

Street theater at CentrePointe

Something finally goes up on the block...and then the Webbs take it down

NoC News Desk

At 4:00 P.M. Friday, August 28, a group of roughly 20 Lexingtonians descended upon the empty downtown block euphemistically known as “The Future Home of CentrePointe.” They appeared in a flash, toting dozens of colorful signs and ribbons to attach to the northern section of fence strangling the block and facing Main Street. Their actions were part of a new street theater troop in Lexington that combines art, politics, community building, and just a whole mess of fun. This was their first performance, a Reclamation Project that encouraged YOUR participation by hanging pretty bits of cloth and personalized messages for the public and the Webb Companies LLC to see.

It turned out to be a tame though uplifting—and above all else fun—first performance. Most of the signs attached to the fence had positive messages: “Read a Book,” “Recycle,” “Gardening Is Patriotic,” and “Ride a Bike.” Others reflected the contempt many citizens have toward the Webb Companies’ languishing CentrePointe project and its destructive effect on the city block. These read “Tear Down This Fence,” “Build Something Taxpayers Can Use,” “Reclaim,” and “As Inhabitants of This City We Have A Right to Decide What Goes HERE.”

About twenty minutes after the street theater congregation left, four Webb Companies LLC employees arrived and removed all the signs and ribbons from the fence. This quartet embodied both a dramatic ideological and visual counterpoint to the playful

citizens who’d just left: one carried a clipboard; one was dressed like a janitor; one looked like a bellhop; and one wore an orange polo and spoke uncertainly on his cell phone as he removed the signs.

Taking orange-shirt for the leader of the group (the guy with the clipboard seemed to carry it for purely cosmetic reasons), this reporter approached and asked, “What’s going on here?”

“You tell me,” he answered.



Webb Companies LLC workers remove signs from the fences surrounding the “Future Home of CentrePointe.”

“You’re taking down some signs,” the reporter observed.

“Yeah, just taking some litter down,” he said as he removed the “Ride a Bike” sign. “Yep.”

He then told the questioning reporter, who was merely doing his job, that if “your friends” wanted the signs he and his cohorts were throwing into trash bags, they were welcome to come and reclaim them. But the guilty litterers chose to watch the scene from a safe distance, preferring to hide their

faces—presumably out of shame for the heinous crime of hanging art on public property.

Orange-shirt gave this reporter nothing substantive to report on the Webb Companies’ behalf, though the guess is they’d say that everything with CentrePointe will be resolved “in the next 60 to 90 days.” (That has been their go-to statement for the past year.)

It’s likely the demonstrators/litterers/street actors are hatching

Keep on the lookout, Michael, and heed the words of the street theater troupe: no Facebook, no Myspace, no Twitter, no pretext for pre-meditated surveillance. Sometimes good old fashioned Sixties ideas do work best.

Manhattan Short Film Festival at Kentucky Theatre

By A.G. Greebs

September 23 and 24 the Manhattan Short Film Festival returns to Lexington, giving residents the rare chance to enjoy what is arguably the most enjoyable part of any film festival – the shorts. And like any true film festival, this is an event as much as a screening.

Every year the festival sends out a call for the most compelling short films of the year. This year, ten films have been selected, culled from 436 entries from 36 countries.

Manhattan Shorts takes the concept of a traditional film-festival and stands it on its ear. Rather than tying its identity to a specific city, this festival happens all over the world. In the course of one week, the same series of ten short films will screen across five continents. Audience members then vote on which film should win highest honors, in what a previous finalist has called “the ultimate Audience Award.”

The organizers of Manhattan Short are committed to making this a truly global experience. There are screenings in all fifty states, throughout most of Europe and the Soviet Bloc and extending into the southern hemisphere to countries such as Argentina and Australia. Next year the festival is adding venues in Africa. The year after it’s moving to the ice stations of Antarctica.

Like the venues, the shorts themselves are drawn from a wide range of experience. An autobiography of an AIDS orphan in Mozambique is juxtaposed with a French animated short about a man who is forced to live 91 centimeters from himself after a collision with a meteor. An Australian film of a woman who discovers she can mold her face like plastic minutes before an all important first date contrasts with American themes of border tensions.

Long term residents of Lexington understand that one of the prices we pay for living here is a dearth of any real independent cinema. The Kentucky Theatre makes a real and valiant effort, and in them we’re better served than most towns our size. But the reality of the world we live in dictates that films like *The Hurt Locker* (which starred Guy Pierce and Ralf Fiennes, and was directed by James Cameron’s ex-wife) are considered independent, because they only got “limited release.”

Which isn’t to say anything bad about *Hurt Locker*. I’m convinced that it deserves every Academy Award it will doubtless receive. But the Manhattan Short is a different breed altogether, because short films, by their very nature, are what actual independent cinema is made of—individual, irreproducible, and unmarketable on a large scale.

If you’ve been looking for shorts in Lexington, welcome to Manhattan. If you haven’t seen a screening of shorts, viewing is mandatory.

Altering a bankrupt system

Placing citizens at the heart of healthcare reform

By Beth Connors-Manke

If you’ve been paying attention to coverage of the health care reform debate since Congress went on its August recess, you may have come to the conclusion that, taken to the streets and to town hall meetings, the issue has turned into a political Wild West. False tales of death panels and murmurs of socialism have been circulated, scaring seniors and raising the hackles of Cold War baby boomers ready to defend their way of life from an age-old enemy.

So, despite all the talk during the 2008 presidential primaries from Democrat *and* Republican candidates about the dire necessity of health care reform, despite all the anecdotes presented during the election about average citizens saddled with monstrous medical debt, despite the inauguration of the Democratic candidate, despite a Democratic Congress, health care reform may still go down the tubes.

America, the Public

I wanted to see what kind of Wild West could happen here in Lexington, so I decided to go the August 29 “America’s Hope: Healthcare for All” forum sponsored by the Central Kentucky Chapter of Kentuckians for Single Payer Health Care.

The forum started at 10 A.M., meaning it was the earliest I’d ever been to the Kentucky Theatre, where the program was being held. The decoration of the theatre suggested the Fourth

of July, with red, white, and blue ribbons and bunting. Signs proclaiming “Single Payer Because America Cares” and “Everybody In, Nobody Out” advertised the political agenda. The scene reminded me of the auxiliary, but no less potent, issues surrounding health care reform: 1) how any changes to economic structures in the U.S. generally get made over by manipulators of public opinion into a litmus test for American patriotism and 2) our endlessly contentious struggles over the balance between the collective common good and individualism.

The forum presented the platform of Kentuckians for Single Payer Health Care via the PBS Frontline documentary *Sick Around the World*, comments by Richard Dawahare, and a panel discussion. The organization describes itself as “a coalition of individuals and organizations working to pass HR 676, The United States National Health Care Act, legislation that will provide comprehensive, universal and affordable coverage under a single payer, nonprofit system.” HR 676, a bill also called “The Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act,” aims to reform the health care system by implementing a “publicly financed, privately delivered health care program that uses the already existing Medicare program by expanding and improving it to all U.S. residents, for all Americans.” The legislation, sponsored by Congressman John Conyers, also has the support of the Physicians for a National Health Program.

The crowd was critical but not crazed. The most contentious moment came when a few audience members questioned the financial viability of reforms that would cheapen cost to patients by limiting payment to doctors and hospitals. Fortunately, it wasn’t much of a Wild West that morning. Overall, the message presented at the forum was that government already plays an important role in our lives and can improve upon health care by providing a single payer system. It was a message that stressed our collective interest in health care and ultimately in our national government.

America, the Private

The “America’s Hope: Healthcare for All” forum demonstrated one type of pro-nation stance, one that valued the role of our government. Other versions of pro-nation sentiments exist, of course. Another one voiced in the current debate is support for the private sector as the core of the American way of life and its most treasured ideology.

One interesting example of this type of pro-nation rhetoric can be found in David Kirkpatrick’s August 27 article “Some Catholic Bishops Assail Health Plan” in the New York Times. The article reports on a group of Catholic bishops who are encouraging their faithful to oppose any health care reform that may, even incidentally, fund elective abortions.

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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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Building a basil economy

Some definitions and precepts

By Danny Mayer

Last year an article appearing in the *New York Times*, a shortened version of which also appeared in our *Herald Leader*, caught my attention. The headline read, “Russia makes return to the barter system,” and was followed by the rather ominous subheading “Critic says it’s a step backward.” The article noted that Russia’s local iteration of the global downturn had resulted in a minor uptick in bartering for goods—up to 3 or 4% of all sales, as reported by the Russian Economic Barometer. I say minor because in the 1990s, when Russia embraced capitalist reforms and sent its economy (and people) into a tailspin as the government transferred its wealth to well-heeled capitalists who unsurprisingly grew richer at public expense, the paper reported that “barter transactions...accounted for an astonishing 50 percent of sales for midsize enterprises and 75 percent for large ones.”

The critic of bartering was Vladimir Popov, who teaches at the New Economic School in Moscow; I am sure that he had good reasons for critiquing the barter system, which seems to have arisen as a way to cope with massive inflation, but they did not appear in the article. Instead, the paper reported that Popov called Russians “arrogant,” and claimed that the minor uptick in barter meant they were “hiding [their] head in the sand.” What the Russians needed to do, the article implied, was to cut costs and reduce inefficiency, normally euphemisms for firing workers and mechanizing production.

The article stood out to me because at the time I had just finished reading an online essay by Charles Eisenstein entitled “Economics of Fermentation.” In his much more developed article, which originally appeared in *Wise Traditions Magazine*, Eisenstein essentially makes the opposite argument of

Popov. Rather than increasing our reliance on exchanging dollars for services and everything else, Eisenstein calls for a return to a much older form of economy, what he calls an “economy of reciprocity and social exchange,” based in human contact and the establishment of social connections. For Eisenstein, what bartering does for us *socially* is something that gets left out of our money transactions.

Money is, he notes, “an anonymous form of energy.” Anyone can go into Wal Mart and buy a TV or food with it, and we need not know how it arrived there or who made it. In barter and social exchange, however, the emphasis is more intimate, on things we make for and with each other. One household makes cheese, another beer, another clothes from wool. Needs and transaction prices are determined primarily by a community rather than anonymous people from afar who cannot or do not conceive of us.

I’ll not go any further into Eisenstein’s ideas here, as I’m sure a discussion of them will play into future pieces, but needless to say that such ideas are at the center of how I would define a basil economy. The following bulleted points make a stab at an opening definition and guiding principles.

A basil economy will...

...take non-monetary transactions seriously. This is not an argument for the abolishment of money; rather, it is a realization that money as a form of economic exchange has usurped other useful modes and overcrowd our thinking. In short, a basil economy seeks to put the exchange of money in its place as one among a number of possibilities. Though your financial analyst may tell you that you can “grow” your money, such growth is entirely unnatural and mostly unearned: unlike basil, tomatoes, wool, wood, or a host of other things we need, money does not grow from the sun, the soil, or our water supply. We should figure out how to use better these living trinkets of exchange that we ourselves might produce from our own labor.

...be based first and foremost in small, community-based transactions centered on need: food, clothing, water, shelter, pleasure, health, transportation, education. This is not an argument against the flow of needed outside goods or people into the community; rather, it is a re-commitment to ourselves as able producers. This should help restrict the accumulation of too many things while at the same

time to allow for a natural diversification of such needs into localized art, shelter styles, etc.—things all communities used to have and do.

This means that a basil economy will...

...flourish to the degree that we produce things. We must begin to think of ourselves as producers once again, makers of things, rather than consumers. For the most part, what we make need not be “perfect,” only “good” and “committed.” (Perfect tends to marginalize interested parties and also to increase value for products that many cannot afford.) Currently, 70% of our GDP is based in consumption, which means that our current solutions to our economic moment lie in us purchasing more. This is a false answer and it makes us poorer socially and economically in hock for the one thing we cannot produce: money. When credit becomes our lifeblood, the answer is not to feed that beast by generating more money to buy things, but to have us scale down to need less money.

In other words, a basil economy will...

...assume a scaling down of economic activity to something approaching a subsistence economy. As Americans, we have been perched at the top of the economic world order. As we emerge out of our current economic moment, this will no longer be the case. We should recognize that and pare down our outsized and destructive expectations.

It will mean a renewed focus on...

...seasonal and cyclical growth and death rather than on the unnatural capitalist model of permanent accumulation and permanent growth. Cancers grow exponentially; economies, like our earth, should experience periods of growth and decay, of work and rest, of relative abundance and scarcity. By focusing on these sort of growths, by desiring them over continual 3, 4, 6, 8 percent returns, we will better prepare ourselves to be resilient and communally self-sufficient.

What I’m describing requires a lot more work from us, from you, from me. It will mean that we necessarily spend much less time watching television and playing on the computer. These contraptions let us off the hook, make us fat and lazy, and waste a lot of our time that could be better spent doing and making things, generating ideas and meeting people.

Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan travels to Lexington for talk, book signing

NoC News Bureau

This Saturday, September 12, anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan will be traveling through Lexington to deliver several free talks, attend public potluck meals, and sign books.

For the unfamiliar, Sheehan gained notoriety as one of the leading voices of protest against U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though it ranges much wider, Sheehan’s critique of the war is based in the intimate pain of losing a son to it.

In the spring of 2004 Sheehan’s eldest son Casey, a Specialist in the U.S. Army, died on a mission in Sadr City, Iraq. Like other families who had lost to the war a son or a daughter, or a husband or a wife, Sheehan was invited several months after Casey’s death to the White House to meet with then-president George Bush. The unsatisfactory meeting with Bush spurred Sheehan to direct her energies to ending the war and holding our elected officials accountable for their illegal actions in invading Iraq and Afghanistan. In the summer of 2005, Sheehan followed Bush on one of his many vacations to his pseudo-ranch in Crawford, Texas. (Bush is a rich,

northern-educated ivy-league city boy who knows zero about ranching; the ranch was bought as he launched his presidential candidacy to burnish his image as a rural southern good ol’ boy while running for office, which is why all he did was “clear brush” on it, and why he now lives in a gated suburban community outside Dallas.)

In a ditch nearby Bush’s play-ranch, Sheehan set up camp and asked to meet with the president. She wanted to know for what “noble cause” her son had died. Eventually more people joined her at what became called Camp Casey, and they asked the same thing. For moribund anti-war activists who six-months earlier saw Bush take the 2004 presidential election in part through brandishing his failed Iraq War, Sheehan’s actions were like a shot of fair trade coffee. Clean, high grade, caffeine. A mother of a dead Iraq vet, sleeping in a tent in a ditch, had depantsed the uber-masculine, ultra-Texas, president. He was scared shitless to meet with her, *never did* meet with her, in fact. Suddenly, the emperor president had no clothes.

The media loved it. All hell broke loose. Suddenly protesting the war became journalistically OK to cover.

Within the year, Republicans lost their majorities in both the House and Senate; they would lose the presidency a year later. Though many nameless people played a role in those events, Sheehan’s personalization of the wrongs of the war played a sizable part.

For most, the story of Cindy Sheehan stops there, which is why you should attend one of the Sheehan gatherings on tap this Saturday. More recently, Sheehan has muddied the Republican/war and Democrat/peace couplings, most notably by announcing a 2008 run for House Speaker—and Democrat—Nancy Pelosi’s seat on the basis that Pelosi and Democrats have been complicit in the war’s continuance (and growth), and more recently still by traveling to Martha’s Vineyard to protest Barack Obama—the most

recent U.S. president to embrace war over peace—while he vacationed there. And for her actions protesting these Democrat politicians, she has become marginalized within the anti-war crowd, who too often have chosen to endorse Democrats in spite of their actions in support of the U.S. war machine.

So stop by the Unitarian Universalist Church for a potluck lunch and concert by George Ella and Steve Lyon, or Morris Book Shop for a signing of her latest book, *Myth America: 10 Greatest Myths of the Robber Class and the Case for Revolution*, or head on up to Transy for her public lecture. All events are free, and all promise to be an eye-opening experience.

Look for a report on NoC’s upcoming chat with Sheehan in the next issue.

Cindy Sheehan in Lexington

Saturday, September 12

11:30: Potluck at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Clays Mill Road
12:30: Concert by George Ella and Steve Lyon, Unitarian Universalist Church
1:00: Talk by Cindy Sheehan, Unitarian Universalist Church
3:00-4:00: Book signing at Morris Book Shop, 408 Southland Drive
7:00-9:00: Lecture by Cindy Sheehan, Cowgill Auditorium (102 Cowgill Building), Transylvania University, across the street from Gratz Park

Healthcare reform (cont.)

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According to Kirkpatrick’s article, despite the push over the last several decades by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for universal health insurance, particularly for the poor, there has been a recent resistance to the health care overhaul from some bishops. The sticking point, of course, is federal funding of elective abortions—or at least that’s the first, most characteristically Catholic sticking point. The other criticisms voiced by this subset of bishops sound as much like Republican qualms as they do Catholic reservations.

A pastoral letter published online by Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless, Bishop of Sioux City, demonstrates the way theology is being made to support the status quo economic system. The letter begins with familiar Catholic pro-life stances on abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem-cell research and care for the poor and the elderly. Then, it moves on to the part that made me involuntarily mutter, “Oh my God. Oh my God.” As you read, keep in mind that the letter is structured around the application of Catholic theology to a current political issue:

“Third, in that category of prudential judgment, the Catholic Church does not teach that government should directly provide health care. Unlike a prudential concern like national defense, for which government monopolization is objectively good—it both limits violence overall and prevents the obvious abuses to which private armies are susceptible—health care should not be subject to federal monopolization. Preserving patient choice (through a flourishing private sector) is the only way to prevent a health care monopoly from denying care arbitrarily, as we learned from HMOs in the recent past. While a government monopoly would not be motivated by profit, it would be motivated by such bureaucratic standards as quotas and defined ‘best procedures,’ which are equally beyond the

influence of most citizens. The proper role of the government is to regulate the private sector, in order to foster healthy competition and to curtail abuses. Therefore any legislation that undermines the viability of the private sector is suspect. Private, religious hospitals and nursing homes, in particular, should be protected, because these are the ones most vigorously offering actual health care to the poorest of the poor.”

In essence, the bishop is asserting three things: 1) the Church can wholeheartedly support federal armies for the common good, but not public health care; 2) government involvement in health care funding would create “such bureaucratic standards as quotas and defined ‘best procedures,’” the implication being that private health insurers are innocent of these things; 3) the private sector should be protected above all else.

I could give you more from the letter, but it only gets worse when the bishop implies that if people had more babies, there would be more workers to tax to pay for health care for the poor and old. (Hmm, but would those worker-babies be the ones on the doll?)

Bishop Nickless is by no means representative of all Catholics or even all Catholic bishops. For instance, Network, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, does see health care as a right of all citizens and a social good. Network advocates for reform that includes affordability and access—even for immigrants—and “systemic cost controls for individuals, families, businesses and government,” including federal regulation of the insurance industry to limit the cost of administration. If federal regulation cannot solve the problem, then Network supports a public option or an optional, expanded Medicare system.

While Bishop Nickless’s position is not typical of all Catholics, it does seem representative of another cross-section of the public: the political Right. When he closes his letter with

“Tell them what they need to hear from us: no health care reform is better than the wrong sort of health care reform,” the bishop certainly sounds like a lot of conservatives—some of them in good faith, others not—who fear and oppose change to the health care system.

As we all know, people are wont to use sacred scriptures and theology any which way they please. Liberal Catholics are no less likely to bend theology to their political hopes for health care reform. What concerns me about the use of Catholic pro-life beliefs against health care reform is the way it leverages fetal life against an entire nation of citizens. As scholar Lauren Berlant observes, in the last several decades fetuses and children have become the iconic citizen in the U.S., the beings to which we are making our nation-state serve. I come from a big, Irish Catholic family that values children, but I want a public sphere made for and run by *adult* citizens.

Debt that Cripples Lives

It’s not so much fetuses or children whose entire lives are being crippled by medical debt as it is the adults who are caring for children, grandchildren, parents, and themselves. The PBS Frontline documentary *Sick Around the World* shown at the single payer health care forum followed reporter T.S. Reid as he traveled to Britain, Japan, Germany, Taiwan, and Switzerland to investigate their health care systems. All of these capitalist democracies shared one characteristic: medical bankruptcy is nonexistent in their countries.

As a person who fears seeing all of her meager savings swallowed up by a serious illness, a system that eliminates the prospect of extensive and ultimately unpayable medical debt is certainly attractive. It also points to the part of the private sector Bishop Nickless so neglected: working adults who need affordable health care. Without it, many more of us will join

the ranks of the poor in the U.S.

The American Journal of Medicine recently published a study on medical bankruptcy in the U.S. in 2007. The study by David Himmelstein, Deborah Thorne, Elizabeth Warren, and Steffie Woodhandler found that “[u]sing a conservative definition, 62.1% of all bankruptcies in 2007 were medical; 92% of these medical debtors had medical debts over \$5000, or 10% of pretax family income. The rest met criteria for medical bankruptcy because they had lost significant income due to illness or mortgaged a home to pay medical bills. Most medical debtors were well educated, owned homes, and had middle-class occupations. Three quarters had health insurance. Using identical definitions in 2001 and 2007, the share of bankruptcies attributable to medical problems rose by 49.6%.”

Health care reform is neither about creating a more public America nor about defending the private America so believed in by conservatives. We can’t let the reform debate devolve into the all-too-typical arguments about the roles of government and the private sector.

Instead, we need to strengthen the idea that there’s another viable pronation sentiment: a patriotism and political will grounded in the real and immediate needs of *citizens*. When health care reform had its strongest head of steam, it recognized that the health care system has begun to cripple us as private individuals and as a people. Reform is necessary because people’s lives are at stake. Now’s the time to take a stand for that type of patriotism.

For information on Kentuckians for Single Payer Health Care, visit www.kyhealthcare.org. Bill HR 676 can be found at www.thomas.loc.gov. Bishop Nickless’s letter is published on www.scdiocese.org. Information on Network can be found at networklobby.org. The American Journal of Medicine article can be found on www.amjmed.com.

On community artist John Lackey

Editors Note: If you’ve seen a Holler Poets poster or looked at the back of this paper on the comics section, you’ve no doubt come across the work of artist John Lackey. John’s given a lot of his time to contribute to these two community ventures, so we wanted to give back. What follows are two word pictures of John Lackey, drawn by Lackey collaborators Eric Sutherland (Holler Poets Series) and Danny Mayer (North of Center). Make sure to support his efforts by showing up during Gallery Hop at Gallerie Soleil, where you can check out his other artwork—the amazing stuff that pays his bills. True to form, in this issue John has offered up a painting/gallery announcement for readers to hang up as a pullout section for this paper. Enjoy.

Homegrown hero and good friend
By Eric Sutherland, poet and founder of Holler Poets Series

Homegrown hero and good friend, John Lackey is one of those characters like Ed McClanahan or Gatewood Galbraith, a free spirit with a growing reputation for his out of the box approach to expressing himself. Generous as a spring that runs year round, he has donated his time and creativity to many projects and causes, festivals, and other events, always with an inviting kindness that precedes a universe of stories.

A gypsy at heart, he danced the highways of Amerika following the Dead before finding a decent job in the world of time clocks and retirement plans. His creative passions proved too strong, though, and boldly he walked away from the safety of the guaranteed paycheck.

Now he creates art exclusively, perched above Short Street in his studio, an old wise crow, his work reflecting the landscapes he surveys. In his drawings, paintings and woodcuts we catch a glimpse of the underlying unity of the natural world, even in relation to the artificial constructions of humanity. Scenes of trees, rocks and

streams come alive, each ornate and vibrant, displaying their wholeness as something “other” subtly before the viewer’s eyes. It’s the wild spirit that calls out from each of us, though often we choose to remain deaf.

John has answered the call and devoted his talents to art since walking away from that 9 to 5, something many creative types never do. And like his creations, this is something worthy of our admiration.

A message from another galaxy
By Danny Mayer, Editor of *North of Center*

Like a hologram shot out of the guts of R2D2, John Lackey materializes from my computer screen every other Monday night, beckoning me into his world of fat cats and cubist thoughts. I never know exactly *when* on Monday night this will occur, of course, but at some point there he is, beaming through the congealed haze of deadlines, smoke, coffee, donuts, pizza, coke and gatorade, telling me not to worry, that it’s coming, things are coming, and everything will be all right.

The importance of these sentiments to an editor hopped up on

sugar and caffeine and who knows what else, one with zero editing experience, no time management skills, and two bloated articles (always “thoughtpieces”) left to finish, cannot be overstated. It is a supremely calming moment.

When Dewburger appears before me on those Monday nights, I abide. I stop what I do, I open the file, I float down the streams, I take shade beneath the trees. I stay awhile and look and listen, a profoundly human thing to do.

Green Lantern

Corner of Third and Jefferson

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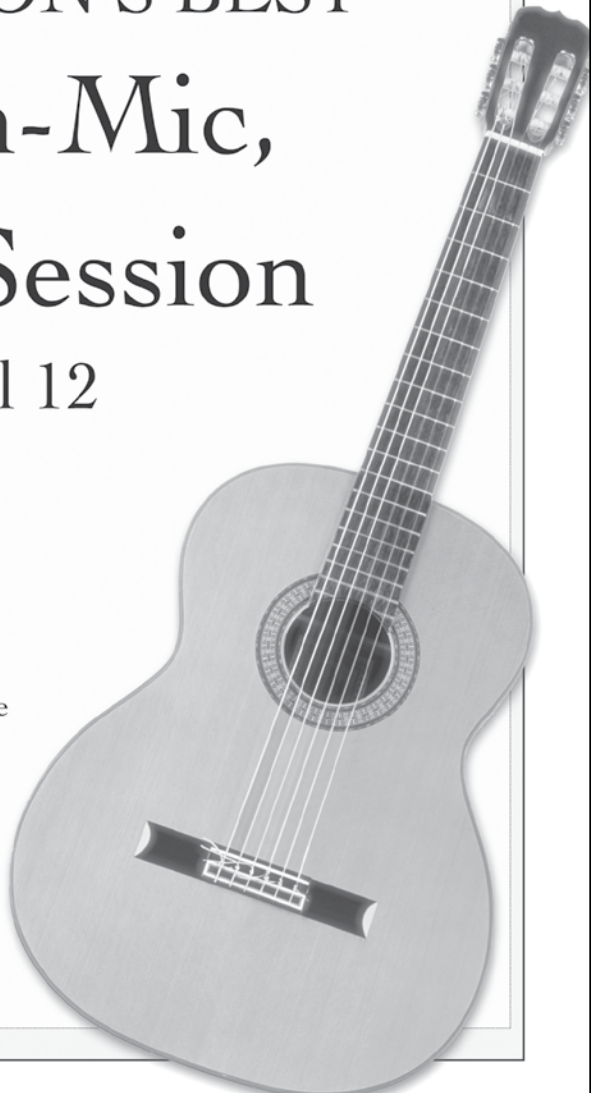
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Green Lantern is a over 21 club.

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Outsiders: Thurman and Marksbury

Filmmakers discuss their past work and latest documentary, *Nick Nolte: No Exit*

North of Center’s Colleen Glenn recently sat down with Lexington filmmakers Tom Thurman and Tom Marksbury to discuss their latest documentary, their past work, and their future projects. Thurman, a producer and writer at KET, and Marksbury, a professor of film history at UK, have made several documentaries on important actors, directors, and figures in American culture, including directors John Ford and Sam Peckinpah, actors Ben Johnson and Warren Oates, writer Hunter S. Thompson, and music producer Jerry Wexler. Their most recent film, *No Exit*, is a documentary on actor Nick Nolte. The following is a transcript of the interview.

CG: When did you two start working together?

TM: 1985. We were grad students at UK, in the English department.

TT: We’re from the same county. He’s from Shelbyville, the big, sophisticated urban hub of Shelby County, and I’m from the country, from Christiansburg.

CG: What was the first project you collaborated on together?

TT: After I moved to New Orleans, and taught at the university of New Orleans, I moved back in ‘91, and we then set about to make a documentary on Warren Oates. That was released in ‘92.

CG: Why do you make documentaries? What draws you to documentaries in particular?

TM: Well, Tom makes a lot of different kinds of documentaries. But as a film freak, for me, [making documentaries on actors and directors] became a way for me to get immediately involved in an era of film that I was really inter-

or so. I wrote my dissertation on Tom McGuane. I got to interview him because of his connection to Warren Oates. So, it all splinters out into all these areas that I’m really obsessive about. It’s given me an entree to it that’s been invaluable to me. I’ve gotten to meet a lot of my heroes. One of the biggest stars we ever had was Charlton Heston, but it meant a lot more to me to meet Tom McGuane, Nick Tosches, and David Thomson.

TT: And also, there’s the all-important notion of budget. I’ve been able to contact James Coburn or Charlton Heston or Tom Wolfe or any number of other actors and writers and say, “I don’t have any or much money at all...Will you appear in the documentary?” Whereas it’s going to be a really abbreviated conversation when I call up actors, screenwriters and directors, and say, “I want to make a feature film. Will you be in it without any money involved?”

CG: Do you think one of the reasons that people like James Coburn and Tom Wolfe are willing to talk to you for little or no pay is simply because you are asking them to talk about somebody who was significant in their life?

TM: That’s definitely what got it going with Warren. Everybody loved Warren so much they were willing to do anything to advance his cause.

TT: It’s not as if [these celebrities] are like, “Yes, we know about your long and vast and respected body of work. When do we show up and where?”

TM: “I’ve always wanted to be in a Tom Thurman movie...My call has finally come.”



Nick Nolte, Tom Thurman, and Tom Marksbury on the set of *No Exit*.

ested in and talk about it in a critical way that’s not academic. And hopefully in a creative way.

CG: What kind of people interest you? I notice a continuity in the kind of subjects you choose. They’re often gritty, outlaw-type figures.

TT: Well, with our first one, there was the Kentucky connection. Warren Oates was born in the state, so there was the local anchor. He seemed to be popping up in films of directors that we admired—not only Sam Peckinpah, but also Monte Hellman. And he seemed to be this glue particularly for a period of filmmaking, particularly in the ‘70s that we were really interested in.

TT: There is some advantage to doing documentaries on people that the general public doesn’t already know everything about. And while people may know *The Wild Bunch*, they may know not a whole lot about Sam Peckinpah. Or they might know *The Last Picture Show*, but they might not know a whole lot about Ben Johnson. There is a thread—many threads—that link our projects...

TM: Not only in film culture but in all of American culture from 1965-75

TT: He liked working with us for whatever reason—we’ll never know. And he called me, and said, Tom, we should do something together. After recording the voiceover narration [on the Hunter S. Thompson film], we ended up spending more time together. That began the concoction of this idea. We went out to Malibu more than once and would spend these marathon six or seven hour sessions with him at his house essentially with him telling stories and us getting to know him. But

even edgier than anything I’d ever dare to write.

TT: And then it becomes a matter of structuring it. What do you start off with? It doesn’t start off with Nick asking himself where he was born. It starts off with Nick asking himself, “Do you believe in God?” That was a way to kick start the thing.

TM: And we also introduced the idea of unreliability, the idea that he’s



Harry Dean Stanton has appeared in four Thurman/Marksbury documentaries. Here he embraces fellow Kentuckian Hunter S. Thompson.

more importantly, he felt comfortable with us to the extent that he would trust us. If we hadn’t spent all that pre-production time with him at his home, there’s no way this would have happened.

TM: It was completely the opposite of searching for Warren Oates that we made years and years after he died. Nolte was just so immersed in the whole project and so flexible and so open.

CG: In *No Exit*, Nolte both asks and answers the questions. He interviews himself. How did you come up with that idea?

TT: Initially, we were going to have a journalist or writer or film critic grilling Nolte. That was the first impulse that we had. And a collaborator of sorts of ours, David Thomson....I was exchanging emails with him one day, and embedded in one of his emails was the thought, wouldn’t it be interesting if Nick asked himself some questions? And of course, there’s a long way between a casual idea in an email and actually trying to figure out how to implement that throughout an entire film. But the idea did come from David and it spurred Tom and I to try to think, what if we did try to pull that off? And then it became a matter of convincing or running it by Nick to see if he would be game.

CG: What was Nolte’s reaction? Was he game?

an unreliable narrator. Nick Nolte is pretty believable as an unreliable narrator.

CG: How much time did you give Nolte to digest questions ahead of time?

TM: He didn’t see the questions ahead of time, but he had all the time in the world to work with it while we were shooting. But then he would forget the question that he had asked himself earlier, and it would be fresh.

TT: He plugged it on “The Tonight Show.” And Jay Leno said, “Did you know the questions you were going to ask yourself?” [Leno] was being a smart aleck. And Nick said sincerely, “No, I didn’t know what I was going to ask myself.”

TM: We shot the questions on one day, and then the next morning he did the answers. He ended up putting a lot of time into this.

TT: I think he pulled it off by opening himself up. He was honest, even when he was talking about lying. He approached it all with a really unique blend of seriousness, but more importantly, with humor. And without that, we would have been dead in the water.

TM: I think his template for it was that he really hates those Actors Studio interviews, how fawning they are.

CG: Where can people see *No Exit*? Will it be shown at theatres?

TT: It will not be in theatres. It will not be coming to a theatre near you. We didn’t start this project with the plan to screen it at theatres. And we were successful. Sundance Select has picked it up. It will be screened on TV after it goes to Video on Demand and the Blockbuster chains.

Challenges, Advantages, and What’s Ahead

CG: What are the biggest challenges you face as filmmakers? Are they mainly financial?

TT: That’s one of the biggest problems, budgetary issues. Sources of funding vary widely for each project. Harry Crews said, “Ideas are a writer’s cheapest commodity. It’s the 200,000 words you need to flesh it out.” [But] you have to be careful talking about money.

continued on page 9

Thurman and Marksbury Filmography:

Warren Oates: Across the Border (1993)
Ben Johnson: Third Cowboy on the Right (1996)
Immaculate Funk (2000)
John Ford Goes to War (2002)
Sam Peckinpah’s West: Legacy of a Hollywood Renegade (2004)
Buy the Ticket, Take the Ride: Hunter S. Thompson on Film (2006)
Nick Nolte: No Exit (2008)

subject that is not only alive but is willing to almost improvise his part of it. It’s just qualitatively a different kind of documentary than all the others were.

TT: The Nick Nolte project emanated out of the Hunter S. Thompson project. We wanted someone to evoke Thompson in the narration. Nolte agreed to be the voiceover narrator for Hunter S. Thompson, and that was our opening.

TM: I think he was open to it from the word “go.” He was excited about it. He likes creating and taking risks with what he’s doing. So then it became really interesting to consider, how do you write the questions? The questions become dialogue for Nick. My favorite question [in the documentary] is, “The Hulk, why?” They were all formulated to push him in a way, and then he started coming up with stuff that was



PICTURED ABOVE: "ETCH" 2009

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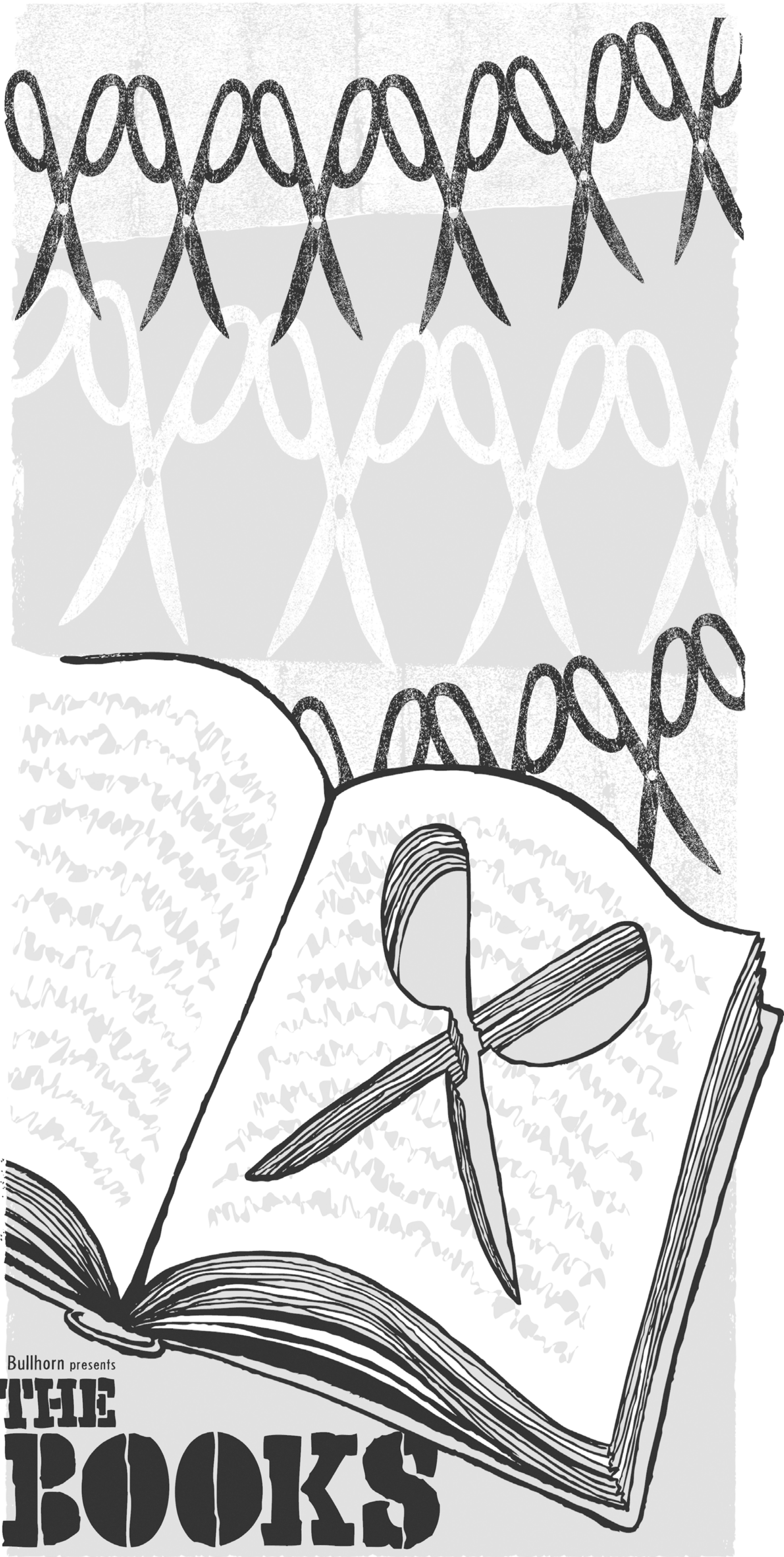
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Bullhorn presents

THE BOOKS

Monday, September 21st at The Miller House

8pm \$15 proceeds to benefit the miller house foundation www.thefoundationforadvancedarchitecture.org

co-sponsored by WRFL 88.1 FM, BlueLine & You Ain't No Picasso

poster design by cricket press

Culture

Musical duo The Books open in Kentucky

Monday, September 21
The Books
The Miller House Museum, 7 P.M.
\$15.

Describing the sound of The Books can be somewhat precarious and borderline ineffective. People have called it “folktronica,” sound collage, experimental and aleoteric. (OK, so I had to look that last one up—basically it means that some element of the composition is left up to chance). But none of these terms *really* embody the New England duo—and besides, describing the sound of The Books, who will be making their first Kentucky appearance on Monday, September 21, at Lexington’s Miller House Museum, is to paint an incomplete picture of what exactly it is that they do. Audiophiles know them for their signature minimalist compositions, which consist of sparse and lovely melodies spliced with found sounds and conversations from various videotapes. But the experience of listening to The Books’ recordings lacks an integral element of the band’s work.

“Our shows are halfway between a film and a concert,” wrote Nick Zammuto and Paul de Jong (the human elements of The Books) in a recent e-mail. “We make videos to accompany all of our live tracks, and they are synched up tightly, as if the video is another member of the band.”

For the most part, the videos The Books synch into their recordings and performances are one-of-a-kind VHS tapes that the band picked up at various thrift stores on their tours of North America. The tapes, many of which were unmarked when they bought them, include outdated instructional videos, home movies, self-help tapes and videos advertising everything from cosmetics to strange religious ideas.

“We recently made a song out of an expletive-filled conversation between a prepubescent brother and sister that we found on a home-recorded audio tape at the Salvation Army,” the band reported. “The video that goes with it was made from the best moments from all of the 20 or so summercamp videos in our collection.”

The band, which has an upcoming album in the works after a three-year recording hiatus, has been known to utilize everything from traditional stringed instruments (guitar, cello, banjo) to a clavinet and a metal filing cabinet with a subwoofer installed. Blended with the found sounds and video, the result is as much a glimpse into the underbelly of modern American culture as it is a neo-folk avatar of the digital age.

This show presents an extraordinary chance to enjoy the setting of the Miller House Museum, which was originally built as a postmodern home for the late Bob Miller and his family.



Nick Zammuto and Paul de Jong, the human elements of *The Books*.

With its labyrinthine catwalks and interior terraces, glass panels, exposed structure and overall avant garde feng shui, the venue will undoubtedly provide a unique, picturesque and interactive backdrop for the strange and elegant sound/video experience of The Books’ performance.

Proceeds from the show, presented by Bullhorn (Lexington’s most with-it marketing & “etcetera” firm) will benefit The Foundation for Advanced Architecture. The foundation was created in part to preserve the Miller House, which has been touted as one of the last remaining marvels of modern architecture in a number of international journals. The show is also sponsored by WRFL, You Ain’t No Picasso and Ky Blueline.

Music and more information about The Books is available at the-booksmusic.com; for exact directions to The Miller House, which is visible from Old Chilesburg Road, visit www.modernacommunity.com. —Riot Rose

West Coast weirdo-rockers Caroliner Rainbow come to Al’s Bar Sept. 15

Tuesday, September 15
Caroliner Rainbow Bluembiegh
Treason of the Abyss w/ Kraken
Fury and Eyes & Arms of Smoke
Al’s Bar, 601 N. Limestone
\$5. All ages.

As if by the governance of some celestial order forever beyond our understanding, perhaps by its own dark sentence, another moon rises. A moon of spectra less visible than psychic. It floods the land, ridge and prairie, knob and hollow, with its dark torrents. And upon this occasion is reported the countenance of a strange legion upon the lanes, not exactly conjurers or fools, nor peddlers nor penitents, nor exactly anything seen in this country before, but who nonetheless plumb some deep, ancient humor of memory. Perhaps once, in a sleepwalk, we counted ourselves among their rolls. By some leg-erdemain they have harnessed the rancid light of this devil orb and painted their frames with its lurid, hellish hues, refracting it like a mocking beacon

across the land, revealing ghastly interiors of all that is sacred and mundane, all the while playing the hymnody of the Singing Bull of the 1800s. They are the Caroliner Rainbow, this time the Bluembiegh Treason of the Abyss.

For over a quarter century, Caroliner have toiled tirelessly to make less and less sense of our national heritage. With banjos, church organs, wagon wheels, cow skulls, and miles of cardboard painted with their trademark Day-Glo arabesques of abstracted viscera and American arcana, these motley heathens come to terrorize us with our own mythology. They incorporate mountain songs, church hymns, Civil War tunes, early jazz, and carnival music with liberal doses of avant noise and something almost resembling punk rock (well, at least, that turn-of-the-decade iconoclastic Bay Area punk of Flipper, Minimal Man, Nervous Gender, The Screamers, Noh Mercy, et al), yet despite these fetid descriptors arrive at something quite unidentifiable, like some witching-hour cadenza

beamed across a forbidden wavelength off a severely haunted wax cylinder.

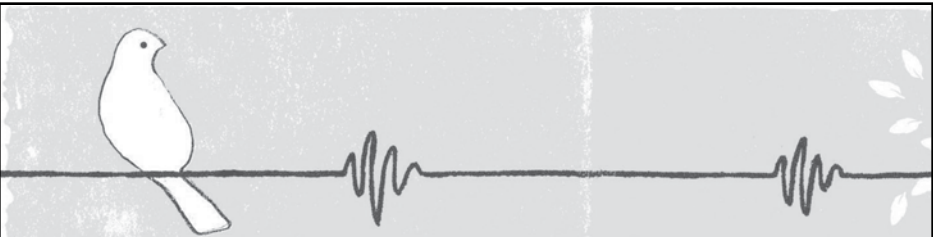
Caroliner belong to the same West Coast weirdo tradition as Smegma, Sun City Girls, Thinking Fellers Union



Caroliner Rainbow.

Local 282, Anton LaVey, Amarillo Records, and The Residents (with whose guarded ranks there have been alleged ties, not to rumor monger...) harkening to a time when the underground was under the fucking *ground*: anonymity was a virtue, quarklike trends were spontaneously created and annihilated, obscurity was the aim. Caroliner are iconic in this regard. They have changed their name with every record (always prefixed by “Caroliner Rainbow,” i.e. Caroliner Rainbow Stewed Angel Skins, Caroliner Rainbow Scrambled Egg Taken For a Wife) since 1983, packaging their vinyl-only missives in pizza boxes and diaper disposal bags decorated with elaborate and strange sketches, spray-paint, handmade stickers, and nearly-indecipherable lyric sheets inviting you to sing along with “Fiddle With a Heart Stuck in It” and “20’ Tall Stacked Skeleton Growling Flat Broke.” Live, they hide behind garish *papier-mâché* masks and paint-splattered prairie dresses like lurching golems from the result is your being dragged, plow-like, through the nightmare of the American collective unconscious, only to discover what a fertile place it is, what strange fruit it bears.

It’s refreshing, in an age where underground music has become so tidily stratified and commoditized, to see these stalwarts vigorously pursue such a willfully obscure aesthetic as if it were the only thing they knew how to do. In the liner notes to their 1986 LP *I’m Armed With Quarts of Blood*, they lament “people are still stuck in this century instead of the 1800s.” The pioneer spirit endures, yet reversed. And it’s a rare fortune indeed that they should travel the highways of our land to demonstrate their weird craft at so low a premium; you’d be a fool not to present yourself. Included in the admission fee are the demented cowboy songs of Kraken Fury, as well as the music of Eyes & Arms of Smoke, which I must recuse myself from discussing. —Trevor Tremaine



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Be on the lookout for snakes

By Nick Kidd

A year and a half after the FreeKY Fest, Lexington finally gets another epic concert festival when WRFL presents Boomslang this October. Boomslang, named after an African snake, will be a three-day, multi-venue music and art festival with a stellar lineup (heavy on psychedelic and experimental bands) poised to draw thousands for a whole weekend of sonic feasting.

Some of the bands on the Boomslang lineup include: legendary Brazilian Tropicalia/ pop/ experimental rockers Os Mutantes; German prog & Kraut-rock godfathers Faust; the tremolo-drenched desert-scuzz

psych-rock of Austin’s The Black Angels; the ethereal art-pop of Atlas Sound (AKA Bradford Cox, the lead singer of Deerhunter); Philly psych-folk/space rockers Bardo Pond; and a trio of Louisville acts integral to the development of mid-’90s post-rock, including The Shipping News, Papa M (AKA Dave Pajo, who’s played in Slint, Tortoise, and Zwan), and Rachel Grimes (from The Rachels).

You can learn about these bands and many others playing the Boomslang Festival (October 9 through 11) at boomslangfest.com. North of Center will devote extensive coverage of the festival in future issues, but we’re eager to get the word out now so you can plan accordingly!



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ROCK rolls over Black and Bluegrass

By Michael Dean Benton

“All sports should involve laughing.”

Michael Marchman said this to me as we stood cheering for the home team Rollergirls of Central Kentucky (ROCK: Lexington, KY) in their match against Black and Bluegrass (Florence, KY). Michael, Stephanie Simon, and I were attending our first Roller Derby match. The sentiment Michael expressed was not one of us laughing at the athletes; instead all three of us were bound up in the collective merriment and good times of the sport of roller derby.

I grew up in Southern California during the 1970s when women’s Roller Derby was a regular weekend broadcast on the local TV stations. I remember as a kid cheering on the tough Bay City Bombers and their take-no-prisoners attitude. They were fierce, sexy, and strong, and they provided for me a counter to the 1970s popular stereotype of weak femininity. It was one of the most popular sports in the state, but suddenly, it just disappeared.

Recently, in Lexington, I started noticing posters hanging downtown advertising a local roller derby team. Then, one day, while eating at Alfalfa’s restaurant, the waitress handed me a flyer promoting the schedule of upcoming roller derby events. Soon after I came across the documentary *Hell on Wheels* (Bob Ray, 2007) and saw a trailer for Drew Barrymore’s feature film directorial debut *Whip It* (2009) starring Ellen Page.

Sensing the cultural momentum of the renewed sport I decided to check out a bout. I headed over to Champs on a Sunday night. The doors opened at 7pm and already devoted fans were gathering to get choice seats for the bout. I was struck by the range of the crowd. There were college age couples, parents with their children, and senior citizens. There were girls looking as if they were attending a ball, rockers in search of a jam, straight-laced business men drinking beer, and the requisite devotees with signs/face paint.

In order to learn about the game beforehand, I grabbed a beer and ambled over to talk to Jack King, the ROCK’s official photographer, and Pacos Chaos, a referee. Jack and Paco



Sissy Bug, #89, attempts to slow down the Black and Blugrass jammer.

The jammers are the point scorers for their respective teams. There is one per team and they are identified by the star on their helmets. They are lined up further behind the pack and start a few seconds later after the pack. Now, here is the key of the competition. The two jammers, in combination with their pack members, are competing to be the first to break away in front of the pack. Once a jammer has successfully pulled in front of the pack they become “lead jammer” for the rest of the jam. The lead jammer can call off the 2 minute jam at any point by waving their hands in the hip area. The teams score points when their jammer laps the pack. This, of course, is a pivotal moment for audience excitement as the fast paced skating is combined with defensive blocking, collaborative whips and daring leaps. The position of jammer, because of the intensive skating in which the jammer must lap other players in a jam, often switches between team members each jam.

The athleticism of the skaters is very impressive. The sport is easily one of the more intense I have seen. The players risk injuries due to the rough nature of the sport. Players are constantly being knocked about and falling down. Near the end of the match there was a scary moment when Sugar Shock (ROCK) took the lead jammer position and as the teams jostled for position a brutal pile up left Irish

Champs eating area. A bonus for fans who attend the bout, afterward there is an open rink where they can skate for free (there is a rental price for skates and/or socks). Fans can also meet their favorite players after the game.

Each team brings refs to the match. Referees in Roller Derby skate just as much as the players because they have to pace the jammers and the pack; however,

team worked together this night to effectively stymie the efforts of the Black and Bluegrass Rollergirls, especially the fast paced Beka Rekanize and Honey Bunny, to come back from a first half disadvantage of 62-34.

After the match, while discussing Roller Derby with the ROCK’s Speedy Jenkins, she mentioned that she has been with the team for two years now and that the sport’s “collective teamwork is a positive representation of women athleticism.” I agree, I once again marveled at the fact that despite the aggressive nature of the sport, there had been no fistfights, loud cursing, or anyone thrown out of the game (there were plenty of penalties and bruises).

Speedy continued to tell me how Ragdoll Ruby founded the team and how they are always looking for women who would like to train with them. She stated that you do not have to be an experienced skater. The average training is 3 months before they allow you to step on a rink in a match and you have to go through a qualification exercise to prove that you have the necessary skills to compete.

The Rollergirls of Central Kentucky are currently working toward being accepted into the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association (WFTDA).



Ragdoll Ruby, #42, takes the lead jammer position ahead of Beka Rekanize, #859, while referee Patriarchy looks on.

they generally avoid the body blows. Interesting for anyone considering the traditional gender roles in sports, the referees, except for one, were male.

The standout moments for me in this match were the teamwork of ROCK’s Ellie Slay and Rainbow Smite. It was thrilling to see them work through the pack, the one working as the blocker would slingshot the other in the position of jammer past the opposing team. They did this many times that night and they seemed to be working at times as one. Rebel Red also had multiple key blocks, including a body blow on Honey Bunny, taking her out just when she was beginning to pile up points as the lead jammer for Black and Bluegrass. Ragdoll Ruby, as lead jammer, and Black Eyed Pea, as blocker, worked effectively together to score points in multiple jams during the second period. The entire ROCK

Once again the communal nature of the sport was driven home when I learned about how applicants for membership go through an apprenticeship period in which they are matched with an established WFTDA member team who acts as the apprentice team’s mentor through the process of being accepted into the league.

One of the requirements for ROCK’s acceptance is that they build an established fan base. I would encourage you to take the time to check out this new local sport’s team and help them to establish themselves in the WFTDA. You can find more information about the team at <http://www.rockandrollergirls.com>.

NoC thanks ROCK’s photographer Jack King, who generously supplied us with photographs. Check the ROCK website for more of his great pictures.

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Post-game shenanigans at Al’s

helped me to grasp the finer points of the game. The team members line up on the track in two stages for the beginning of a jam. First in line is the “pack” headed by the “pivots,” commonly described as the “brains” of the operation (think middle linebacker or quarterback). The pivots (one for each team) are identified by the stripe on their helmets and their job is to block while controlling the speed of the pack.

Lined up behind the pivots in the pack are the “blockers.” Each team has three blockers who have the dual roles of defending against the opponent’s “jammer” and working together to assist their team’s “jammer.”

Iris (Black and Bluegrass) face down, writhing in pain. Both teams immediately stopped skating and knelt while she was attended to by the refs and coaches. She was soon up and the game continued.

This is an aspect of the bout that left the deepest impression upon me; the professionalism of the skaters on both teams. The bout was full of intense moments and fierce blocking. Although there were spills galore and bruised bodies, the players never slipped into mindless aggressiveness. They remained disciplined teams working together. After the game, most of the players dined together in the

Lexington Bike Polo falls at Worlds

NoC Sports Desk

Though official word has yet to make it to the Sports Desk, word on the street is that no Lexington team placed at this year’s Bike Polo World Championships, held September 5 and 6 in Philadelphia.

Tripple Lexxx, second place finishers here at the Bluegrass State Games, were once again forced to shuffle their lineup, as Brad Flowers was sidelined with what some say is a chronic case of athlete’s foot. As of press time, there was no word from the Flowers camp to verify the reports.

ROCK vs. Black and Bluegrass

Sunday, August 30 – Champs Skate Center

Final Score: 98-90 (ROCK)

Top Scorer ROCK:

Ellie Slay

Top Scorer Black-n-Bluegrass:

Shelter Skelter

Most Penalties ROCK:

Ryder Die (4 majors, 5 minors)

Most Penalties Black-n-Bluegrass:

Irish Iris (1 major, 12 minors)


MVP ROCK:

Ellie Slay

MVP Black-n-Bluegrass:

Red Emma

Next Game: Sept 20 (Home) vs. Gem City Rollergirls



Roller Derby

Opinion

An open letter to progressives

Ten points to ponder from someone who wants your help

Dear Progressives,

I've been thinking a lot lately about our relationship. And I think it's time we had a talk and set some things straight.

1. I'm not mad at you. Really, I'm not. I'm just disappointed.
2. As far as I understand things, we have two major differences. First, you think that we can provide for social justice and equality through gradual reforms. Second, you think that these reforms can be accomplished through the mainstream political process—parties, voting, legislation, etc. I, on the other hand, believe that a more fundamental change is required of our society and that the only way to achieve it is through direct confrontation with ruling powers. As far as I can discern, positive social change has only ever occurred because people demanded it and refused to accept anything else. In many respects, our vision of social justice and equality is the same, but I feel like you're unwilling to take the steps to make it happen.
3. Recently, you made what I regard as a devil's bargain. Based on your fantasy that racial equality could be achieved through symbolic shifts and your justified need to find real hope in a seemingly hopeless world, you agreed to support a centrist Democrat for the presidency. Not only this, you won against all odds. I honestly believe that it was your grassroots organizing that made the difference in the election. But as time has gone on and as the War in Afghanistan has escalated and as Guantanamo Bay has been allowed to hold prisoners without trial and as universal healthcare has been abandoned as a real possibility and as troops have remained in Iraq and as a coup by corporate elites in Honduras has yet to be officially described as a "coup" and as they have "bailed out" the rich in the US and as they have foreclosed on the poor in the US and as

- more and more people have lost their jobs... I feel like you've been silent. You certainly haven't mobilized against Obama's massive policy failures in the way that you mobilized against Bush. I hope you can understand why I would think of this as a deal with the devil.
4. But, as I said, I'm not mad at you. I'm just disappointed.
 5. What disappoints me is that you are not out on the streets with that amazing grassroots effort that won



- this presidency. Shit, as far as I can tell, you aren't even on the phones. You certainly aren't going door-to-door in every state. What could have possibly led you to believe that your job was done when Obama took office? Nope, that was only the beginning.
6. Here's the deal: If you still believe that change is really possible through the mainstream political process, you need to get up off your ass and make that change happen. Period. Take this administration and every other level of government in this nation over and start making the changes that we both know are necessary. Hit the streets. Knock over doors. Run for office. Do whatever it takes. Obama seems like a nice enough guy (for someone who would order drone executions in the knowledge that innocent people would

- die or escalate a war), but he's no savior. He's just the president. If you're not there fighting every step of the way, then corporate elites will win. They are winning.
7. If, however, you've decided that the mainstream political process will not work, this is not time for immature cynicism. Seriously, the world can't afford it. You're bright, talented, educated people with a lot to offer. Do not squander that on some desk job! Do not

doing it and doing it well. We need you and we'll be happy to have you. The first step is simple. You start with your friends and family and say: "Friends, healthcare reform will not solve our problems. The problem is white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy. It is a system of oppression, abuse, and domination. That people would die when we have the means to save them, that they would suffer when we have the means to alleviate their pain, that they would starve in this land of abundance, that they would go without work or pay when so many people need so many things, that they would be imprisoned because they are black, that they would be denied because they're from another country, that they would be beaten because they are women, that we would all break our backs and distort our minds for a few dollars... all this must end. We, together, can end it." If you are foolhardy enough to say something like this, then you're on the right track. Plan actions, make shit happen. Start small, but think BIG.

9. Again, I'm not mad at you. I'm just disappointed.
10. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said that an injustice to one is an injustice to all. To sit quietly by in the face of injustice is to be a coward. Our time calls for courage and boldness; there's little room for cowardice. Personally, I don't think that the deep injustice of our society can be fixed by reform through the mainstream political process. But, maybe you're right. Maybe it can. I am certain, however, that the only way that change will happen is if people like you make yourself a part of it. It's only going to happen if you stop dropping out and start plugging in. It's only going to happen if you forego many of the comforts of consumerism and "middle class" life. You have to roll up your sleeves and make the change.

Yours with respect,
brandon.

Marksbury and Thurman (cont.)

continued from page 4

Robert Rodriguez made a \$7,000 narrative feature film [*El Mariachi*], and it was really good, and then the studio gave him five million dollars, and he basically re-made the film [*Desperado*], and it's not very good. So it's certainly not all about money. Ideas are a film-makers' cheapest commodity....it's the 200,000 *dollars* you need to flesh it out.

TM: We've gotten a lot out of a little. That's the flip side. You can write a novel, and all you're putting in is your life and time. With film, money is just so much a part of the raw material.

TT: If you want to make a film, and you're meeting with people about ideas, the room will fill up. But then when you talk about money, the room empties, real fast.

CG: What is it like going back and forth, immersing yourself in LA/Hollywood culture for a few days and then returning to Kentucky? Or, let me ask that another way. How do you think being from Kentucky influences your work and makes it different than work produced by LA filmmakers?

TM: You know, you start calling yourself an outsider, and you almost sound like a politician, but not being from LA has definitely added a lot.

CG: Is it because your perspective is different? Or do you think it's that the people with whom you're working, the actors and such, might respond to you differently?

TT: I think one thing is that actors and actresses and directors and producers get interview requests from people who are so clearly anchored in

LA and New York that when someone comes to them from Kentucky, there's a kind of perverse curiosity factor that might work to our advantage. And then, particularly with the more recent films, people actually have an opportunity to look up what we've done in the past, and they see something on Warren Oates, Ben Johnson, Sam Peckinpah and John Ford, and maybe, just maybe, they think there's a chance that we know what we're talking about. That we have some kind of taste, anyway.

CG: How do you handle unflattering remarks about the subjects that come up in interviews? Because I know that you have a lot of affection for your subjects.

TM: We love these people, or we wouldn't have started to begin with. But on the one hand, you don't want to make a hagiography, a sort of "no warts" love letter. That doesn't serve anybody, particularly the subject. On the other hand, you don't want a warts and all, celebrity-drag out. You try to be fair. A lot of times there's certainly two sides to the story. But I think that's a judgment call moment by moment.

CG: So, what's the next project?

TT: Promoting this project [*No Exit*] is the new project. It's so difficult after you finish a project to think about anything other than promoting what you've done. You want people to see it. That's a question for 2010.

CG: What is your dream project?

TT: One that's paid for.

TM: As valuable as all the movie work has been to me, if I had dream projects

or wishes, it would be that we could do more with music. And particularly more with writers, like Faulkner. I think an epic big documentary on William Faulkner would be my fantasy. There's just not the financing [for projects like that]. Film lends itself so much better to financing.

CG: Why do you think this partnership has worked so well?

TT: That begs the question: has it worked that well? We've spent long periods of time apart and intense periods of time together working. And we both enjoy similar authors, films, and genres. We've been friends for 25 years, and we know how to avoid each other's weaknesses and fill in each other's gaps.

TM: And this is a way to do something creative socially. I always wanted to write, and Tom's always had a talent for visual art. But this is something where we can come together and work together—most art forms don't allow for that.

TT: I think one thing we're really proud of is the body of work we've assembled. You get so caught up in single projects and finishing them and getting them shown sometimes you forget to step back and think about what you've accumulated over the years. We've got 10,000 minutes worth of an oral history archive that stretches from Warren Oates in 1992 to Nick Nolte in 2008. All of it is our own material that we've generated.

TM: You might only get to use a minute or two of somebody's interview [in a documentary], but a lot of them are just really wonderful, and they go on for 90 minutes.

TT: For archival purposes, the interviews are all transcribed, so there's a wonderful written document. And then you have the master tapes.

[A favorite moment was when]Tom and I were showing the Warren Oates documentary to one of our favorite directors, Monte Hellman. And you could tell that he was moved by it.

Ben Johnson died before we were able to finish the documentary on him. But a film festival in Italy wanted to screen a 30-minute cut and invited Ben and Dobe, Harry Carey Jr. and myself to the film festival in Italy. And I sat behind Ben. I didn't want to sit next to him; I sat behind him. And after the thing screened, he stood up and looked for me, picked up his cowboy hat and tipped it to me. And then later at a party, he put his arm around me. He was like 6'4", so he dwarfed me, and he said, "You know, Tom, it's a lot better than I thought it would be." Great compliment. Things like that do make it worthwhile.

We've got Harry Dean Stanton refusing to answer our questions over an 18-year period on 4 different occasions. He's talking, he's singing, he's putting drinks on our tab at the bar....He's remembering lyrics to Kris Kristofferson songs that Kris has forgotten. Actors like Luke Wilson will sneak into the interview site and watch Harry Dean and Kris play songs together. [Wilson] came up to Tom and I and said, "Nothing this cool ever happens in Hollywood, man." That was the only thing he said, and he disappeared.

TM: That was a good moment for Shelby County.



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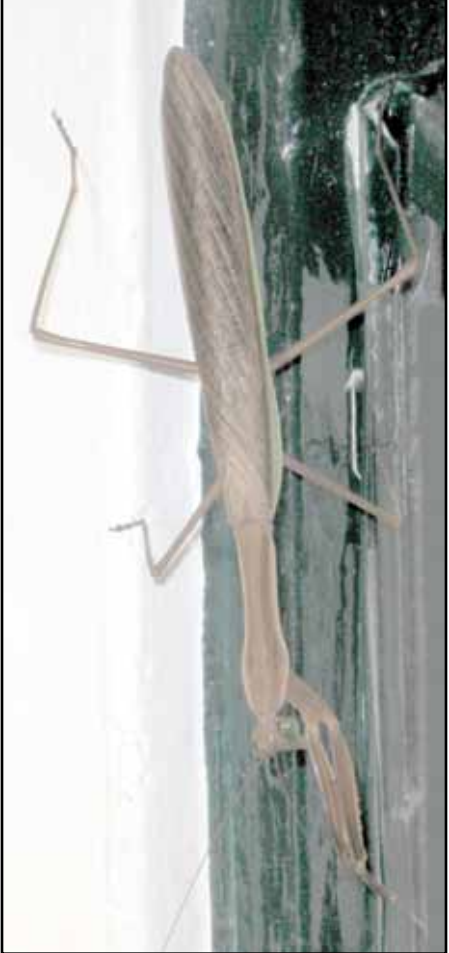
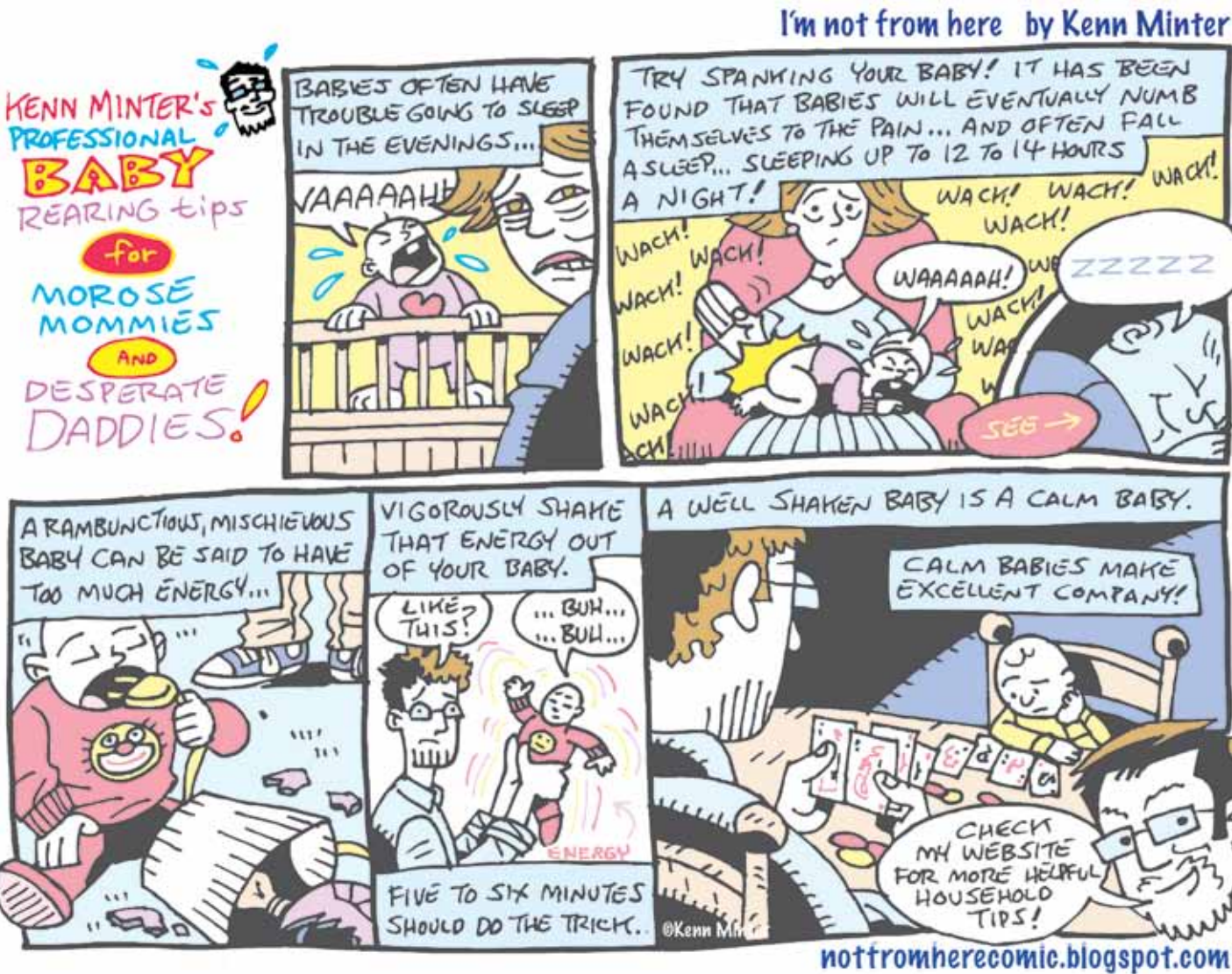
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