's. Maybe not as champions, but as deep-runners, cinderella stories, etc. It is a statistically provable fact that West coast basketball fans favor a higher percentage of West

Coast teams to project far in the tournament. Our three-year analysis suggests a 22% exuberance factor from the brackets of West Coast basketball fans for their regional biases.

The same goes in the East (26% exuberance factor), the SEC (38%) and even here in Kentucky (74%). In sports as in politics and nationalisms, people tend to pick what they know and see often.

Having run a pool or two in the past, we can't begin to count the number of local brackets that have had Kentucky winning it all. No matter who the coach was or what year. If you factor in this year's team with all of its success...well, you have a better chance of winning the Powerball Lottery than picking a bracket in Lexington with Kentucky as the winner.

The NoC Plan

Here's what we plan to do. We'll definitely be picking two, maybe three, brackets with UK winning it all. We'll simply refuse to play those brackets in Kentucky and, with few exceptions, on the east coast. Our Kentucky picks go to San Francisco, Vancouver, Denver and Las Cruces.

This year our one exception to the regional rule is Tennessee. With our contacts in the middle Tennessee vector, we'll place brackets that exhibit initially a high SEC exuberance, but we will finish instead with a Big East-heavy Final Four followed by a Kentucky national championship.

The thinking here is that the middle Tennessee area has many SEC fanatics, with the three main populations of fanbases comprising (in descending order) the Tennessee, Vandy, and Kentucky sectors. Because both Vandy and Tennessee will be in this year's tournament, there is a good likelihood of the Kentucky national champion vote getting siphoned off through an abnormally high Vandy/

Tennessee exuberance factor (which itself could also be expressed through an over-abundance of SEC-heavy final four brackets.)

Here locally in the inner Bluegrass, we'll take our chances with Kansas, Syracuse, Purdue and West Virginia. Or maybe Ohio State, Duke, Kansas State and Villanova. For many years,

Duke, in particular, was a big winner here--speaking strictly in terms of maximized bracket efficiency, of course.

In any case, the moral here is that you'll have a much better chance of winning each pool you enter if you target your picks to the region in which those picks will be played. You'll be getting more for your money.



TROY LYLE

The only picture able to be retrieved from the Fisherman KY RIVER disc.

A note from the Frugal Fisherman

Editor's Note: With deadline day nearing an end, the Frugal Fisherman frantically appeared at NoC headquarters brandishing a hastily scribbled note, several pictures that were beaten up and still dripping mud, and a cd in a jewel case with the words KY PICTURES scrawled on it. Before we could open our mouths to query him, he had vanished.

We here pass on--unedited--the first, coherent, portion of the Fisherman's note, before it veered off into deranged lunatic conspiracies about fish, fowl, early March water temperatures and NCAA Tournament brackets:

"I had planned to regale you with stories of largemouth bass and flat-head catfish from this past weekend's fishing and camping trip. But alas I didn't catch a thing on the nearly 20 miles of Kentucky River between Lock 10 in Boonesborough and Lock 9 at Valley View.

And when I say I didn't catch anything, I mean I didn't even get a bite. The river was cold and clear, a deadly combo for a rusty fisherman like myself. Good thing there's this coming weekend's NCAA bracket announcements to save the day...."

Opinion

The week in labor history Hotel Bauen, marches, evictions and other happenings

NoC News

In this month in 2003, former employees of the closed-down Hotel Bauen, located in the Argentinian city of Buenos Aires, reclaimed the rundown building and began making repairs. The space is now run collectively by its workers as a hotel, free meeting space for labor groups, and residence for (some) of its workers.

The story of Hotel Bauen dates back to the mid-70s, when capitalist Marcelo Lurkovich secured easy government loans to construct the four-star hotel in downtown Buenos Aires. Lurkovich was looking to cash in on the projected tourist influx that would hit the Argentinian coastal city when it hosted the 1978 World Cup. Sold in 1998 to some Chilean capitalists after Lurkovich sucked enough profit out of it to open two more hotels (though, curiously, not enough money to pay off his initial loans), the Bauen closed in 2001, leaving a number of workers jobless and forcing many into the streets, in the midst of Argentina's great economic collapse.

Two years later in 2003, some of the hotel's former workers took matters into their own hands when they illegally entered the dilapidated building, began to fix it up themselves and started running it as a worker collective. As the writer/filmmaker Sammy Loren observed in 2005, without an owner to get in the way of progress and suck out all the profits for himself, the workers repaired all the broken and wrecked living areas, fixed the dysfunctional

bathrooms, and revived the ugly 70s interior design before finally accommodating guests—all while providing better wages and working conditions



for the people running it. Currently the worker-run hotel has 150 workers, a street-side cafe selling many products produced by other worker-owned shops, and over 200 renovated hotel rooms for happy guests.

The worker-reclamation of the Hotel Bauen is but a small part of the larger story of worker power that

has swept through Argentina since the mid-1990s, when pro-corporate privatization policies were instituted throughout the country (and enthusiastically supported by the U.S. government). These austerity policies resulted in thousands of people getting laid off, sharp cuts in wages and pensions for all workers, and slashed social services. (In other words, what we are in the process of experiencing here in the United States.)

The result in statistics? According to the writer Marina Sitrin, by 2001 industrial production had fallen by 25 percent; official poverty grew to 44 percent (with the unofficial rate much higher), and the formerly docile middle class de-classed to the lower classes.

Since 2001, unemployed workers movements in Argentina have responded to the top-down corporate policies championed by its own government (and its U.S. overseer). These groups have reclaimed a number of formerly closed-up workplaces, fixed them up and run them collectively and profitably in a manner similar to the Hotel Bauen.

And like the workers at the reclaimed Hotel Bauen, the fruits of these worker reclamations of shut-down industry continue to be challenged in court by the former owners who cut town at the first sight of waning profits. In the Hotel Bauen's case, workers continue to struggle to keep Lurkovich's kin from claiming the now-profitable hotel as their own.

In other labor news this week:

On March 11 in 1930, Gandhi began his Salt March to Delhi.

On March 12 in 1982, three-hundred women workers staged a slowdown at Control Data in Seoul, South Korea, to protest the firing of their union president.

On March 14 in 1991, government workers from Brazil, who had been unpaid since November, seized control of the governor's palace.

On March 15 in 1877, Ben Fletcher was born. Fletcher was an organizer for the International Workers of the World (IWW) who organized longshoremen in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Finally, on March 18 in 1937, New York police evicted retail clerks who were occupying a Woolworth's and agitating for a 40-hour work week.

Information comes from Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) 2010 calendar. Supplemental information came from Marina Sitrin's Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina and Sammy Loren's online article, "Argentina's Worker-Run Hotel Bauen," found at: upsidedownworld.org.

Letters to the editor

Stumbo's values

Recently I was reminded that we live in a Republic, not a Democracy. If I remember my 101 political science class, the difference is that in a Democracy the elected official votes the will of the people, whereas in a Republic, an elected official votes in a way that reflects what they feel would be best for the state, based on their own value system. Given this difference a person running for office in a Republic must state his/her values but also hold true to those stated values once in office.

This is not the case for Speaker of the House Stumbo. Just last year Senator Stumbo stated, "I don't have an appetite to turn my back on the needs of our state." Now in the current budget debate Senator Stumbo seems to have developed an appetite for cutting back on the state's needs. Namely he advocates shorting the public school year by two days (and thereby lowering teacher pay), cutting funding for services like poison control hotlines, and cutting community college funding by 2%. All this and

more while still leaving a 400 million dollar shortfall.

With this letter I am asking Senator Stumbo to return to his stated values and control his appetite to balance the budget on the backs of the states needs.

Sincerely,
Jerry Moody

Surveillance at NoC

When I saw a front page with a diatribe against corporate personhood; a reasoned, factual plea for the decriminalization of useful plants; and accounts of freaky radio drama and MTR struggle music I was concerned. "I am being watched. Spied upon. . ."

Please forgive this irrational impulse. I had no prior experience with a newspaper so connected with its people and place that it wrote exclusively about things of interest to people in that place.

Keep up the good work, thank you, and give'em hell.

Your neighbor,
Jonathan Hampton

Shutter Island (cont.)

continued from page 4

Set in 1954, *Shutter Island* becomes a lens for contemplating and understanding the trauma of war, and specifically of WWII, a war that essentially ended any semblance of innocence the world may have possessed. In addition to the murder of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, an estimated 200,000 Japanese civilians were killed during the U.S. bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The second statistic is particularly tenuous, as many bodies were never found. They simply incinerated into thin air.

These facts, of course, do not begin to describe the full extent of the trauma of the war, including huge death tolls around the world, with Russia topping them all at 20,000,000 casualties. Of relevance to this film is that as a WWII vet, Daniels is not celebrated, but suspect, as the doctors at Ashecliff (including an ex-Nazi played by the incredible Max von Sydow) continually suggest that it is not the war

that necessitated Daniels' violence but rather his violent nature that drew him to war.

The movie, in its broadest sense, grapples with the human attempt to reconcile memory with reality. Daniels' repeated visions, as well as the fears the inmates have concerning the rumors they've heard of the H-bombs, prove that such a task—on an individual level, as well as a global one—is impossible.

As Daniels begins to place more trust in his partner, he confides that he requested this assignment for personal reasons. Ashecliff Hospital, Daniels has reason to believe, is conducting heinous experiments on its patients, the sort of atrocities the Nazis committed during the war. HUAC, the OSS, the CIA...the government is implicated at every level. Daniels plans to use this opportunity to gain proof of his suspicions and "blow the lid wide open" on the scandalous and horrific acts occurring on the island. Chuck's response is chilling as he asks incredulously how Daniels could be so naïve

Crazy Heart (cont.)

continued from page 4

possible and everything is full of hope. There is a light in the bleak landscape of Bad Blake's late nights and hungover mornings. Everyone is holding their breath for a happily ever after. But, like real life and any good story, things don't go so smoothly. Jean's doubts and Bad's substance abuse make fools out of them both for believing in a fresh start. Things fall apart again, and both are back where they began.

At that point the character development really begins and the movie's namesake is revealed. The whole point of life is not that someone will save us, or that love will turn a new page and make us better people, but that love makes our hearts crazy enough to keep trying, and to not give up. And through the attempt, we may be able to save ourselves.

This movie isn't good because it contemplates love. It's good because it speaks on so many levels to the life experience. First, it looks at an artistic life fallen short of poetic glory, and

the kind of hopelessness that plays out offstage for a country musician whose songs speak to many but whose life is at an all-time low.

Second, it comments on the value of a lifetime of experience in music and art, and how those that adhere to their methods get left in the dust by newer, trendier, sexier talent.

Third, it asks whether we are defined by our previous actions or if there really is a possibility of revelation or even improvement.

And lastly, and most importantly, the film frames two completely real characters in both their most unremarkable and most capture-worthy moments.

Crazy Heart is a successful movie because it bridges the gap between life and art. It does not focus primarily on life influencing art or art influencing life, but the inseparability of the two. In the end, what makes a movie formula really work depends on whether the film has some sort of applicable value to our own life experience. And in the case of *Crazy Heart*, the proof is in the pudding.

as to think he was selected randomly for the assignment. If he's been asking questions, then it's possible that he was brought here...to be silenced.

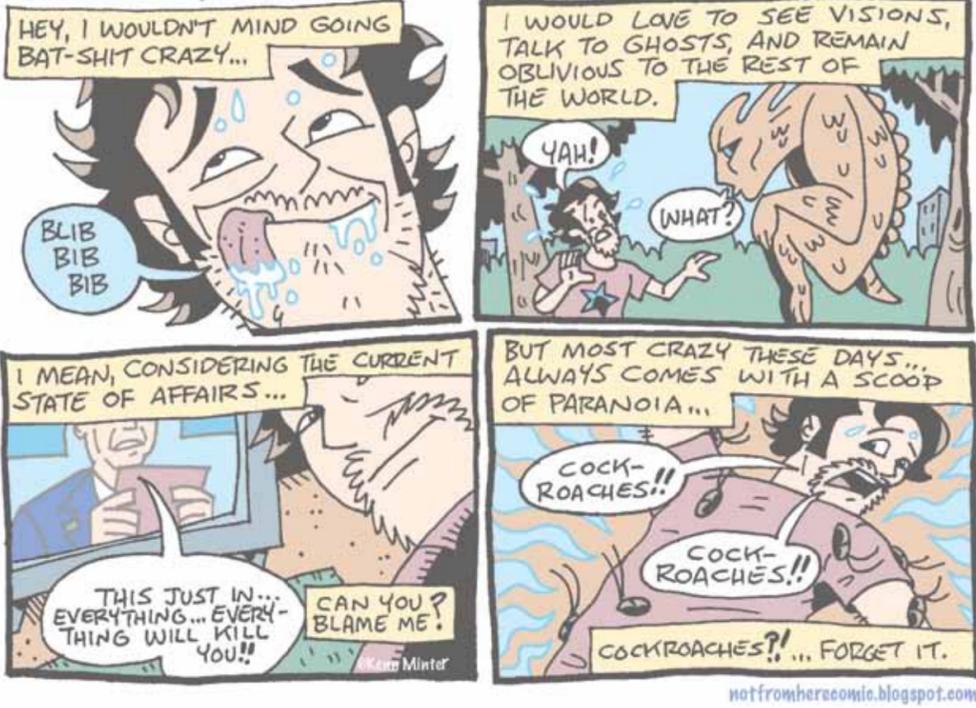
The film, up to this point, and for a short while beyond it, is fascinating. The mistake the film makes, however, is when, at its climax, it shells out all vestiges of mystery and intrigue to close the book—definitively—on the heretofore captivating mystery. It's an unfortunate choice because the narrative could easily have ended in a more restrained manner, an ending that would allow the audience to contemplate the sanity and fate of its main character. As it is, we learn that Teddy Daniels is really an inmate at the asylum, and the events of the last two days have been merely a progressive form of therapy, a hopeful experiment that allowing him to play out his delusional fantasy might help him snap back into reality. An interesting twist, but can we trust the reticent Dr. Cawley (Ben Kingsley)? Well, as it turns out, yes. A 20-minute flashback explains exactly

how and why Daniels snapped, leaving no room for ambiguity or even a raised eyebrow.

This decision—to erase any shred of mystery to *Shutter Island*—is the cinematic equivalent of the final shot of the rat scurrying across the railing at the end of *The Departed* (with the gold dome of the Boston capitol building in long shot). Just in case we missed the 151 minutes of corruption and dirty business endemic to the plot of *The Departed*, Scorsese felt it was necessary to cast a rat as the final character onscreen to drive the narrative's point home. It's like the opposite of a rainbow thanks, Marty. I wonder if he has lost his confidence in his audience to grasp abstract concepts, to be comfortable with uncertainty, and to appreciate a movie that makes us think.

The final shot of *Shutter Island*? The lighthouse. Where Daniels will be lobotomized to remove any last traces of original thought and intelligence, a process Scorsese began with his audience in 2006.

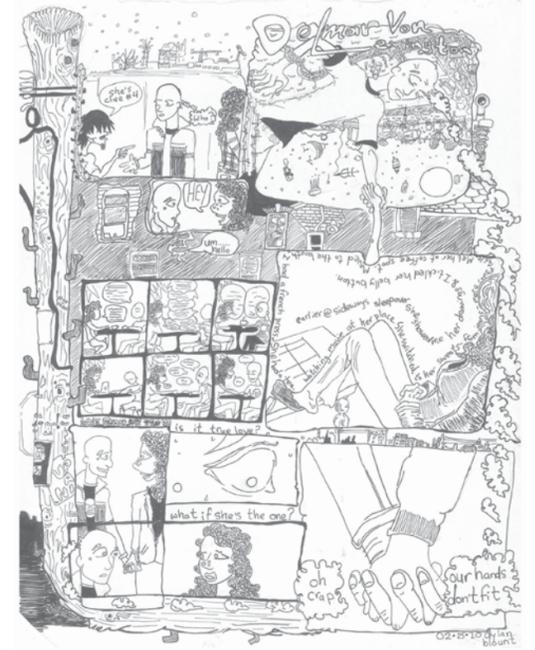
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Post-game shenanigans at Al's

Awesome Color (cont.)

continued from page 5

peppering their set with gimmicks like toting around unloaded rifles and faking a sniper assassination of lead singer Rob Tyner.

The MC5's manager John Sinclair, who later formed the White Panther Party, became the face of the MC5 and greatly shaped their politics and onstage antics, stoking the controversy that occasionally mired the band. Some of Sinclair's central political tenets: "Total assault on...culture by any means necessary, including rock and roll, dope, and fucking in the streets," abolishment of currency, and free health care for all. In other words, Sinclair and, by extension, the MC5, were a group of militant liberals with Libertarian ideals...a political movement that almost nobody took seriously. (Then again, if people can't come together for rock and roll, dope, and fucking in the streets, maybe we can't come together for anything.)

Apart from their reputation for putting on some of the most high-energy concerts known to man, MC5 and The Stooges are also cited as two of the first and most influential punk bands ever. Together they challenged the utopian optimism of the hippie movement as well as the norms of popular rock, eschewing catchy melodies and bright motifs in favor of harsh sounds and seditious themes. They made outsider music cool and, along with The Velvet Underground, practically invented punk.

MC5 and The Stooges helped put Detroit on the map as a hub for rock n' roll, a reputation bolstered by Alice Cooper, Ted Nugent, Grand Funk Railroad, and, later, The White Stripes. Yet MC5 and The Stooges don't fit comfortably alongside such household names. Rather, their music flowed outward, away from anything that would

ever show up on the Top 40, and toward heavy metal, hard rock, experimental noise, and just about everything outside the mainstream. There's a direct link between them and much of today's alternative music.

Today you can get on the internet and buy a house, a whole fucking house you'd own, in Detroit for \$500. It might have boards for windows and be missing all traces of copper, but hey, it's yours. Needless to say, these are tough times for the Motor City: nobody wants their motors. With the jobs go the people too, making the former "Detroit Rock City" one of the worst places to start up a band.

One trio of Michiganders left for New York some years back, setting up camp there and bonding over a mutual love for skateboarding, music and art. They made it their expat mission to create and spread the barbaric blend of hard rock and shambly blues they grew up with, the sound that put Detroit on the map. This trio would grow into Awesome Color and, like their Detroit forebears, they didn't fit neatly into the musical landscape surrounding them. But they garnered a strong contingent of fans that fell in love with their messy, supercharged, 70s-inspired rock and epic live performances. One of these fans was singer/guitarist Thurston Moore, who signed the group to his Ecstatic Peace! label and brought them on tour to open for his band Sonic Youth.

Awesome Color has played all around the world in the four years and two albums since signing to Ecstatic Peace!, including a handful of gigs right here in Lexington. I caught them last year at The Void in one of the best shows Lexington hosted all year. I was immediately sucked in by Awesome Color's energy and sound, an amalgamation of Zeppelin, Hendrix, and Sabbath with a flair for experimentation a la

Sonic Youth. Their set was a darkly euphoric, feedback-heavy, balls-to-the-wall blues rock acid binge party. And it's time to trip again.

Recently, I picked up Awesome Color's first album and flipped through its liner notes, trying out my armchair anthropologist hat, comparing it with the *Kick Out the Jams* liner notes. Unlike the MC5's reissued debut, Awesome Color's liner notes offer no band backstory whatsoever. What it does have: a trippy depiction of the band as psychedelic, anthropomorphic creatures; a photograph of the band; and a foldout collage constructed of tiny paper slivers surrounding a pink face.

The collage is the centerpiece of the liner notes and it's made from pieces of old Batman and Superman comics and various children's books, magazine advertisements, and toy package flotsam. Closer inspection reveals a satellite, a totem pole, a happy ghost, buildings, and chopped-off pieces of words, all wrought in, well, awesome colors. I guessed that it functions as a metaphor for consumer culture preying on youth, filtered through an enlightening—or terrifying—LSD experience. It could, in fact, double as a doppelganger for the *Kick Out the Jams* album cover, a mess of gruesome ambition pulsing with horror or ecstasy, depending on your perspective. Both images appear shattered, though, apparently, by different forces.

Since there's no story in the Awesome Color liner notes, the artwork serves to establish their character instead. But this central, abstract image leaves things decidedly open-ended: are Awesome Color a gimmicky rock outfit ripping off their Detroit

forefathers? Or are they loyal purveyors of raw, underground Detroit rock, heirs to the legacy of the MC5 throne?

Fortunately, the pleasure of experiencing Awesome Color in concert transcends this argument because, after all, it's only rock n' roll and it isn't the kind of thing anyone should over-intellectualize.

Please, take this opportunity to experience Awesome Color firsthand, to bask in the revelry of some seriously ass-kicking rock, to decide for yourself what their legend will be, long before historians and rock critics decide for you. Experience one of the most bruising, brutal takes on Detroit Rock in a generation, a sound that learned a long time ago that peace and love aren't going to cure us, a sound built on disillusion and failure, and one that doesn't offer answers so much as an alternative: to party. Experience Awesome Color and taste what it means to be alive.

Awesome Color will be playing at Al's Bar on Wednesday, March 24, with Tyvek, Babes, and CROSS. \$5, all ages. The band's third LP, Massa Hypnos, drops on April 6th and it's likely you'll hear plenty of it at the show. Recommended listening to prepare for the show: "Animal," from their debut, self-titled album.