

Life at Phoenix Park

Homelessness in our communities

By Jeff Gross

Editor's note: This article is part two of Jeff's series based on his work with and for people experiencing homelessness in Lexington. In his last piece, he introduced the Catholic Action Center and the Street Voice Council.

On a recent Wednesday afternoon, I was sitting in Phoenix Park, near the downtown public library at the corner of Limestone and Main. I counted 27 people in the park, most of whom were sitting on benches and carrying on private conversations. Two police officers on bicycles talked to each other and watched the park. All-in-all, the park was a clean and quiet environment. Despite its tranquil atmosphere this particular Wednesday, Phoenix Park is an often-contested space in the heart of Lexington.

The homeless and marginally homed, the vast majority of people who inhabit the park on an average workday, see it as a space for community, a safe place where they can get together to make it through the day.

For some downtown business owners, though, these park users are seen as a threat to business.

In the public discussion over the character and purpose of the park, the problem has been that the voices of the homeless and marginally homed have been the most muted in the struggle over the park's future. Yet, these are the people the most personally affected by decisions made about Phoenix Park.

The DLC's engagement

The Downtown Lexington Corporation (DLC), in its 22nd year of existence, is funded in small part (less than 13 percent) by LFUCG, but most of its funding comes from business membership and profits from beer sales at various events and festivals. The DLC sponsors a wide range of community events from downtown clean-ups to Thursday Night Live and the upcoming Lexington Fest-of-Ales.



Hillary Brown

Phoenix Park with daytime residents.

Beyond these special events, the DLC is focused on day-to-day life in downtown Lexington. The organization has the stated goals of promoting "diversity, communication and leadership in assisting property owners, businesses, employees and residents in making Downtown Lexington a location for retail businesses, restaurants, offices, arts and cultural activities as well as a wonderful place to live and work."

I talked to Jessica Gies, Vice President of the DLC and the self-described watchdog of Phoenix Park, about her vision for the park. After walking outside her office building in 2009 and seeing three piles of human feces, Gies decided that the quality of life in the park had to change. Since then, Gies has made it her mission to bring about changes in Phoenix Park, trying to find a middle way between the desires of business owners and the needs of the people who frequent the park.

When I asked her if she considered herself an advocate of those experiencing homelessness, Gies responded without hesitation that she was "absolutely" concerned about the welfare of those experiencing homelessness in Lexington. She has been at the

forefront of committee meetings to work towards improving Phoenix Park.

In November 2009, the DLC conducted a survey of downtown businesses within a few blocks of Phoenix Park to initiate the process of finding "the best possible solution to the needs of downtown businesses, their patrons and those who make up either the homeless or marginally housed population in downtown Lexington." Thirty businesses responded to the survey, and 29 of those felt that they were "affected by the homeless or transient population." Nine of those 30 reported that they were "very affected."

The most common complaints in the DLC survey were panhandling, littering, and shoplifting. Businesses suggested that this population scared off customers. One responder explained, "Potential customers, especially women, face panhandling, cussing and general harassment when coming from 'park side.' Tip Jar has been stolen three times and once someone opened the cash register and tried to steal the cash." It seems as though most crimes in the area are automatically attributed to the homeless population. For

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They're all sons of bitches

Fancy Farm with the anti-fascists

By Danny Mayer
Fancy Farm, KY

It takes a worried man
To sing a worried song.
—Woody Guthrie

In June, I began attending meetings for a new group, the United Front Kentucky (UFK), formed to mobilize against what we see as a growing fascist movement in this state. Our goal is both to educate people about fascism's specific history and to agitate against folks who deploy the term incorrectly as a form of fear-mongering.

As a political movement, fascism has a distinct history of support by populist movements that scapegoat outsiders as a way to make sense of national economic crises. Strong populist rhetoric has historically provided the groundcover for more overt oppressive forms of fascism.

In fascist Germany during the global depression of the 1930s, for example, Adolph Hitler mobilized support by scapegoating outsider groups like the gypsies (nationless immigrant outsiders) and Jews

(religious outsiders)—both groups exterminated by the millions using the hard, cold tools of industrial capitalism—as dangers to the nation's future prosperity.

Working alongside his fear-mongering of perceived outside threats, Hitler also energized and harnessed the German folk through nationalist appeals to a mythic and superior Aryan German race that needed to be reclaimed by any means necessary.

An umbrella group that includes a diversity of left/progressive political loyalties, UFK wishes to engage and counter-act, through education and agitation, such fascist rhetoric. While we recognize that the Tea Party is where much fascist rhetoric emanates, our resistance to fascism is non-partisan.

Most of us (myself included) would not define ourselves as Obama

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CRAG CROWDER

Rand Paul and Jack Conway supporters turn out at Fancy Farm.

Small batch coffee

Superlative Coffee Roasters open on Mechanic Street

By Evan Barker

Size matters at Superlative Coffee Roasters. The tiny shop on Mechanic Street is the latest addition to Lexington's growing coffee scene, but occupies a slightly different niche than the city's corporate and independent mainstays.

Part of the interest at Superlative is what you don't see: an espresso machine flanked by grinders, syrup bottles, blenders, and giant chalkboard menu. A single coffee carafe sits next to a pint of half-and-half. The real attraction is behind the front counter: a shiny red and silver contraption lovingly called "The Little Red Roaster." Superlative Coffee is not a coffee bar; it's an artisan roaster which turns green coffee into the aromatic brew Lexington loves.

Owners Jenny Super and Patrick Meyer speak eloquently on the virtues of being little. With at least five college degrees between the pair, opening an artisan coffee roasting business is the latest chapter of two long and decorated careers. Jenny has worked for corporate giants Sara Lee, Hershey's and PetSmart. Patrick is a combination lawyer, MBA and financial planner. Despite years of experience running multimillion dollar businesses, Super and Meyer are focusing on building a coffee brand eight pounds at a time.

Eight pounds, incidentally, is the peak capacity of the Little Red Roaster. The machine itself is chrome on fire-engine red. The roaster is computer-controlled for the sake of consistency and capable of drawing a virtually limitless variety of traits from raw beans.

When asked how they learned about coffee, Jenny shrugs. "I'm a consumer," she says. "I've always loved coffee." They've been members of various coffee clubs for years, always sampling something different.

She and Patrick have a small-batch roaster at home with which they constantly experiment. When a roast piques their interest, they try to replicate it at scale at the shop, which is how several of Superlative's varieties came to be. Jenny hints that she's working on something special for the shop's official grand opening in September.

For now, it's just the two of them: Patrick running samples to prospective customers and working the Farmers' Market stand, and Jenny working the roaster and buying the beans. The objective, however, is what Jenny terms "smart growth."

She speaks with the eagerness of a chronic go-getter, someone who has seen several major business projects from molehill to mountain.

"This building will always be the headquarters of Superlative Coffee," she says.

"If we expand, it'll be into a warehouse," she laughs. She gestures across the street at a nondescript brick building. "That'd be a good place. If we expand, I'd like to go right there so I could walk across the street."

Her philosophy of business boils down to "fairness." When she expands, she'll "want to pay employees a fair wage. It's about establishing a relationship with your farmer and with your customer. What can people expect for eight dollars an hour?"

The fact that competitor Third Street Stuff is just around the corner doesn't faze her at all.

"They have a relationship with

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

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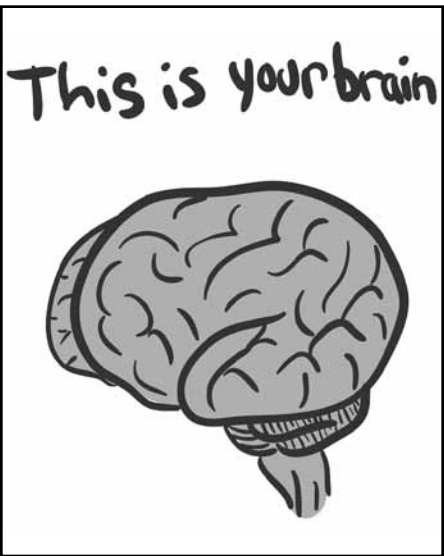
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Scrambled eggs Out on the streets, that’s where we’ll meet

By Captain Comannokers
NoC Transportation Czar

Back to school means back to some cycling basics. Specifically, do NOT ride in the wrong direction in a bike lane. On a recent ride down Euclid Avenue, the proof was on the pavement.

A cyclist had just been to Kroger and was riding west on Euclid back toward campus – unfortunately, in the wrong bike lane. This happens a lot on Euclid. Folks pick up a couple of things from Kroger and instead of waiting and making a left hand turn



to get in the proper bike lane, they unwisely choose the improper bike lane.

This particular cyclist was hit by a car pulling out of 5/3 Bank near Park Avenue – crash, boom, bang – and the freshly purchased eggs were splattered on the Euclid Avenue asphalt.

Officer Howard Florence, who patrols Lexington streets on bike, chimed in on the situation. “I’ve seen that happen too many times. Most people ride the wrong way because it’s a bit quicker or easier for them at that

moment. Maybe their street is a block away or traffic was heavy and they were too impatient to cross. That’s just human nature sometimes.”

If this is your human nature, do not follow it: it is trying to get you seriously injured. Time to trade in your human nature for a dose of common sense.

“Pointing out how things can go really bad seems to get the idea across,” Florence said. “I don’t just tell someone they’re in the wrong lane. I’ll take a moment and explain that when you go the wrong way, cars aren’t looking for you.”

Euclid has landmines everywhere – side streets, businesses, heavy pedestrian traffic. It’s a tough enough street to ride even with bike lanes. So, keep the Evil Knievel stunts at the skate park or on the cul-de-sac in your comfy neighborhood.

In addition, when students return Euclid is one of the epicenters of the city. Can traffic get heavy on it? Yep. Is it easy to get impatient when travelling on it? Yep. But those are not reasons to improvise your navigation of it. If you do improvise, your eggs (or brains) could wind up on the street, too.

Luckily, this young man seemed to have only scrapes, but another situation was unfolding. The driver was obviously shaken from just hitting someone. He didn’t want to call the police and offered to help pay for the damage to the bike and the lost groceries.

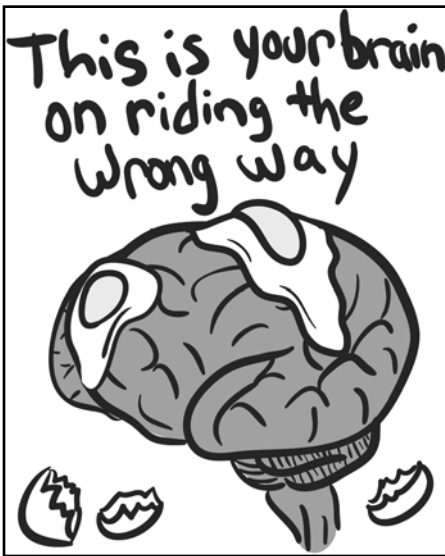
First, it was not the driver’s fault. He owed this cyclist nothing.

Second, Officer Florence explains why it is important to have the police on the scene after an accident.

“If there is more than \$1,000 damage or if someone is injured, a police report is required by law. If you decide to make a claim on someone’s

insurance, they almost always require a report so you would have to call us anyway.”

“Often in these situations a person may not realize that they are injured until a day or two later. The hospital is required by law to contact the police. It’s difficult to take a report that far after the incident. Too many people just exchange information and, at first, say they will work it out between themselves only to have one of the parties not follow through. Someone then wants a report, but any possible evidence or witnesses are gone,” Florence said.



To borrow from chicken riddle lore – Why did the cyclists cross the road? To get to the other side (where they will ride in the correct bike lane, save their lives and get their eggs home safe and sound).

Surf over to noclexington.com or send mail to the Captain at ShareTheRoadLex@gmail.com to continue the discussion. Ask questions. Voice frustrations as a pedestrian, cyclist or driver. Let’s work though our differences in sharing the road. Captain Comannokers over and out.

East End Community Market

Saturdays 8 a.m. – 12 noon

3rd Street and Midland

Fancy Farm (cont.)

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supporters or Democrats. We recognize that Obama has continued, and in some cases deepened, a number of Bush era policies that are consistent with the march to fascism: creating a privatized military force of “contractors,” increasing overseas wars intended to facilitate corporate development of other countries’ oil fields, mandating the privatization of human needs like access to healthcare, and using the power and wealth of the state both to enrich bankrupt financial institutions (TARP) and to cover over corruptly inept private sector functioning (BP). We are decidedly not, as has been suggested on some post-Fancy Farm websites, connected in any way to the Democrat party.

Why Fancy Farm?

In keeping with our mission to educate and agitate, we decided our first public action should take place at the Fancy Farm picnic. None of us had been to the gathering, but we knew that the audience we hoped to engage—journalists, Tea Partiers and politically interested groups—would be found in abundance there.

We knew also that the throwback stump-politicking and all-around carnival atmosphere would lend us a measure of safety. This was an important feature; left-based protestors like ourselves have historically borne the brunt of state crackdowns, as anti-war gatherings and G-20 protests are routinely turned into militarized zones

by the government. (Right wing agitation, it should be noted—bringing guns to political rallies and preaching on bathing the tree of liberty in blood—gets a relatively free pass from the government.)

Plus, the whole damn thing—the quick trip West to Fancy Farm, the picnic, the hootin’ and the hollerin’—just sounded like it’d be a kinghell of a time.

Prep work for Fancy Farm

Beginning a couple months before Fancy Farm, we began to developed a handout to provide some historical background to fascism as a political ideology. Garnishing it with quotations from both historical and current political figures, we titled the pamphlet “Flirting with fascism.” It was our main educational gambit, a document people could read quickly at Fancy Farm or, fishing it from their trousers hours later, more slowly at home.

I loved the pamphlet’s cover art: in the foreground, a young white couple, arms clasped and smiling atop a globe, are juxtaposed against a fleet of B-52 bombers in the process of firebombing a city in the background. Below the couple a banner reads, “To protect our way of living.” The couple face forward, seemingly unaware of what to protect really means; from the perspective of the collage, the two appear to lead, stridently, the B-52 fire-raid formation receding into the distance.

In addition to the pamphlet, we also planned, sketched and painted a Fascist Scoreboard onto a slightly re-cut

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and home-grommeted 6’X 9’ painter’s tarp that I had sitting in my basement. We planned for the scoreboard to tally both the type and amount of fascist statements made by the politicians during their stump speeches at Fancy Farm. As it turns out, we’ve now got an easily transportable game for any public event.

Initially modeled on old-timey baseball scoreboards and attached to two eight foot tall bamboo poles, the scoreboard listed five traits of fascism in big letters: NATIONALISM, FEAR-MONGERING, SCAPEGOATING,



“To protect our way of living.”

PRO-CORPORATE, and ANTI-DEMOCRATIC. (Among others, MILITARISM and CURRENCY MANIPULATION lost out on space issues.) Alongside these descriptors, we left room to keep score, choosing blue electric tape for our marking system.

We hoped the scoreboard would be an interactive event when, with our banner scoreboard facing the crowd, we imagined keeping track in real time whenever any speakers engaged in, say, fear-mongering, or made knee-jerk big business statements that put the needs of various industries and specific corporations over that of the people of the state. The scoreboard was perfect for Fancy Farm: big, highly visible, fun, explicitly political and, in what we found to be a departure from Fancy Farm protocol, viciously nonpartisan.

Much pork at Fancy Farm

We arrived a little before noon, nine strong and in two vehicles, to the Fancy Farm grounds, 100 degree heat soon turning us, like the surrounding corn fields, a dusty light brown. Our vegan and vegetarian comrades had eaten thirty minutes earlier, at a Taco John’s on the way over, after being informed that there might not

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Phoenix Park (cont.)

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example, one responder complains about the “homeless panhandling our customers inside and outside of restaurant (on our patio). We were burglarized in March, early morning.” The survey reveals a variety of opinions about the homeless, though the vast majority of the business owners’ testimonials suggest that they believe the presence of the homeless negatively impacts downtown businesses.

If there is a middle road between the wants of business owners and the needs of those experiencing homelessness, then Lexington will need to find a creative and progressive solution.

Right now, some business owners seem to have simplistic and perhaps even draconian responses to the following question: “What actions toward a solution would you suggest

“Clean” rather than “cleanse”

In its efforts to improve the quality of downtown life for all stakeholders, the DLC must find a way to please its primary constituency (downtown businesses) while still meeting the needs of other stakeholders, including citizens of downtown and those persons who are staying in or around Phoenix Park. Gies emphasizes that her goal is to “clean” the park rather than to “cleanse” it. When asked about this distinction, she explained that a “cleansed” Phoenix Park would involve forcing all the homeless out, inevitably displacing them to another public location. An effort to cleanse Phoenix Park of the homeless would not help people experiencing homelessness improve their lives or find the services available to them.

A “clean” park, on the other hand, would ensure that those feeding the homeless are following health depart-

Central to the DLC’s ideas for improving downtown life is the formation of a day center. The drop-in center would include a small paid staff and other volunteers and offer a centralized location for those experiencing homelessness to have public restroom access during the day. Furthermore, the center would be a hub of information about social services. This plan has the attention of the mayor’s office and seems to be moving forward.

However, the fact remains that until those experiencing homelessness in Lexington have access to facilities 24 hours a day, there will still be feces in outdoor public locations. Safer food distribution practices will be good, but those persons inhabiting Phoenix Park are not concerned about food. When you ask people what they need, access to restrooms and safe places to sleep are at the top of their lists. One person

many of the services that those experiencing homelessness need are scattered around town. “You have to be a thoroughbred to make it in this town,” says Bond, speaking of the demands placed on the homeless in Lexington. In Phoenix Park, people have quick access to restrooms at the library during the day, the Internet and other information, and an environment where many individuals feel safe.

To coincide with the DLC’s research, the Central Kentucky Housing and Homeless Initiative (CKHHI) also conducted a survey in October 2009. Targeted at all people sitting in the park—those experiencing homelessness and those who may just be there at that moment—for a 90-minute period, this survey explored patrons’ backgrounds and reasons for visiting the park. When asked what they liked about the park, a vast majority said that they liked either the park’s environment (31 percent) or the people and friends they met there (46 percent). Another nine percent suggested that they like the library.

Of the CKHHI survey’s 95 responders, 35 percent said that they were staying in the park overnight. This group would be the most impacted by any decision to close the park for a few hours each night for cleaning. Such a decision would represent an effort to make sure that people could not spend the night in Phoenix Park, and it does not account for where those sleeping in the park would end up. For someone like Bond, being pushed out of the park would put him in a position where he would feel less safe.

The CKHHI survey also showed that those residing in the park wanted to be considered stakeholders in the park’s future. When asked what changes would improve the quality of the park, participants in the CKHHI survey favored improved safety and stopping the use of alcohol and drugs in the park. Partly in response to the ongoing discussions about the future of Phoenix Park, the Street Voice Council (SVC) was formed in the fall of 2009. The SVC has offered to help patrol the park. SVC leadership committee member Ellis Boatley has proposed a plan to have members of the homeless community serve as ambassadors in the park. These ambassadors would remind people of the rules and push them to do little things like clean up trash in the park.

As I finish this article, I am staying in a house on Maxwell Street with several persons who were formerly homeless; they are preparing to perform a play about their experiences of homelessness in Lexington. At 3:30 A.M., I sit with Boatley outside while he smokes. In the bushes, just outside, three men are sleeping.

I could ask these men about their stories, and chances are I’d learn something about addiction or underemployment, but I will let them sleep. However, eventually their voices must be heard fully by the community at large: downtown Lexington’s future is also their future.



Phoenix Park.

the community take to address the current situation in the downtown area?” A number of business owners seem to want more police activity, as seen in responses ranging from “Very regular police patrol and presence in the Phoenix Park area. 24/hours/day” to “Officers stationed at Phoenix Park and Courthouse at night. ‘No Hanging Out’ policy. Arrest ALL panhandlers.”

Other business owners did propose alternatives to more policing of the park area. One suggested that we need “better healthcare to deal with mental illnesses” and another several favored approaches to help those experiencing homelessness find the housing, jobs, skills training, education, or social services that they need.

Coffee (cont.)

continued from page 1

their supplier and I respect that.” The implication is that there’s room enough in Lexington for all of them. Superlative’s niche is to be able to roast smaller batches more frequently. A coffee club order that shipped last Monday was roasted the same day; Jenny makes no compromises about the freshness of the product.

Much of Superlative’s business comes from the Farmers’ Market. There, they set up grinders and brewers and make coffee on the spot to sample. They admit to being skeptical about the Market at first, but since their first weekend two months ago, business there has “exceeded expectations.” The market has put them in touch with a core group of downtown customers who come there specifically for quality products.

Not that running this kind of business is easy. The ability of the roaster to run only up to eight pounds per batch means more frequent roasting and more time spent in the shop

ment protocol. Gies says that one of her first goals is to ensure that all groups providing food in the park are permitted. She makes it clear that she does not want to criminalize feeding in the park, but she wants all groups to be on the same page. She worries about people who pull up and start distributing sandwiches from the trunks of their cars. If the food isn’t being prepared or stored properly, Gies explains, then it could spread sickness to recipients.

A clean Phoenix Park may still be a central hub for the homeless and food distribution during the day, but a clean park may be closed for a few hours each night so that cleaning crews can remove refuse.

instead of out selling coffee. Their beans come from distributors in Chicago, Minneapolis, New York and elsewhere – middlemen who visit the coffee growing regions of the world to personally verify the quality of the product and the conditions of the growers. This kind of business costs more and requires more hands-on work on a tighter schedule than simply selling pre-roasted coffee according to corporate recipes.

“We’re not corporate. I’ve done corporate,” says Jenny in response to the observation that she’s chosen a tough row to hoe.

Superlative Coffee intends to become a permanent part of the social and economic fabric of downtown Lexington. Jenny and Patrick say they’ll always be down on Mechanic Street, and will still walk their equipment to the Farmers’ Market. As a business owner, “you want to look back and stand by your decisions,” Patrick says.

For them, it’s about quality and fairness, at any size.

in Phoenix Park explained to me that it takes away her human dignity when she can’t use a restroom at night.

Community and safety at Phoenix Park

What Phoenix Park offers people experiencing homelessness is a shared sense of community and access to food, clothes, and blankets. Those who stay downtown also appreciate the security it offers, something lost when people are pushed to temporary or semi-permanent camps around the city.

Benjamin Bond, who has lived in Phoenix Park during the summer for around five years, says that the easiest way for the city to clear the homeless out of the center of downtown would be to bring food somewhere else. Where the food is, he says, is where the homeless will congregate. Regardless of where food is distributed, people will still congregate out of a need for community and mutual protection.

Bond says that he has chosen to sleep in Phoenix Park because he’d “rather be out there in the open than in some cubby hole where someone will find [him] and knock his brains out” for \$4 or \$5.

Phoenix Park gives the homeless and the marginally homed a centralized location to meet in a city where



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For education and volunteer opportunities, visit
www.seedleaf.org

Music you need to hear: 8/26 - 9/4

Thursday, August 26
Kill the Noise: Loaded Nuns, The
Downtown County Band, Lee G, & the
Charlie Parker Sextet
Al's Bar, 9 P.M. All ages. Free.

Something like an educational seminar on musical diversity, this free series pairs up often exclusive niches in the Lexington scene. Not everyone is going to end up friends, but everyone will respect one another. Anyway, that is the hope.



Loaded Nuns.

This week will see the Loaded Nuns, The Downtown County Band, Lee G and The Charlie Parker Sextet take the wood-paneled stage. Shit talking punks, Owenton Americana, the self-proclaimed Ladykilla himself and some 50s flavored bebop. Something to please the whole family. —*Megan Neff*

Friday, August 27
Appetite for Destruction w/ The
Greatest of These
Buster's, 9 P.M. 18+. \$10 adv., \$12 at door

There's a certain sort of person who gets pretty fired up about the prospect of going to a Guns N' Roses tribute band show, even if you saw Adler's Appetite just two weeks ago, and if you're such a person, you know what this thing is all about and I don't have to write a word of explanation. Go forth ye and rocketh.

If you're not that sort of person, then I won't write a thing to persuade you of the error of your ways except to say that you ought to go anyway to check out local four-piece The Greatest of These, who will probably lose to the

headliners in number of choruses passionately belted by audience members but may leave the more lasting impression: you can't deny "Rocket Queen," but the openers have something to say with a loud guitar too. —*Keith Halladay*

Saturday, August 28
Lexington Music Academy: Battle of the Bands
Natasha's Bistro, 6 P.M. \$5, of which four dollars goes to God's Pantry.

This is one of those things where you're sitting around reading this paper, you read this paragraph, and you think to yourself, "you know, there's no way that that's not gonna be a good time." So you call up some friends and pitch them the idea, like you were pitching a movie script, because you want to make sure they understand what you just understood, which is that there's no way this isn't going to be a good time, and even though you think that they didn't reach your level of enlightenment, they all agree to join you because you really just wore them down with your true-believer enthusiasm, and you go and have a *great* time and you remind your friends that it was your idea and even get a little obnoxious about it.

So here's the deal: six teenage bands vie to be named the very best. Friend, these will be some motivated youngsters, and they will do what it takes to earn your approval. And they can really play. And 80% of your money goes to God's Pantry. Make that call. —*KH*

Naked Karate Girls
The Roxy, 9 P.M. \$10.

For years now I've told anyone who would listen that the best live act I ever saw was the Supersonic Soul Pimps in 1996 at Berbat's Pan in Portland, Oregon. That night they wore their silver spandex bodysuits and played hard funk and rock so uptempo and infectious you were exhilarated trying to keep your dancing from being left behind. Since I live in Kentucky now

and can't go see SSP, I do the smart thing and go see Cincinnati's NKG instead. —*KH*

Monday, August 30
Greg Ginn
Cosmic Charlie's, 9 P.M.

One evening in 1988, I crammed myself and the thick fiberglass cast on my ankle into Bernie's run-down VW Rabbit and rode 40 minutes to the next town north to watch my high-school basketball teammates play our arch rivals, or whoever it was. On the way we smoked a joint and listened to Black Flag's Damaged. At some point we noticed that the cassette case was cracked and splintering, and we giggled like schoolgirls that an album called Damaged was actually damaged. Misspent youth. Meanwhile, Greg Ginn kept making kickass post-punk records, and he's Greg freaking Ginn, so get off yer ass. —*Buck Edwards*

Tuesday, August 31
Psychic Steel w/ Fielded and Tiny Fights
Al's Bar, 9 P.M. All ages. Free.

If you happened upon Ga'an at WRFL's Boomslang Festival last year, you have encountered the combined efforts of these two solo projects. As separate entities, however, the respective Chicago-based drummer and vocalist branch into strikingly distinct realms.

Psychic Steel is Seth Sher. He loops synthesizer, vocals and drums into a hypnotic swirl. His strength as a drummer undercuts his sound, which centralizes on building up intricate rhythms into progressive industrial soundscapes.

Lindsay Powell of Fielded blends vocal-based ambience with hyperactive pop. If the forces of Kate Bush and Grouper's Liz Harris combined in a musical supernova, this would rise from the ashes. Local experimental shape shifters Tiny Fights round out the bill.

The show is free and happens to fall on two-for-one drink night, so go

ahead and plan on watching the new episode of "Secret Life" online later. —*MN*

Wednesday, September 1
Soul Funkin' Dangerous
Cosmic Charlie's, 9 P.M.

Guitarist DeBraun Thomas attacks his instrument with startling ferocity and yet manages a soulful articulation and deep-funk feel. Since there aren't many players around with quite that combination, and since that combination is pretty much what Hendrix and Eddie Hazel had, and since Thomas plays his lines over a swinging, sinewy rhythm section, well, you pretty well ought to go see Soul Funkin' Dangerous. —*KH*

Saturday, September 4
Chris Knight
Buster's, 9 P.M. 18+. \$20.

Sometimes a whole mess of personal bullshit goes wrong at once, and it's raining, and the world's pretty much going to hell, and on top of it all you're pretty sure you have an infestation of bedbugs. So you tie it on one night to remind yourself that the booze doesn't work anymore, then cut firewood all afternoon to bleed off the hangover and all those regrets, and finally make a few phone class to the folks you pissed off last night. Lucky you have Chris Knight to help you though. —*BE*



Chris Knight.

Brown Sugar under the radar no more

Brown Sugar: A Devine Intervention and Disco Damie Production, much like Lexington's hip hop scene, has kept its wings tucked neatly beneath the radar for most of its existence.

The event is hosted by Cass Dwyer and Devine Carama at Al's Bar every month. It serves as both a venue for bringing local hip hop artists above ground and a way to draw outsiders into the circle.

"There wasn't really a monthly event for all of us to get together and

celebrate hip hop as well as let new artists introduce themselves to the Kentucky audience," said Dwyer.

The latest installment of Brown Sugar took place last Saturday, August 21, and featured the local-based lineup of Devine Carama, Kae State, Scoupe and Kuntry Noiz, plus guest DJ WarrenPeace. The next is only a month away, so be on the lookout.

For more information about the show and other Disco Damie and Devine Carama events, go to to www.devinecarama.com.

Reflection: Student Center Spectacular

By Megan Neff

It is Sunday night, August 22. I finished my radio show this afternoon and ate the ritual #6 with barbecue chips afterward. And after four years at UK, I felt out of place again as I walked to Jimmy Johns and back to WRFL alongside so many golden tans and carefree faces.

It made me think about my first semester. About how I would rather be back there and not another recent college graduate who was unprepared for not being able to find a job in their field of study. Or just a job that pays above minimum wage and has health benefits.

But on a positive note, it made me think about my introduction to the local music scene that semester. About my first noise show and how John Wiese's performance made me think of a painfully slow airplane crash.

The now defunct Icehouse and feeling the slight of the higher cover charge for outsiders. And my very first

show in Lexington, which strangely enough was at UK's Student Center Spectacular four years ago.

It seems it is that time of the season again. This year, I am not a freshman intimidated by the hipness of the WRFL crowd. I've done this a hundred times before and know most of the people here. Some of the magic is lost, but I can sense it in the crowd around me.

Real Numbers begin as the sun starts going down with a brand of straight forward punk-edged rock. Vicious Guns continues with the trend but adds a dash of black leather, lace and some slightly drunken theatrics. And Matt Duncan closes out the show with his unfailingly perfect blend of soul and buoyant pop.

So much has faded away in four years, but so much has grown. And whether apparent to my disillusioned eyes or not, it will continue to grow around me. Be it in a bug-infested lawn on UK's campus or in another seedy basement. And that in itself is some kind of magic.

On driving great distances for a band

Or, why don't gloomy, semi-obscure European prog band play our town?

By Keith Halladay

The more unfamiliar a music, the more inaccessible to many listeners the music tends to be. And so it took about five years from first listen for me to finally say aloud, with confidence, "I really like Porcupine Tree." So much so that when a friend called with tickets I again agreed to travel a great distance to see the moody British prog-rock band play the War Memorial in Nashville this past Sunday night, a co-headline show with moody American prog-rock band Coheed & Cambria.

It took me that long to learn to like them because Porcupine Tree is unfamiliar music. When I first heard them I was put off by the dense, melancholic harmonies, odd-meter rhythms, difficult arrangements, and aura of English despair, but gradually—very gradually, and the despair thing still bugs me—I began to understand and appreciate what they were doing, and to be wowed by how well they were doing it. The strange became familiar.


It's how we move from nursery rhymes to adolescent pop to the sundry personal discoveries of high-school and beyond: as we hear and grow to an appreciation of different musics, we are then able to appreciate still more musics. Behind every door is another door.

And so my prog-loving friend Chris and I planned to drive the three-or-so hours to the band's Nashville show Sunday afternoon. We'd previously driven to Cincinnati to see them, and several months ago all the way (and back that same night) to join a packed house at the Cleveland Hard Rock Café, a journey made even longer by the late-arriving band equipment, described by the promoter to the anxious crowd as being "somewhere on the way from Los Angeles."

"Why," we sleepily wondered, still driving back from the Cleveland show at 5:30 in the morning, "why can't they just play in Lexington?"

Well, it's because they probably wouldn't draw, at least not enough to

continued on page 8



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Film & Media

Review: *The Expendables*

Aging action stars: “Will work for food”

By Stan Heaton

Sly Stallone is back as the grizzled hero of *The Expendables*, a testosterone-charged action flick about a group of mercenaries hired to eliminate a brutal dictator on some arbitrary South American island. During the job, Stallone encounters the dictator’s daughter, Sandra (Giselle Itie), a beautiful woman trapped by the misfortune of her country and the power of her

always sleazy Eric Roberts, is really an ex-CIA operative, mirroring the corrupt officials in *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) and so many other ‘80s action movies. And most important, *The Expendables* is much more about how something happens, rather than what is happening. In other words, the focus of the film is not that the Expendables are guns for hire who take the law into their own hands. Instead, the focus is

any time Mickey Rourke is on the screen, we know we’re about to get some exposition. But for the most part, the movie is all about the action. The entire plot revolves around who is going to get beaten up next. For many movie-goers eager to see the old guard of Hollywood action films back in the saddle, the explosions and gunfire will be enough. However, for the rest of us who need more than automatic shotguns and obnoxiously loud motorcycles, *The Expendables* has another, more intelligent layer.

I’ve been following the production of this movie for many months, and when I heard that the cast of a movie called *The Expendables* included Sylvester Stallone, Jason Statham, Jet Li, Dolph Lundgren, Eric Roberts, Randy Couture, Steve Austin, Mickey Rourke, Terry Crews, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Bruce Willis, I immediately thought of the trend in Hollywood to use action stars to make gobs of cash before tossing them aside to usher in the next wave of tough guys.

It seems that this film is so much about movie stars that using the names of the characters is pointless. In fact, many of the character names, such as Toll Road (Randy Couture) and Hale Caesar (Terry Crews), seem like bad jokes meant to point out the farce of giving big action stars character names at all. I find myself writing *Sylvester Stallone’s character* or *Jason Statham’s character*, underscoring this subplot about macho men getting work in films.

No one embodies the struggle of the action star in *The Expendables* better than Dolph Lundgren. In the film, Lundgren’s character gets kicked out of the Expendables because of some

questionable morals. Out of work and down on his luck, Dolph joins the bad guys and squares off against his former team.

Jet Li’s character is also motivated by work. In one of the movie’s funnier moments, he tells Stallone that he deserves more money because he is smaller and has to work harder. These characters, then, don’t just kick ass for thrills: they do it to eat.

In the ‘80s, action movies often put characters in revisions of the Vietnam War so that they could “win” it and help ease the pains of a culture that had just lost a war. *The Expendables* takes the same approach to our current economic recession. Have you been laid off from your job? Have you lost your home? Are you struggling to feed your family? Well come watch how REAL men solve those problems!

That’s not to say that this film is brilliant for its dissection of American culture. Much like those ‘80s movies *The Expendables* emulates, the solution to America’s problems is escapist and kind of stupid. I doubt highly that bigger muscles, louder guns, or quicker punches will help families rebound from such a depressed economy.

But, to be fair, that’s not quite the purpose of the film. It’s abundantly clear from the funny dialogue, the all-star cast, and the elaborate stunts that *The Expendables* is meant to be fun, which might be just what unemployed, out of work, or struggling people need to reduce the stress born from realizing that they too are expendable.

The Expendables is currently playing in those places where action movies are shown in Lexington.



COURTESY LIONSGATE

Stallone and Statham, actors for hire.

evil father. In an effort to save this woman and his own soul, Stallone assembles his crew of bad-asses and attempts to liberate the island. In many ways, *The Expendables* resembles action movies of the ‘80s. The stars (and there are a lot of them) have almost as many muscles as the cast of *Predator* (1987). The most sinister villain in the film, played by the

whether or not Jason Statham’s knives or Stallone’s guns killed more bad guys. Each scene is simply a vehicle that allows Stallone, who directed the film, to show us the next exploding body part, dangerous car chase, or old man wrestling match. There are a small number of scenes in which we actually get a pinch of character development;

Review: *The Switch*

By Colleen Glenn

Spoiler alert!: read at your own risk.

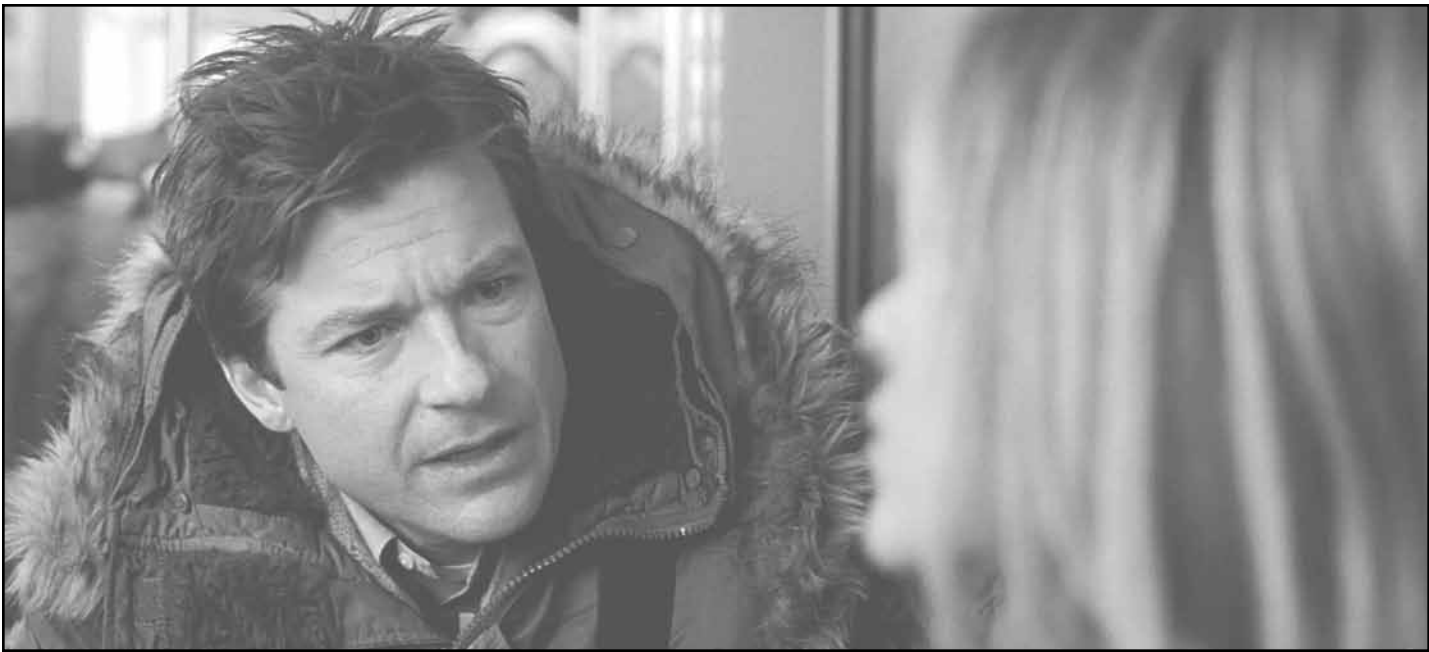
Romantic comedies often get a bad wrap. They’re described as “chick flicks,” their loyal viewers considered to be occupying the space just below Jane Austen fans on the ladder of art and literature. But a romantic comedy, like a comedy of manners (that’s Austen’s genre, for all of you haters out there), can teach us quite a bit about society’s customs concerning love, marriage and sex.

Directors Josh Gordon and Will Speck, who brought us *Blades of Glory* in 2007, teamed up again to bring us *The Switch* (2010), a comedy that deals squarely with our current society’s changing customs concerning love, marriage, sex and children. No longer does our heroine seek a marriage contract that will bring her financial security and sweet companionship. Financially secure, independent, and not in love, the 2010 heroine is seeking to do it all herself.

Jason Bateman and Jennifer Aniston pair up in this feel-good flick about two long-time friends who’ve put each other so squarely into the “friend zone” that any chance of romance is too weird to consider. But when Cassie (Aniston) declares that she’s looking for a sperm donor, Wally (Bateman) feels surprisingly jealous and protective, objecting to her plan to become a mother without a man in the picture.

Wally, an endearing neurotic, worries about everything, especially Cassie’s bold decision to inseminate herself. “What if you meet someone 6 months from now and fall in love?,” Wally questions, launching protestation after protestation to her plan. Fed up, Cassie calls for a time-out in their friendship, and doesn’t see him again until the night of her insemination party.

What follows is hilarious. Suffice to say that several drinks and one “herbal supplement” later, Wally



COURTESY MIRAMAX

Jason Bateman and Jennifer Aniston’s hair star in *The Switch*.

switches his semen for the donor’s. But so intoxicated is he that he has absolutely no memory of making the switch. Seven years later, when Cassie returns to New York City with her six year-old son, Sebastian, the similarities between Wally and Sebastian seem uncanny...That is, until Wally begins to remember what he did at Cassie’s party seven years ago.

Bateman shines in this film as a charmingly phobic “man-boy,” a role not too far from the adorable Michael Bluth that Bateman played in *Arrested Development*. Aniston delivers a genuine performance as a woman who lets go of the “First comes marriage...” fairytale and takes matters into her own hands. Bateman and Aniston have great comic timing, and good chemistry to boot.

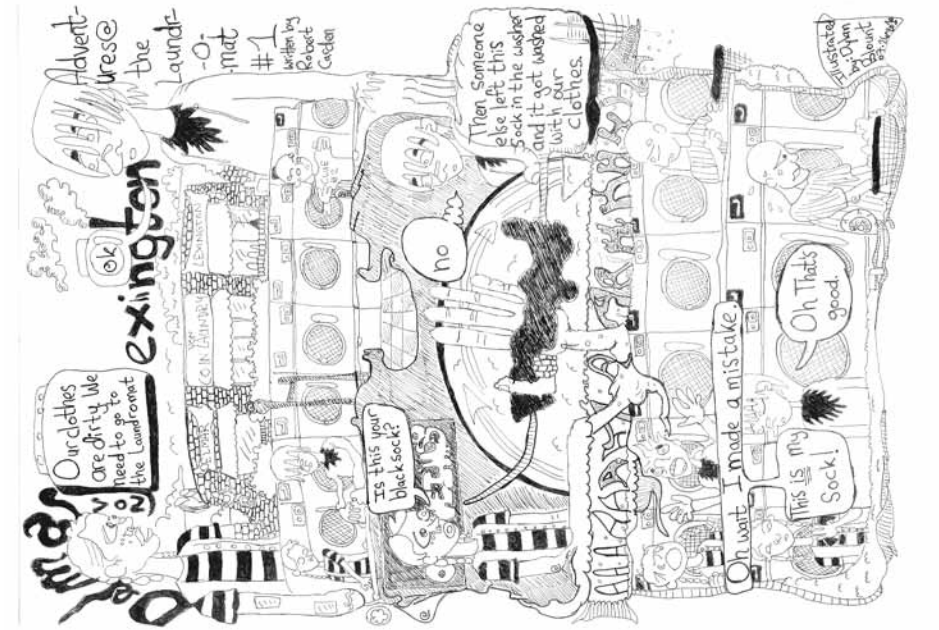
A solid cast of supporting actors, including Jeff Goldblum and Juliette Lewis, round out the film. Goldblum, in particular, steals the spotlight with his captivating charisma and comic wit.

Thomas Robinson, the child who plays Sebastian (Cassie’s son) is engaging and not as annoying as most other

child actors. The film could stand to trim a few of Robinson’s scenes (when did it become “cute” to give children overly sophisticated dialogue? Was it in 1990 with Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*?) as it is really the story between Cassie and Wally that we wish to see unfold. Overall, however, the movie does a nice job of developing its characters while focusing on the primary tension of the plot.

The Switch is not bad. Not fantastic, mind you, but pretty good. *The Switch* might even encourage you to stop waiting for life to happen and make it happen for yourself. Now, who says rom-coms aren’t important?

The Switch is currently playing in those places where romantic comedies are shown in Lexington.



ROCK dominates Dolls in Center opener

By Troy Lyle

The Lafayette Brawlin’ Dolls. That’s who it all came together against for the Rollergirls of Central Kentucky (ROCK) earlier this summer. Lafayette is where ROCK started to show everyone this year’s league is better at every facet of roller derby: skating, blocking, jamming, scoring. And score ROCK did. For the first time in the team’s three year history it managed to completely impose its will over another derby crew. When the final whistle

perform flawlessly, it managed to do so for 40 solid minutes, the length of time a derby bout lasts. “For every one good blocker they had, we had two,” said Slay. “And our blockers made it easy for our jammers to take the lead and often. From there it was score, score, score.” By the half ROCK already had 100 points on the scoreboard (another first), but that didn’t stop them from coming out in the second refocused and reignited. “We started the second as if we had zero points, not letting up on any

highlight. Hers centered on punishing the Brawlin’ Dolls jammers, blockers and one particular pivot. “I was really proud at one point in the second period when I put their pivot on the floor as soon as the whistle blew,” said Smite. “It was such a vicious blow I could hear the crowd go OOOOOOOOH.” Smite said ROCK has been training to be more aggressive, and it’s beginning to show—and not only for Slay and Smite. “There was one point in the bout where Sharon Moonshine kept beating the crap out of Psycho Socializer,” said Slay. “She’d give her a little space on the inside line, which is the most tempting thing if you’re a jammer, and just as Socializer would attempt to pass—WHAM—Shine would knock her down.”

“I remember one insane quadruple grand slam that Ragdoll Ruby had,” said Smite. “She was juking all the Brawlin’ Dolls blockers and staying in bounds on a single skate on about 3 inches of floor space. It was a thing of sheer beauty.” Beyond the bone crushing blocks and deft, sidewinder skating, ROCK managed it all in style. Sporting their new uniforms provided by Julie Butcher’s Law Office and UK Orthopedics, the team not only played but looked the part. “These new uniforms are so awesome,” said Smite. “We look more polished and streamlined, and I think that helps with the mental aspect of the game as well. Plus, they flatter everyone, so that’s always a positive.”

New uniforms. New mentality. New aggressiveness. Watch out derby world, ROCK is on the way up, as one fan put it. With only a few bouts left on this year’s schedule, Smite said ROCK’s main focus will be on consistency. “We have to bring it like this for the last three bouts of the season,” she said. “I think we’ve got such a taste for blood now that we’re all fired up.” Slay echoed Smite’s sentiment. “We have to skate smart, and execute our strategies automatically as a group,” she said. Slay also pointed out that ROCK has big plans for its future as well. The league intends to apply for the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association’s (WFTDA) apprentice program. The governing body for women’s flat track roller derby, over seeing the WFTDA oversees all professional derby team rankings and tournaments. But there are still a few hurdles in ROCK’s near future, one of which is finding a new location for the team’s three or four practices a week. If anyone knows of a location or can connect the team to an interested party, please contact ROCK at www.rocknrollergirls.com or www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5827970811.

Up next for ROCK is another home bout set for September 11 against the Black n’ Bluegrass Rollergirls (BBR). In the two teams’ last meeting, BBR barely edged out a 10 point victory. ROCK looks to avenge the loss, this time on its home turf. Doors open at 7 P.M. at the Civic Center. Bout is set to begin at 8 P.M.



Meracle Whip and Sharon Moonshine look to punish the Brawlin’ Dolls jammer.

blew, ROCK had banged, bruised and burnt its way into the record books, landing its first ever 100 plus point victory: ROCK 215, Brawlin’ Dolls 100. If you were one of the more than 600 people present at the Lexington Civic Center on August 14, you may have been lulled into thinking such a feat was common place, even ordinary. Don’t be fooled. ROCK was so on its game this night that every jam, every skate and every block appeared effortless. How far have these women come in a very short period of time? For ROCK, roller derby is fast becoming instinctual. “The Brawlin’ Dolls were very competitive throughout, but I think we played a smarter game than they did,” said ROCK Captain Ellie Slay. “We had this mindset of ‘We Will Win This!’” That opening mindset clearly laid the foundation for the team to communicate and execute its strategy to perfection. Not only did ROCK

of the intensity or momentum we had gained,” said Slay. “When we started to get frazzled, from fatigue or over excitement, our coach Ragman would call a timeout and we would quickly regroup. He really kept us focused and pushed us hard to kill, kill, kill.” Slay said at one point the bout was going so well that not even a penalty could set ROCK back. “Ryder Die had fouled out in the second half and I had to take her place in the penalty box as jammer. When I came out of the box, I was in and out of the pack and lead jammer before the Brawlin’ Doll’s blockers even knew I had hit the track,” she said. “My blockers kept their jammer busy and their blockers frustrated, causing the pack to slow way down. It was probably the easiest jam of the bout for me, every time I approached the pack my blockers made a huge lane and I skated through unscathed. It was spectacular.” ROCK assistant captain Rainbow Smite had her own version of a bout



ROCK can’t wait to take the track.

Beware the Beavers is in the books

By Troy Lyle

The Bluegrass Disc Golf Association (BDGA) was at it again. The tireless organization seems to have something for area disc golfers every weekend. Most recently, it was the Beware the Beavers IV tournament held at the Riney B course in Nicholasville on August 7. Beyond the sheer enjoyment of competing in 48 holes of disc golf, entrants managed to pad their pockets with some cash and their bags with a few new discs. The BDGA doled out more than \$500 in cash and merchandise, with \$205 going to first place in the pro, or open, division.

Of the 51 entrants, 13 were professionals and 38 were amateurs. Everyone took home at least one disc. Merchandise prizes included everything from Glow Champion Orcs to Glow Champion Gazelles and even a UV mini disc marker that changes color in the sun. “None of these discs are available in stores,” said BDGA president Drew Smith, who pointed out that part of the allure of competing in a BDGA event are rare and cool prizes. Smith said he was very pleased with this year’s turnout, up from last years, especially considering the event was contending with another tournament in Louisville. Part of what attracted so many entrants was the

fact that the Riney B course was in great shape, thanks to the help of the Nicholasville Disc Golf Club and the Nicholasville and Jessamine County Parks and Recreation. Beyond cash and merch, four entrants managed to snag some additional prizes for their efforts in the closest to the pin competitions, one for each of the events divisions. Holly Williams won the pro division on hole 20, Evan Bennett the advanced on hole 9, Jeff Worley the intermediate on hole 8 and James Key the recreational on hole 21. These four took home another couple discs and a Beware the Beaver shirt and hat. Up next for the BDGA is the Super Summer Slammer scheduled for September 11 at Veteran’s Park. The 36 hole event will once again award cash and merch prizes. The first 50 amateur entrants will also receive player’s packs with extra discs and markers. If you’re interested in competing in

the event visit www.bdga.org for more information. Here’s a breakdown of the top three scores in each division of this year’s Beware the Beaver tournament:

Pro
Jay Embree, 135, \$205
Jeff Eades, 144, \$145
Sean Turner, 145, \$95

Advanced
Evan Bennett, 139
Dillon Nickell, 149
Zach Skees, 155

Intermediate
Thaddeus Highbaugh, 146
Charlie Cavalier, 153
Colin Nickell, 155

Recreational
Matt Partain, 158
Eric Kopser, 163
Damian Roddy, 165



Bike Polo gears up for fall at Coolavin

Fall is an excellent time to come out and start participating in Lexington Bike Polo. If you are interested in learning how to play, simply ride your bike to Coolavin Park, located three blocks north of Green Lantern Bar at Jefferson and Sixth, early Wednesday and Sunday evenings.

Ask to get into a game, borrow a mallet, and the players can teach you the rest. If you enjoy the game, and you will,Alex Brooks has a mallet for sale for twenty dollars. Will Criner, the Blonde Bombshell himself, deemed the sale price “fair” during last Sunday’s polo play.

Opinion

Horse Mania geographies

The city, its neighborhoods and our public art (cont.)

By Danny Mayer

After a ten-year hiatus, in mid-July Lexington experienced the return of Horse Mania, a public art project described as “a citywide display of fiberglass horses extravagantly decorated by local artists.” Horse Mania finds local artists decorating one of three models of horse actions: standing, striding or eating. The artists are sponsored by patrons (mostly businesses), and the horses are eventually sold at auction. Proceeds are split between regional charities and public art programs.

The money generated from Horse Mania 2000 reached in the several hundreds of thousands, a figure that the LexArts organizers surely figure to match this year. As a fundraiser, Horse Mania should be a success, a sorely needed, locally rooted stimulus for both the arts and regional non-profits.

Beyond fundraising, the logic behind public art events like Horse Mania goes something like this: public art events draw people into town, downtown, in such a way that they help showcase, to both long-time residents and first-time visitors, the essence of what their city has to offer.

Here in Lexington, that general statement gets translated like this: Horse Mania is successful because it helps hype the coming World Equestrian Games and further supports Lexington’s branding of itself as the horse capital of the world. The colorful and artistic horses help show-



DANNY MAYER

Horse Mania on High Street.

case Lexington’s vibrant art scene to out of state visitors unfamiliar with Lexington when they arrive for the Games—potentially with the intent to come back and visit, dine, perhaps even buy a farm on the outskirts here.

For local residents, most of whom don’t have much of a relationship with downtown, the horses provide an attraction that brings people to town and allows them to see firsthand that downtown Lexington is both vital and enjoyable. It also gets them to value and interact with local artists and art.

Real world example of this translation: “It’s clear to anyone who has been downtown this summer that *Horse Mania 2010*, featuring 83 decorated fiberglass horses, has been enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.” (“Horse Maniacs,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Wednesday August 18, 2010, B-1)

As with other city public art projects—pigs in Cincinnati or Bulldogs in Athens—Horse Mania locates nearly all of its public art in the city’s downtown core. Of the 82 horses listed in the *Herald-Leader*’s Horse Mania 2010 guide, a total of 71 reside in a narrow strip of land centered somewhere around Vine Street and Rose.

The strip runs three blocks above and below Main Street between Jefferson on the west and Winchester on the east. Roughly speaking, UK and 3rd Street provide the strip’s southern and northern borders, with horse battalions grouped at Gratz Park/Transy (7 statues), Isaac Murphy (2 statues) and Thoroughbred Park (5 statues)

seemingly defending this downtown Horse Mania Zone.

The other downtown

I live on 4th and MLK and travel through downtown to work often enough to encounter many of the horse statues of Horse Mania, but many of my neighbors have no need to cross 3rd and enter into the downtown commercial zone. That part of the city, after all, does not offer much beyond financial planning, city government, eating establishments and bars. Though I haven’t asked, I’m guessing that a good many of my neighbors, who theoretically live downtown, have had little direct interaction with Horse Mania.

Though a small (and speculative) example, it highlights a more general conundrum: downtown has been so narrowly defined to fit within a safe, tourist-friendly and brand-enhancing space, that it has, perhaps unintentionally, sidestepped a majority of Lexington’s downtown residents.

So while the Gratz Park area, one of Lexington’s oldest and richest downtown neighborhoods, gets five horse statues, the Living Arts and Science Center (LASC), located three blocks away on MLK at the corner of 4th, was not allowed to participate in the public art program.

LASC has been a mainstay on the north side for a long time now. It offers a blend of science/art programs to the public, mostly children, and has been a regular patron of Lexington arts. It puts local artists in classrooms with kids of all socioeconomic classes, races and ethnicities. It uses its grounds as a sort of public art park and sends student volunteers to London Ferrel garden for hands on learning/work experiences. It is a regular participant in the Gallery Hop. In short, the LASC is a downtown community treasure, one deeply invested in both the arts and its diverse public.

But LASC doesn’t get a horse, and as a result, the public that passes through its grounds on a regular day—artists, students from throughout the neighborhood, city and region, and me and many of my neighbors across the street—gets benignly excluded from a public art project celebrating the city. Ditto for residents on 5th, 6th, Breckenridge, Loudon and points beyond.

A view from the suburbs

But don’t let me get too parochial here. There’s nothing at Living Arts and Sciences Center, but there’s also nothing at La Roca on Limestone, the co-op on Southland, or Charlie’s Fish Shack on Winchester. Five horses patrol Thoroughbred Park, but none are to be found at Elizabeth and Douglas Parks. Three in a vacant lot on Vine Street menace bus-travelers and two more cower around a construction site at the southeast corner of CentrePointe; yet no horses roam Cardinal Valley or Kenwick, Castlewood or Clay’s Mill.

If you want public art, Horse Mania’s geography suggests, you must travel to the art; it will not travel to you.

That is of course one model, the corporate one, of public art: put the art where you get the biggest bang for the buck, literally. Centralize, and by all means, seize control of the image. Patrol the borders, plan the city.

But doing so seems perverse, an act difficult to jive with the everyday city. Lexington has a number of micro-neighborhood centers that are the historical remnants of its continued affection for suburban growth. Over the years, these neighborhoods have developed their own distinct geographies, centralized around small corner commercial centers like Romany Road at Cooper and Liberty Road at Winchester.

Right now all these small places need our support—our business. We are in the early moments of what appears to be a long depression, and things

are most likely going to get worse. We must begin to get to know each other, our environments, as a precursor to building trust.

A major city event like Horse Mania could have been used to let city residents get to know each other and our different city neighborhoods. Instead it required us all to leave our own neighborhoods and visit a narrow city slice that is mostly not representative of Lexington. We learned little, and saw little, of our public.

Considering that it has become a sort of public art hunt, perhaps a better idea—and one we hope is considered in the near future—would be to place Horse Mania’s sculptures throughout Lexington’s many neighborhoods. People might choose to retrace Austin’s bike paths, go have a sandwich at Charlie’s Fish Shack, play a round of disc golf at Shillito Park, drop on by the Kids Cafe on Seventh,

Fancy Farm (cont.)

continued from page 2

be much in the way of edible food for them at the gathering. To their somewhat inconvenience, the Fancy Farm political picnic features some excellent pork and mutton barbecue, but little in the way of clean Vegan fare.

Their loss was Martin Mudd and mine’s gain. After bumping into some KFTCers pamphleting for the re-enfranchisement of Kentucky felons and setting up an interview with the Murray NPR affiliate, we dropped our gear and split to survey the food. With the Knights of Columbus buffet line stretching outside the group’s grounds, our choices, essentially, became pizza, pork or mutton. We both went for the pork, one pound of it apiece at \$8 per, a styrofoam box packed so full that our collective weight in purchased pig, Mudd and I surmised, was somewhere near six pounds.

No buns, no napkin, not even a fork. I would eat on it throughout the day, scooping up the last scraps with my thumb, index and middle fingers while crossing over the Cumberland River on our return trip to Lexington eight hours later.

They’re all sons of bitches

At Fancy Farm, the name of the game is loud and brutal. I now understand why I had to sneak my flask of Svedka onto the picnic grounds. The people there went temporarily frothing mad. Not necessarily in any physically violent sense...it was more ritualistic, like regimented daily market calls on the floor of the Dow, a verbal assault that started casually enough, moved to a rush at 2:00 with the national call to God and undercard speakers, peaked rabidly during the great Conway/Paul (7 minutes) debates, and—like that—became calm, presumably for another 365 days.

As it turns out, we had dropped our gear and set up right next to a contingent of Conway supporters, mostly members of Kentucky Young Democrats and one NeanderPaul man, a brainchild of the Conway camp who dressed in cave-garb and intermittently shouted out “*Abolish all taxes! Abolish all government! Abolish all education!*” while raising a plastic club. A couple of Rand Paul supporters and a cluster of locals who came to see their loved ones receive various pre-game civic awards, rounded out the set.

We stood stage right, clustered in and around a bleacher half-located in sun, just about even with the stage, allowing us an upclose profile of each of the day’s speakers. Though we couldn’t see them, I think we faced most of the Paul supporters, who cloistered around stage Left, some grown men snazzily dressed in white pantyhose, tight-fitting blue jackets and pointy hats.

The undercard featured a strong cast of Kentucky politicians: U.S. Senate

shoot some hoops at Douglas Park. Surely some downtown horses could be spared to do that.

Public art for the public

Horse Mania is a wonderful project. Not only does it operate as a fundraiser for local charities at a time when social services are getting slashed, it is also a much-valued paycheck for artists who are also struggling to get by.

But it is also a manifestation of Lexington’s current failures. The inordinate focus on downtown has diminished all of our own neighborhoods. This applies to urban north side neighborhoods seemingly located downtown and university south side ones, older inner circle suburbs as well as their newer outer rings.

Horse Mania can’t fix Lexington’s failures, but we can ask that its focus on public art be made more available to the public.

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R), Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear (D) and Kentucky Secretary of State Trey Grayson (R). The year before, Jack Conway had proclaimed that he was “one tough son of a bitch,” which had prompted the picnic’s sponsors, Saint Jerome Catholic Church, to create a new rule for this year’s edition: no cusin’, the penalty for which would be a strike-up of Rocky Top by the band at stage left. This prompted a number of puns off the phrase, both complimentary (from Beshear) and derogatory (McConnell, Grayson).

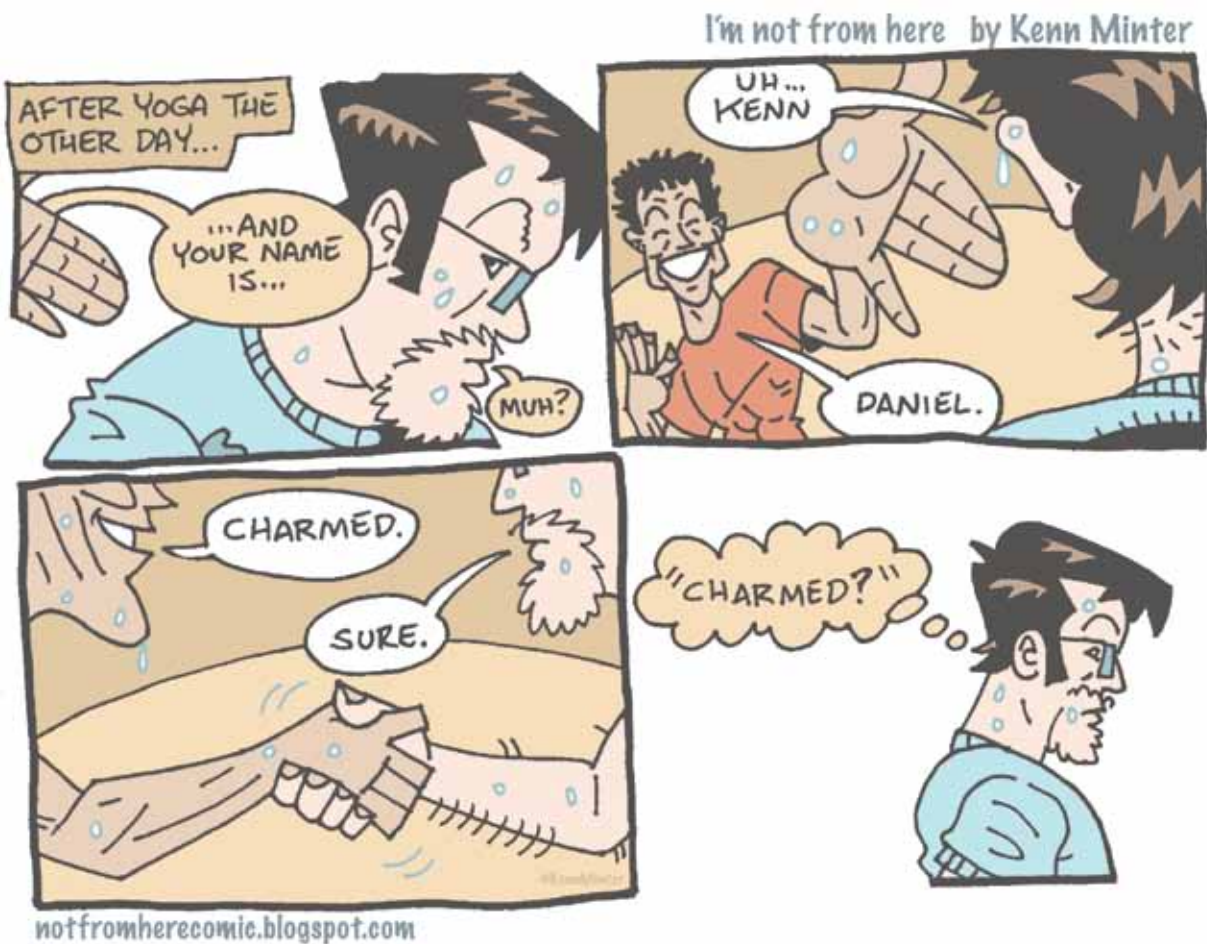
For the main event, Conway won the coin toss and elected to receive. He had clearly rehearsed his call and response with the crowd, one guesses via burned and delivered cd roms to the Conway Democrats near us. They were all ready for the jokes, when to laugh, when to be quiet, when to get rowdy happy. Conway scored several points—both on our scoreboard and with his compatriots.

Finally Paul spoke. The person even the Conway folks seemed most jazzed at seeing, Paul was largely underwhelming and easily the worst of the five main speakers at the picnic. His quiet, whiny tone, what one journalist has generously described as his “elusive accent,” was awfully matched to the white populist fire of Fancy Farm.

Mudd was kept busy scoring points during Paul’s talk, a lot at my urging and most of them based off his speech, but some marks also came out of the generally primitive courtside reactions to the game unfolding before us. The Conway kids to my right and behind me were vicious. Paul mentioned tax code, and they chanted boring (so much for the pretense of intellectual engagement); he moved to Pelosi, and they exploded with boos. In front of me, a College Conway kid and a white-haired Tea Partier in mesh baseball cap jousting Conway and Paul signs, while tucked next to them NeanderPaul Man, part of Team Conway, continued to belch out Abolish all government! Abolish eduction!, brandishing his plastic club like Captain Caveman. To my left, I glimpsed my UFK comrades, swept up, their hands also over their mouths, shouting I couldn’t hear what.

It all blended together. A huge explosion of sound with only faint echoes of Rand Paul whining stupid about the tax code and how heavy it weighed, a 2010 heaping of that same stale capitalist mutton basted in free market populism, his prattle a weak backbeat no louder than some taped over analog.

It wasn’t until later that I could figure out what the scene reminded me of, and then it hit me, around the time I finished the last of the Fancy Farm pork on the way home. It reminded me of the great Tea Party shutdowns at the healthcare town halls. Except, of course, at Fancy Farm verbal shout-downs are so part of the game, they are the game.



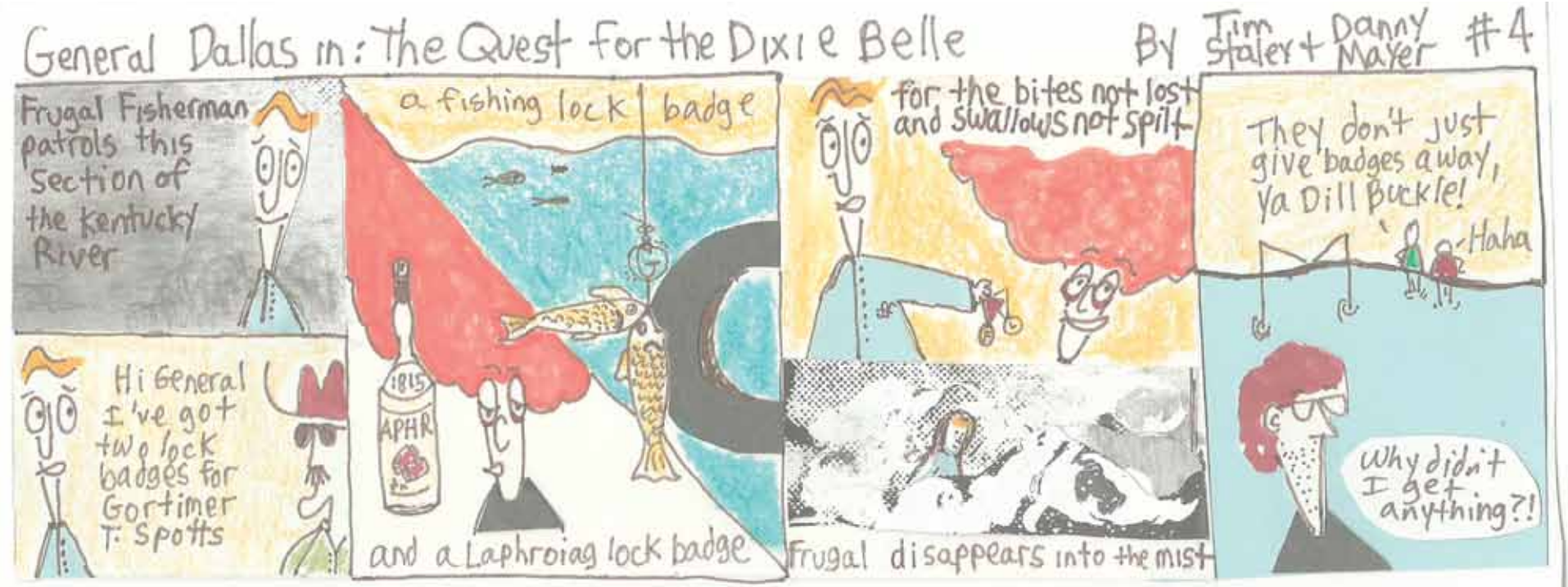
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Why not play Lexington? (cont.)

continued from page 4

cover the cost of playing here. Booking agents—good ones, anyway—plot tours that tend to maximize efficiency, both logistic and financial. Shows in cities with a guaranteed draw occupy the weekends, and the rest of the week—every day if possible—has the band playing less-developed markets on the road to the next weekend city. The mid-week gigs might not make money, or even break even, but at least you’re building a fanbase and defraying travel costs.

But for a European prog act such as Porcupine Tree, who travel with an extensive lighting setup and a whole mess of expensive gear, but whose inaccessible music limits its audience even in the most receptive American cities—the Cleveland show drew about 1000, and was their only Ohio show that tour—Lexington apparently just doesn’t make fiscal sense. So they go to Cincinnati and Nashville, and other bands of similar stature—way too big for bars, but nowhere near Rupp—go to Louisville and (shudder) Knoxville. But they usually skip Lexington, which indicates that our fair city isn’t often considered a viable stopover on the road from Columbus to Nashville, or from Chicago and Indianapolis to the southeast.

Some time ago I asked an old friend in Oregon who runs a successful

booking agency about this, and he confirmed that when he booked tours through the midwest and southeast Lexington usually missed the cut.

“I think I’ve sent national acts to Lexington a couple of times,” he said, “but nothing recently. It isn’t really on the radar.”

But why shouldn’t it be? One problem, which may have been solved by the addition of Buster’s to the city’s lineup of venues, was for some time the absence of a dedicated music club larger than the Dame used to be but smaller than Rupp Arena; bands that drew 400 played the former, and bands drawing 15,000 the latter, and not much happened in between. When the Dame was demolished the gap only grew. But Buster’s helps fill that gap, and already we’ve seen an upturn in national-act bookings.

But is there also something circular at work here? If we learn to appreciate unfamiliar music by becoming accustomed to it, but can’t grow accustomed to it if bands won’t schedule us on the tour, then we seem to be caught in a Catch-22. Certainly a number of styles of music do very well in Lexington, but as fans of jazz, hip-hop, extreme metal, electronica, and world music can attest, seeing your favorite band often involves heading down the freeway, praying the equipment made it from L.A.

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