

Vacant lot garden planted on N. Limestone

In-feed joins growing list of gardening groups

NoC News

On Saturday morning, June 5, less than twelve hours after a fatal shooting a block away, two members of In-Feed and a lone volunteer helped plant a garden on the grassy vacant lot located across the street from the old Spauldings Building on the 500 block of North Limestone. The urban gardeners put in tomato and basil plants and, from seed, bush beans, okra and sunflowers.

The small reclamation of the grassy lot was organized by In-Feed, a group challenging the widespread misuse of green space in a region where 1 in 7 inhabitants rely on food banks for some form of nourishment during the course of the year and, more specifically, in a part of the city where mean annual incomes remain below \$20,000 per year. In-Feed’s strategy is to push for making unused city land more productive and beholden to the immediate communities in which those lots exist. As the group’s mission statement puts it, “We want unused land to be made available for urban gardening.” The North Limestone garden was the first of two gardens the group would put up that day around downtown.

The appearance of a vacant lot gardening group in Lexington is an

offshoot of the growing diversity of activist city gardeners. In the past several years, community gardening groups Seedleaf and the Jim Embry-led Sustain Lex have (for good reason) gotten much of the publicity and community support for their excellent work in re-fusing communities to agricultural pursuits. Such pursuits have given rise to a number of other newer, less publicized and supported, groups who have related, but different, methods and tactics for supporting city gardening and food initiatives.

BCTC’s PeaceMeal Gardens uses a two-acre farm just outside New Circle to provide subsidized food to its economically disadvantaged student (and staff) body; John Walker’s Lexington Urban Gleaners collect unused fruit and vegetables from farmers and backyard gardeners to distribute to food banks; the Lexington Free Store gives away free produce collected from a number of guerrilla gardened sites at a weekly inner-city market; and throughout the city nameless thousands share their extra bounties with friends and neighbors.

As Bob McKinley, who helped start In-Feed, noted, community gardening in Lexington is amply represented by Seedleaf and Jim Embry. McKinley wanted instead to provide



DANNY MAYER

Liquor store, barber shop and vacant lot garden at North Limestone and Sixth Street.

a different outlet for community gardening initiatives. In Feed’s focus on vacant lots moves community gardening initiatives away from the Church/School/Park trinity of gardening spaces and instead begins to put the question of “usable” space to private landholders who do not put their properties to use.

In this sense, In Feed has deep connections to guerrilla gardening initiatives that have employed vacant lot gardening of private property since

the 1970s. Like guerrilla gardening, In Feed emphasizes that anyone may take produce from the garden, “no strings attached.” The one notable difference is that McKinley and In Feed ask property owners for permission, whereas much guerrilla gardening has its roots in the political proposition that unused land demands to be taken from its owner and delivered to the people, who will make it productive.

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A short design history of urban Lexington

By Danny Mayer

Like nearly all towns on the American frontier, Lexington, Kentucky was platted on a map before it actually was developed as a real town. And like other frontier towns, its development was orderly, more or less, so as to facilitate both economic and demographic growth. The map decreed that downtown “city” lots, where city commerce would take place, be a half acre in size. Roughly speaking, this was the area located a block above (Short Street) and below (Town Branch, now Vine Street) Main Street between Thoroughbred and Triangle Parks. On the city’s periphery, which in 1800 would have been Second Street, lots were split into five-acre “out-lots,” upon which Lexington’s earliest white citizens would build their houses and house their slaves to pimp them out at cut-rate prices to the city’s developing merchant class. Many years later, as lots on Second and Third Streets were being subdivided into new majestic houses, the city’s new suburbs—behind Third Street in Smithtown or in the

East End in Kincaidtown—were places of racialized separation, kept close enough to perform the required tasks of the new (now paid) labor class. Even majestic—and now decidedly urban—downtown streets like Second, Third and beyond, it seems, are structurally built upon sound suburban design principals.

While houses like the Kincaid House (aka the Living Arts and Science Center), alleys like Smith Alley (which housed urban slave labor) and neighborhoods called the East End (Kincaidtown and others) offer visible reminders of this past, the early suburban gridding of Lexington is most evident in the layout of Lexington’s downtown streets, which for the most part have remained as they were designed over three centuries ago. Traveling up North Limestone from Main Street, for example, a discerning inhabitant is sure to notice how Lexington’s city blocks get considerably larger once one leaves the old half-acre lots of the city’s original mercantile downtown and begins to hit the vulgar frontier suburbs of Second and Third Streets, on

the west side of town, and the MLK and N. Limestone neighborhoods on the east side.

Landscape historian J.B. Jackson, who spent much of his life looking at distinct places and trying to figure out how they worked, would undoubtedly describe downtown Lexington as, essentially, a political space: a “well defined, permanent, established village or town or landscape, self-sufficient, well-adjusted, and happily conscious

of its unique quality.” He defined such landscapes—streets, monuments, town centers, mansions, picturesque boulevards— as “political” because they are “maintained and governed by law and political institutions.” In addition to the tyranny of political landscapes, Jackson also noted the presence of “[a] vernacular landscape, identified with local custom, pragmatic adaptation

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Charlie’s too loud?

Music venue receiving a number of noise complaints

By Nick Kidd

Cosmic Charlie’s has grown into one of Lexington’s strongest concert venues since opening last September on the corner of Euclid and Woodland Avenues. It’s a favorite amongst local musicians because of its ample sound system and ideal size: small enough so that concerts are intimate, big enough to fit about 300 people. Their eclectic booking has given music fans of every ilk reason to visit, making Charlie’s the heir to the original Dame’s legacy more than any other venue in town and a vital place for local musicians to cut their teeth. But last time I was at Charlie’s, on Sunday May 30, something unusual happened.

In the middle of a set by the band Shemale Fiesta, police entered the building over a noise complaint. At an officer’s behest, the band’s set ended immediately, followed by a large, voluntary exodus of the crowd. Charlie’s was issued a citation for a noise ordinance violation, a fine compounded by lost revenue from the fleeing crowd.

In the parking lot outside the venue, members of the band and

audience convened and wondered aloud how there was a noise complaint: Shemale Fiesta wasn’t louder than other bands playing Charlie’s on any given night. That’s when I learned that the same thing had happened only eight days prior, on May 22, and on Christmas Eve 2009, giving Charlie’s three noise violations (and cut-short concerts) since opening last September.

Currently, a noise disturbance is any sound that endangers the safety or health of humans or animals, endangers or injures personal or real property, or anything that “annoys or disturbs a person of normal sensitivities.” This includes any sound that creates a “disturbance” to any public space within fifty feet, including sidewalks. This subjective definition, coupled with hundreds of concerts that went off without a hitch, makes it difficult for Cosmic Charlie’s, a music club located on the corner of Euclid and Woodland Avenues, to figure out exactly when their venue is too loud... until it’s too late.

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An international food store thrives in the suburban Eastland Shopping Center.

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On someone else’s land Misadventures in...streetwalking?

“I am a streetwalker, but, no, I am not a prostitute.”

By Beth Connors-Manke

To state what I hope is obvious to most, there are lots of things wrong with the movie *Pretty Woman*. Richard Gere isn’t really acting in it. Julia Roberts is completely unbelievable as a prostitute. There is also the anti-feminist theme of rich-man-saving-dstitute-sex-worker-from-a-life-she-didn’t-deserve. The biggest problem, though, isn’t these three things. It’s that prostitution is so much more mundane than *Pretty Woman*—even the parts of *Pretty Woman* the audience doesn’t see: the backstory of Vivian’s nights on the boulevard in cheap but sassy knee-high boots and tight dresses.

So how would I know about the banal aspects of the sex-trade? *COPS*, the TV show. One weekend my brothers made me (by virtue of the fact that they would do nothing else) watch a *COPS* marathon. I dislike the show, but after three episodes I started learning things, including the fact that women willing to trade sex for cash money generally don’t look good. Even more, many of them don’t do it as a career path, as the Julia Roberts character did. Often, prostitution is serendipitous and opportunistic. If you’re waking down the street in your dirty, cut-off jeans and drugstore flip-flops looking for a friend to hang out with because you’re bored, and a John in a broken down old truck with his work tools in the back stops beside you, well, why not? Who doesn’t need more cash?

This was an important insight that came back to me when I moved to the North Side last winter and started making a daily trek from Loudon down North Limestone to get to work. I chose Lime as my route because I like

to walk along busy streets (which are generally safer for women); it also takes me through parts of downtown that I like.

So, it was January, and if you remember, it was cold and snowy this winter, meaning Beth was always swaddled in three to four layers when she tromped down Lime in her snow boots. On my third day of pedestrian commuting, the solicitations began—and they continued throughout the season. They came from black guys in cars, Latino guys on bikes, and, my favorite, a bald white dude in a business suit driving a ridiculously large SUV. Bald John was my favorite because he made his proposal (“You wanna ride?”) as he was turning left in the intersection of Loudon and Lime. I just slowly nodded my head “no,” wondering when he was going to crash into another car. When you need some strange love, I guess you really need it. Even if you’re in the middle of a left-hand turn.

To be honest, I was pretty pissed off about the situation for a time. I don’t like being hollered at, honked at, or being scared by mumbling men in sunglasses who stop their cars beside me—men who seem like they already have a woman chopped up in the trunk. But eventually the anger and fear became a heavy burden, too. So one day I just stopped paying attention. Actually, it was more like I softened my reaction to N. Lime. Then, strangely, I had fewer Johns trying to get my attention.

More than likely, there were several reasons for this. Those guys hard up for love during the winter 2010 snows finally found their somethin’-somethin’ with someone else. Maybe it got warmer so they didn’t need another warm body next to them. Perhaps it was because I stopped looking around.

One of the things girls are (or should be) taught when they’re young

is that you have to be wary, to look out for yourself because you are prey to some predators. It isn’t right that women have to be socialized this way, but it is pragmatic. My early walks down Lime were informed by this, and this lesson was reinforced by the frightening, mumbling serial killer John that I met early on. Yet, contrary to my conditioning, I stopped putting up the appearance of wariness, which taught me another lesson about prostitution. Evidently, prostitutes are women who look around. “Ah-ha!” I thought, “Now I have the key to a pleasant N. Lime stroll: just don’t look around.”

Well, no sooner had I grown comfortable in my sex-trade knowledge, than a friend told me a story about a mutual friend, whom we’ll call Jane. Jane was pregnant and out walking in our neighborhood. A guy drove by and yelled, “Hey baby, let me make you pregnant twice.” What? *Really?* What have the abstinence-only people done to sex education in the schools?

All-in-all, I’m grateful to *COPS* and N. Lime for disabusing me of the romantic notions of prostitution that *Pretty Woman* had encouraged in me. Thankfully, I no longer believe that if I trade sex for money a rich guy will fall in love with me and save me from my bad decisions. I now understand that any and all women are targeted as prostitutes, especially when we’re covered from head to toe, with only our faces showing (as I was during the winter and as women are in some conservative religious cultures). I also now know that prostitutes are women who pay attention to their surroundings. Finally, I’ve learned that some men are habitually, indiscriminately, and/or desperately horny.

With the summer heat bearing down on us, I’m sure I’ll learn still more about how the currents of desire run down N. Lime.



A gentleman solicitor rides his scooter on N. Limestone.

Beth looks to the side, making it seem she’s ready to trade sex for cash.

Beth looks straight ahead, making her appear uninterested in engaging in prostitution.

Regret to Inform at Public Library

Part of showcase of documentary films by Henry Clay alum

By Danny Mayer

On June 12 and 13 (Saturday and Sunday), the downtown public library will hold a free viewing of six documentaries made by filmmaker Lucy Massie Phenix. A graduate of Henry Clay high school, Phenix will be in town for her 50-year high school reunion.

As an editor, director and producer, Phenix’s body of work is a wonderful example of how the medium of documentary film can be used to engage emotionally with politically and socially charged events. Her first work on documentary films, for the acclaimed 1971 Vietnam War documentary *Winter Soldier*, chronicled a war crimes panel held in Michigan at the height of the Vietnam War. Conducted by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the panel featured hundreds of soldiers documenting their own experiences and observations of U.S. war crimes in Vietnam. Though the panel was little covered by the press

in the papers (though widely attended by journalists), the details of American war crimes have come to be an important document of recent American history—in large part through the continued popularity of the *Winter Soldier* documentary.

Phenix’s interest in documenting acts of struggle against social and human justice extends beyond the war in Vietnam. In her work on *Word is Out* (1977), she explored the stories of 26 gay and lesbian men and women. *You Got to Move* (1986) found Phenix recording stories of community activism in the south through the lens of the famous Highlander Folk School in Tennessee (which included civil rights icon Rosa Parks as a graduate), while even closer to home in Kentucky, Phenix edited *Stranger with a Camera*, the 2000 documentary that explored Canadian filmmaker Hugh O’Conner’s 1967 murder in central Appalachia while he was filming a documentary on the region’s poverty.

But perhaps Phenix’s most dynamic interests have centered on the intersections of women and war. She is best known for editing *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*, a 1980 documentary that looked at World War II through the lens of women’s participation on the home front. (Rosie the Riveter was a catch phrase for women during WWII who took up the slack in industrial—and wartime—production of goods by working in the factories while American men went off to fight in Europe and Asia.) The documentary is as much about the beginning of the modern women’s rights movement as it is about the specific story of women’s home front contribution to the American war effort.

Phenix again returned to the Vietnam War when she edited the 1998 documentary *Regret to Inform*. To my mind, *Regret to Inform*, which takes its name from the standard opening lines of telegrams informing spouses of the death of their significant others in war,

is one of the best documentaries on the Vietnam War—or war in general, for that matter. The film follows director Barbara Sonneborn as she travels to Vietnam in search of the place where her husband, Jeff, had died in battle.

Only 24 years old when she received the “regret to inform” telegram in 1968, Sonneborn travels to Vietnam in the early 1990s. Her traveling companion and interpreter: a Vietnamese friend whose family and first husband were killed by U.S. troops, and whose second husband, an American serviceman, brought her to the United States and quickly divorced her, all but abandoning the Vietnamese refugee in a foreign country whose language she only barely knew. Through this frame story, Sonneborn weaves a variety of interviews with women from the U.S. and Vietnam who received, either literally or metaphorically, “regret to inform” messages. The story

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Vacant lot garden (cont.)

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(Sidenote: Where are the guerrilla gardeners in Lexington?)

While each of these Lexington gardening groups operate separately and focus on slightly different spaces and aspects of urban agriculture, they do all work together to provide each other help. In Feed, for example, relied on a number of the groups referenced above: Seedleaf will donate some tomato cages for the N. Limestone garden site; Ryan Koch of Seedleaf and John Walker of Urban Gleaners provided gardening help at In Feed’s seed sale last April, which provided start-up funds for the North Limestone plantings and other gardens In Feed will establish. At the sale, The Rock/La Roca Church (which established a garden through the work of Jim Embry’s Sustain Lex) helped provide seeds while Kids Cafe on Seventh Street (which itself has a

Seedleaf-started raised bed garden to help feed the children that use it) helped package the seeds for the sale. The visible outgrowth of these sets of collaboration is the vacant lot garden on the 500 block of North Limestone. Time will tell if the (supposedly “creative” and “actively engaged”) community embraces vacant lot gardening as much as it has community Church/School/Park gardening. Much like with Seedleaf, which this reporter had the pleasure to work with several years ago as it began to sprout as an organization, In Feed’s community support has started small—at least if the lone journalist/volunteer who showed up at 9:00 AM on a Saturday morning to help with the planting is any indication. The lot’s owner, James Maxberry, however, did make an appearance at the groundbreaking. Maxberry owns and operates the liquor store on the

southwest corner of Sixth and N. Limestone. His property stretches southward down the block and includes a brick building housing a barber shop, an upstairs apartment over the liquor store and the grassy area on which the new In Feed garden sits. “The lot’s empty,” Maxberry said when asked why he allowed the garden to be built on his land. “I’d love to do something beneficial with it.” He paused for a moment before getting into his car, and then added, “It’s up to you all to keep it safe and tended.” He was speaking to this white reporter who had asked him about the lot, but his meaning should apply to anyone who lives in the area. Now that the garden is planted, it is up to us, the immediate community, to ensure that it gets established.

Read more about In Feed at their website: <http://infeed.wordpress.com/>



Grow spots cut into grass of vacant lot garden, 500 block of North Limestone.

Design History (cont.)

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to circumstances and unpredicted mobility.” Vernacular landscapes, for Jackson, were about making things new—buildings, ways of inhabitation, forms of community—and they were “resisted by the political landscape.” Though he is quick to note the power of law and political institutions to protect landscapes that it deems important, we also might add that such landscapes owe their permanence to accumulated wealth—which of course has the ability both to maintain “aesthetic” or “historic” structures and to purchase unwanted structures and tear them down.

Good urban design: A tale of two walks

Since moving to our new home on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard two years ago, Saturdays have become market day. I grab a couple market bags and begin my walk past the Episcopal Diocese and the Living Arts and Science Center (the Kincaid house) at Fourth and MLK, where I head west a block and then south onto N. Limestone to Third Street Coffee to purchase a paper. Leaving Third Street, I continue south down N. Lime. As a treat, I may stop at Sunrise on Main Street, though often the Saturday crowds are large, and I can buy their bread, baguettes or sourdough, at other stops along my walk, so I stay away. My next stop is the market. In summer, the market is teeming with shoppers and songsters and jugglers and vendors, and I wade in and bump into many friends. I bring a set amount of cash each week to spend, often on non-produce items: meat items like chicken from Carey Farms or Elmwood, brats from Blue Moon and pork from the pork guy; canned items like mustard and apple butter and jams; impulse items a fire baked pizza or a fried apple pie; necessary items like bread, eggs and any herbs or peppers I didn’t grow from seed. In winter, when the market locates to Victorian Square, the market is much less crowded—empty, actually. I often wonder, as I purchase my potatoes, greens, eggs, meat, bread and other items, why people do not come out in the winter. Do they not eat? I ask the egg lady and she says that at first many farmers showed up, but that Lexington buyers did not. Their loss

is my gain—quick winter trips to the market are a seasonal delicacy. In all seasons, after market I make my way across Broadway to Wine+Market, where I try to do as much of my normal grocery shopping as possible: a hunk of pecorino and blue danish cheeses, flour, chorizo, milk, dried fruit, sliced deli meat, or any other necessities they carry. My way back—fucking long suburban blocks—my back is drenched and my bags are at risk of tearing some key seams. I walk past the intact mansions on Second and up through the beautiful homes on Gratz before reconnecting with N. Lime and funneling back home. I’m usually gone two hours. I find it funny that this would be considered an urban narrative, the urban livability we all desire, found through the use of the city’s strategic and historic design. Three summers ago my wife and I moved from a 1960s suburban ranch home located off Liberty Road. In that it was a suburb built in the 60s, the neighborhood was the “political space” of the day, built for a white Lexington population fleeing the city core. At the time, the 1960s, US demographics were in the midst of big changes: the country’s wealth was moving to the suburbs, and its poverty was getting further concentrated in its city core (and rural areas, but that’s another story). What was deemed desirable—and in large part aesthetically acceptable—was the suburban ideal of larger lawns and drivable shopping centers.

Such design aesthetics, we are now told, are not conducive to proper ways of living—building strong communities, developing close economic ties with small scale shop keepers that enrich the local community, cutting down on carbon footprints. I used to believe it, too, until I realized the immense walkability of my bleak suburban neighborhood. Unlike my current prolonged twenty-five minute one-way (nonstop) urban market walk, my suburban home afforded me a fish market (Charlie’s), several taquerias (depending on whether I cut through to Winchester or New Circle Road), and joy of joys, Eastland Shopping Center, a drab strip mall located on the inside edge of New Circle Road. I used to visit Eastland quite a bit, cutting through a back parking lot, where I had constructed a guerrilla

garden bed full of romas and basil, and across five lanes of Winchester traffic at the stoplight (a not terribly threatening or un-pedestrian thing to do, by the way). I normally did this to eat at Enza’s, an Italian restaurant now closed. The cook, Curtis, and I traded basil (from my guerrilla garden) and mozzarella balls (homemade by him). While there, I might visit the knife shop to sharpen my knives, or the SavALot, the African grocery store, the shoe repair shop or Roberts Health Food Store—all located closer to my home than the distant Wine+Market. I’m running out of space here, so I’ll just get to the point of all this. I’ve done both walks, now, many times, and I can say without a doubt that what we are told is valued in the city, and what we are told the aesthetics of the city allow to happen—cross-cultural connections, concentrated shopping, a return to a more localized way of life—is precisely what I see less of in downtown Lexington, and precisely what I saw more of at Eastland: middle class folks of all colors and nationalities owning small business and shopping at local shops. And what I’m seeing is backed up in statistics, which has found that, in the past decade, demographics have switched. Poverty is moving to the suburbs. Cities are becoming increasingly more wealthy

as, in the words of one report, a “bright flight” has brought in young adults, mostly white, who see “access to knowledge based jobs, public transportation and a new city ambiance as an attraction.” The fallout of this new wealth infusion is that cities have become too expensive to house the kind of small-scale amenities that places like cheaper suburban strip-malls like Eastland can attract. We should all know something is up when Lexington punks, the white group most often seeking out spaces of social and economic abjection, have begun to move en masse into the suburbs, to what’s being called the punk rock retirement community. We should also know something is up when our downtown leaders—designers, politicians, university academics—begin denigrating the places real little-guy entrepreneurs are inhabiting. I recently went back to Eastland and looked around. It’s quite the vernacular landscape. Enzas is gone, but everything else is there, including a Rite Aid drug store and Nana’s African and Caribbean. Meanwhile, down in the livable city, a minor investor of the CVS, in denigrating the poor suburban aesthetics of the CVS design, has played up the “success” of bringing Krispy Kreme to anchor his recently built, aesthetically urban, and above market value downtown lofts.

Regret to Inform (cont.)

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shows how powerfully the agonies of war transcend “sides.” When it comes to war, Sonneborn seems to say, we all lose out. The first Gulf War author Anthony Swofford wrote in his nonfiction novel *Jarhead* that all war movies function as pornography. For the most part, he’s right, but maybe that’s because most war movies are either produced by men or (in the case of *The Hurt Locker*) written for a male audience. *Regret to Inform*, however, tells a radically different story of war. There is very little war porn here, though the film shows us plenty of burned out landscapes, a legacy of the insane amounts of pesticides dropped by the U.S. throughout the Vietnam War. And we see what happens, over twenty years later, to children born of parents—both U.S. and Vietnamese—who ingested those U.S. war chemicals. And while some may get off on James Bond type torture/interrogation narratives, such actions lose their luster when described, twenty years later, by an aging though still devastated female Vietnamese fighter tortured by U.S. backed South Vietnamese forces. Ultimately, *Regret to Inform* is powerful because it both escapes and doesn’t escape a war that officially concluded 35 years ago. Traveling to Vietnam two decades after the U.S. hastily left, *Regret to Inform* moves between coverage of the war and its lasting legacies. Wars may end on paper,

but the documentary shows just how much they continue to leak—into the soil, into diverging lives and fractured families, into our offspring’s DNA—well after the helicopters get shipped home (or bulldozed into the sea, which happened during the Vietnam War). Like many great feminist works, this is not so much of a political stance as it is a bodily one. Women, after all, are the ones who raise kids after fathers die in wars; they are also the ones who bear children, who raise the orphaned kids, who later gestate the DNA-ravaged offspring, that are the inevitable brutal legacies of every war, without exception. As we fight two wars under the leadership of a so-called anti-war president, as we continue to poison Mother Earth in the service of war aims, as our actions directly contribute to more *Regret to Inform* letters, this is a message we should be aware of—bodily. You will cry during *Regret to Inform*, but then again, you should. Here is the calendar for the Phenix documentaries showing at the downtown library. All are free and open to the public: June 12: *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (9:00 AM); *Cancer in Two Voices* (10:30 AM); *You Got to Move: Stories of Change in the South* (1:30 PM); *Don’t Know We’ll See* (3:30 PM). June 13: *Regret to Inform* (1:00 PM); *Word is Out* (2:30 PM). Many thanks to the Chevy Chaser, whose *Neighborhood News* section brought Phenix’s film showings to my attention.

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Review: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

By Michael Dean Benton

Stieg Larsson’s source novel for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (the first part of his Millennium trilogy) and the Swedish film adaption of it (Niels Arden Opley, 2009: 152 minutes) have enjoyed similar international success. Larsson, posthumously, was the second highest selling author worldwide in 2008, and this weekend the first film adaption of his trilogy is poised to crack the \$100 million level (a significant mark for a Swedish film). Hollywood has also taken notice and a remake is set for 2012 with David Fincher directing; reportedly a slew of stars are jockeying to be cast in the two lead roles.

There are two important contextual facts that can help in understanding the international popularity of the book and the film. First, like the film’s lead male character Mikael Blomkvist, Stieg Larsson was a Swedish journalist actively reporting and editing an independent publication on contemporary Swedish far-right movements. Larsson’s life was threatened by neo-fascist thugs and the Swedish police took these threats serious enough to have him put under police protection. Mysteriously, just as his Millennium trilogy was poised for great success (a series he intended to expand to 10 books), he dropped dead of a heart attack at the age of 50 on November 9 of the past year. Significantly, Larsson’s sudden death occurred on the anniversary of the German night of terror known as Kristallnacht, infamous as the beginning of the Nazi “final solution” for the Jews of Europe. Understandably,

this fueled rumors that Larsson was somehow eliminated by the far right movements whom he was seeking to expose.

Second, the book and the film were originally titled, internationally, *The Men Who Hate Women*. The titles for the English translation of the trilogy, however, all start with “The Girl...” seemingly a standard form for Anglo series mysteries. The original Swedish title reflects the monstrous nature of the men who commit the crimes in the

role, the five-foot, punkish, anti-social hacker Lisbeth Salander, could become an identifiable character for those that have felt powerless and or have been abused. Furthermore, the actions of Salander are not gratuitously violent; her rage and actions instead are the result of direct provocations.

It is in these two main characters, Mikael Blomkvist (Michael Nyqvist) the honest crusading journalist broken by the system, and Lisbeth Salander (Noomi Rapace), the anti-social hacker

police whenever the two are in trouble is actually a threat to the more marginal Salander. On the one hand Salander is every bit as ethical as Blomkvist, but on the other hand, the legal system of her society is not set up to recognize her struggle for autonomy and the abuses she suffers at the hands of her so-called protectors.

I have purposefully avoided major plot details in this review because this is a crackling good thriller that engages the viewer throughout. To give away

key aspects of the plot would ruin the experience. The film combines equal measures of procedural mystery and thrilling action to good effect. I would recommend that you catch the Swedish film, rather than wait for the 2012 American version, for a few main reasons. The American film will no doubt rest upon the star power of one or two major stars. The Swedish film’s cast is relatively unknown to the average American filmgoer. This actually makes for a good mystery thriller in that we are not constantly distracted from the story by the celebrity fetishizing of American films. If David Fincher does direct the film it may retain its honest realism (think *Zodiac*), but I get the feeling that this remake is being targeted as the launching of a potential cash cow film franchise—and the American version will no doubt suffer due to the typical proliferation of too many cooks messing with the soup.

The film will be showing at the Kentucky Theater until June 14.



Peter Andersson and Noomi Rapace in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

story. They are sadistic sexual predators who represent a fascist impulse. They seek to control their marginalized victims through the channels of corporate capitalism and the faceless bureaucracy of a state apparatus that favors the surface appearances of respectable patriarchy. I was not surprised that I met a handful of women in the lobby before and after the film that were avid fans of the source books and were eager to watch the film. Through her retributive justice, the film’s leading female

betrayed by the same system, that we can identify the broad appeal of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. You have both the older character (Blomkvist) trying to fight for justice within the boundaries of the society’s legal framework and the much younger, and one could claim less naïve, outlaw character who recognizes the absurdity of a system set up to favor the powerful every step of the way. One of the ongoing conflicts between the two centers on Blomkvist’s inability to recognize that his alerting the

Of baseball and Blue Devils

By Jennifer Miller

Besides a first career in professional baseball, filmmaker Richey Nash doesn’t have much in common with Jimmy “Rip” Ripley, the anti-hero of his award-winning screenplay *Hitting the Cycle*. But thanks to Lexington Legends President Alan Stein’s offer for the film production to use facilities at Applebee’s Park, Nash shares at least one more story line with his alter ego: nurturing his hometown roots.

“The Lexington Legends and Applebee’s Park have always been about two things: fun and making the community better,” Stein said. “When the opportunity came up to participate with our friend Richey Nash in his film project, we jumped at the chance because it will be fun for our fans around Central Kentucky to see their hometown ballpark, and it will help extend the brand of both the Legends and Lexington.”

Stein said his staff is excited to be part of “this wonderful project.”

“No doubt *Hitting the Cycle* will be a home run for all of us,” he added.

Like Stein, Nash is an alumnus of Henry Clay High School. Following in the footsteps of his father (UK basketball great Charles “Cotton” Nash), Richey played both basketball and baseball in college, attending Princeton University, where he also earned a degree in Psychology. After graduation, Nash was drafted by the San Diego Padres and played a few seasons in the minor leagues. He went abroad for a year as a player-coach in Italy, then moved to New York City to start a career in theater. Now based in Los Angeles, Nash has enjoyed successes on stage, in film, and in network television.

In 2005, Nash began to stretch beyond his award-winning work as an

actor. In addition to writing several screenplays, Nash launched Tall Tales Productions to create independent film projects. Most recently, Nash wrote, produced, and directed the dramatic short *Universal Remote*, which was screened at film festivals across the country (including Louisville’s Bluegrass Independent Film Festival).



Jimmy “Rip” Ripley (Richey Nash), the anti-hero of the award-winning screenplay *Hitting the Cycle*.

Already in Lexington for pre-production, Nash plans to begin filming *Hitting the Cycle* in early August at locations throughout Central Kentucky. Key scenes in the film take place at Applebee’s Park, with “Rip” on the Lexington Legends roster. Hoping to make it back to the Major Leagues, Rip is instead cut from the team. Reluctantly, he returns home after an absence of more than 15 years to face his estranged family, tackle his inner demons, and discover a life beyond the diamond.

Nash’s very different homecoming for *Hitting the Cycle* will create a ripple

effect in the Central Kentucky filmmaking community. Stein points out advantages for students and alumni of the Filmmaking Certificate Program at Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC), where Stein serves on the BCTC Foundation’s Board of Directors: “One of the byproducts of supporting a project like this is the

to broaden their experience. Nash explained, “From an industry standpoint, it’s always beneficial to cast a few known actors from LA or New York in your film. ‘Name’ talent can help immensely in the eventual marketing and sale of an independent project such as ours. But there are close to 30 principal roles in *Hitting the Cycle*, and over half of these will be cast in Lexington and the surrounding areas. So we’re very excited about finding and working with local talent, which seems to be in abundance here.”

While Rip Ripley has reservations about reconnecting with contacts from the high school where he never earned a diploma, Nash has actively courted multiple generations of Henry Clay Blue Devils for his film project. Veteran film editor Harry B. Miller III, based in LA since the 1980s, signed onto *Hitting the Cycle* after having worked with Nash on short films. Miller then recruited his screenwriting collaborator and brother, John Winn Miller, a former foreign correspondent, investigative journalist, and daily newspaper editor and publisher—and a Henry Clay classmate of Alan Stein’s.

This summer, many more Lexingtonians will get the chance to join Nash’s team on-camera and behind-the-scenes. For more information about *Hitting the Cycle*, visit the film’s official website at www.HTCmovie.com or e-mail info@HTCmovie.com. Even Tates Creek Commodores are welcome to apply.

Jennifer Miller (jenniferbethmiller@insightbb.com) is a Lexington attorney and community activist, and the Cruise Director of March Madness Marching Band. She is also the most recent HCHS Blue Devil (and Miller) to join Nash’s production team.

Music

Spotlight: Renee Rigdon

By Sunny Montgomery

Her husband won’t let her have a blowtorch. Her anxiety can be cream-filled and self-indulgent and if she were a superhero she might be called Cheesecake Chippy. These are the kinds of things one might learn of local poetess Renee Rigdon during one of her lively readings. Rigdon, like many other local writers, has found her voice through the Holler Poet Series’ open-mike.

Certainly by now most Lexingtonians are familiar with the series, founded by Eric Sutherland and hosted by Al’s Bar. Each month features a different Kentucky writer, from the nationally known Silas House to local celebrities like Donna Ison. Since its beginning in 2008, Holler Poets Series has become a sort of haven for local poets, songsters and misfit writers alike to rally together, unstress with a few whiskey shots and then share their words during the no holds barred open-mike. This is where I first met Rigdon last April when she “popped her Holler cherry,” as Sutherland so elegantly phrases it.

“I hadn’t spoken in front of a large group of people since I was in sixth grade,” says Rigdon of her premiere performance. “It was really a leap of faith that no one would chuck a beer bottle at my head like something out of *Blues Brothers*,” she said, laughing,

making me wonder what kind of barbarous grade school she attended. Rigdon debuted that April evening with “Self Indulgent Crème-Filled Anxiety,” a smart and honest poem about a girl panicking before reading at an open-mike, distracting herself with thoughts of Twinkies and the promise of getting drunk afterward.

Anyone who’s been courageous enough to stand in front of strangers and share their poetry, and there are always plenty of us at Holler, can wholly relate to this poem. Instantly, Rigdon found herself a Holler favorite.

In fact, she has accrued such a fan base since that debut that the term “Renee-iacs” has been coined among her devotees. Her appeal is palpable; she is a strong performer and an accessible writer.

“The thing I like best about her work is her diversity of subject,” says Sutherland. “You never know what’s going to come out of her mouth but you can guarantee it will be intense and lit like a house fire.” Her topics have ranged from being a fat girl in the summertime, to misguided feminism, to the tribulations of being a writer as seen in—my personal favorite—“Federico,” where she battles writer’s block after her ideas are seduced to San Juan for a “whirlwind romance” with Federico and “his tight cotton pants.”



Renee Rigdon reads in the Holler Poets Series.

She can be snarky or sentimental, but each month Rigdon brings it with authenticity. “I’m always going for truth,” she says. “No matter what I am writing, no matter how topical, esoteric or insane. Through the other writers I have met at Holler, I’ve learned how to better tell the truth with my words. Similarly,” she continues, “spending time at Al’s Bar has taught me exactly how much gin I can have and still read words on a page.” Rigdon even goes as far to credit Holler for a more balanced relationship with her husband. “He no longer bears the sole brunt of my rhyme attacks,” she explains.

Currently, Rigdon is collaborating on a project called “Sisters Provocateur,” which will feature poetry, dance and immersion theater. (Full disclosure: your author is a member of Sisters Provocateur.) Sisters Provocateur will debut June 25 at the Loudon House Fourth Friday event. Make sure to catch Rigdon then, alongside a group of local women writers whose mission is to prove that “poetry doesn’t have to be pretentious, brainy doesn’t have to be boring and sexy doesn’t have to be skinny,” a group of women writers that, not surprisingly, she met through Holler Poet Series.

Cosmic Charlie’s (cont.)

continued from page 1

Concert promoter and owner of Sprouse House Productions, Nick Sprouse is familiar with concert venues being targeted by noise ordinance violations. He worked as The Dame’s booking agent for six years where he witnessed selective enforcement of noise violations firsthand. He wonders why bars like Two Keys are allowed to be loud while concert venues, for some reason, are not. “Why the double standard?” he asks.

Sprouse posted a message on Facebook expressing disappointment with the recent “witch hunt against live music in Lexington.” He points out that 388 Woodland Avenue, the property Charlie’s currently inhabits, was home to The High Life Lounge, The Library Lounge, Lynagh’s Club, and the original Library Lounge going back to the 1970s. Each of these establishments featured live music, creating a long-established tradition of sound emanating from the University Plaza. This tradition, Sprouse believes, makes it reasonable for nearby residents to expect to hear music from Charlie’s, and he questions whether past incarnations of the property had to deal with such a frequency of noise complaints.

Sprouse’s words caught the attention of many, including Tom Martin, vice president of the Lexington Area Music Alliance (LAMA), an organization formed to “represent the interests of the Lexington area music community.” After meeting with Sprouse, Martin contacted Linda Gorton and Tom Blues of Lexington’s Noise Ordinance Task Force (NOTF) and set up a meeting for June 24. Gorton, Blues, Martin, Sprouse, a city attorney, a Lexington police department representative and others are scheduled to attend the meeting, where LAMA and Sprouse hope to discuss problematic ambiguities of the current noise ordinance.

Incidentally, Gorton and Blues are in the process of drafting a revised noise ordinance with fellow NOTF members, a revision two years in the making. It is LAMA’s hope that any future ordinance will provide more concrete guidelines for venue owners. “The goal is for all parties involved to understand where the other sides are coming from,” Martin said. “In the past, noise ordinance issues weren’t considered with the interests of venues in mind. So we’re hoping to foster a larger conversation on this issue.”

John Tresaloni, owner of Cosmic Charlie’s, says he’d comply with the current ordinance if he knew how. “Police come onto the property because they claim people are calling in noise complaints,” he said. “But we’re surrounded by businesses and college students. We don’t know who’s complaining, so we don’t know how to resolve it. Two of the times we were cited were holidays, when the students were gone. It’s not like an old lady lives across the street. So who could it be? People pumping gas at Speedway?”

Martin thinks Charlie’s has a right to know who’s complaining so the venue can work toward a resolution.

“What is a reasonable level of sound?” Martin asked. “One person’s reasonable is another person’s excessive. It’s an arbitrary definition.”

Tresaloni echoed this thought, asking, “Can you define loud? Is there a decibel level? Because if there was a parameter, we’d take care of it. As it stands, we don’t want to risk money bringing in a band for something like the World Equestrian Games if we’re just going to get shut down at 1:30 and lose a bunch of money.”


Other cities have implemented decibel measurement devices so that police and venue owners are on the same page with regard to acceptable sound levels. This seems like the most likely area for compromise, though Sprouse worries that the decibel parameter might be set too low. “If it’s set at, say, 100 decibels, that might sound like a big number but that’s actually pretty low. It could end up making the problem worse and hurting the audience’s experience.”

Martin, who plays in local band The City, can relate to Sprouse’s assessment. “I measure decibels at our concerts with an iPhone app and, invariably, we get louder as the night goes on. Usually, it starts with our guitar player turning himself up so he can hear, and then the bassist has to turn up to hear, and so on. This is actually pretty common at concerts, but the audience usually doesn’t realize it.”

NOTF members, Martin says, are open to listening to new ideas and he’s confident the upcoming meeting will be the first step toward a broader conversation. “This will be an important discussion about making a long-term impact on the local music scene,” he said. “We want to set up mechanisms so that younger generations won’t have to deal with what Charlie’s is going through down the road.”



Cosmic Charlie’s has been the recipient of noise-related citations.



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Redbeard out-pedals Simpson

But T1 still loses defensive polo showdown

NoC Sports
Coolavin Park

Nick Redbeard generally outdueled Chris Simpson in last Wednesday’s bike polo play, but Simpson got the last laugh when he pushed through a five footer amidst heavy bike traffic to secure a 5-4 victory over his arch nemesis.

Redbeard opened up the scoring for Team 1 (Redbeard, Christina Buckner, and Katie Jo Doerfler) minutes into the match after pickpocketing Team 2’s Megan “3 Street” Stanton at half court and coasting the other way for an easy put-in.

After the quick score, things settled into a defensive showdown with T2 (Simpson, Stanton, and Ben Wood) taking control of the tempo by keeping the ball out of the mallets of T1. Nine minutes into the match, T2 had built a commanding 3-1 lead after Simpson made an incredible three-quarter court shot in transition with Doerfler draped all over him.

The deficit might have finished off lesser teams, but not T1. Behind

a blood curdling redneck yell from Montgomery, Alabama native Buckner, T1 marched back into contention. Redbeard stoned a slashing Simpson drive that threatened to put the match out of reach, then quickly pushed-out to himself and began racing the other way, where 3 Street waited at half court to slow him down. Redbeard had other plans, though, and performed a brilliant nutmeg through 3 Street’s tires. Without missing a crank of the pedal, he continued on past 3 Street untouched to bring T1 to within one score at 3-2.

Redbeard’s feats seemed to alarm Simpson, who a month earlier had been named MVP of the Midwest Championships in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At the time, the lanky reach-around artist was a teammate of Redbeard’s (along with Rich Lopez) on a team that placed an impressive third at the Minnesota championships. The flood of endorsements—not to mention the increased contract demands inevitably accompanying an MVP performance and what some say were vague allegations of boozing

and smoking—overwhelmed the players, and so the team split up nearly as quick as it formed.

Back at Coolavin, Redbeard’s continuous stoning of Simpson—either at the goal or on approach—was beginning to wear on the Midwest MVP. Moments after Redbeard’s nutmeg goal, Simpson again found himself in a one-on-one with the bearded mangiant—this time defending a Redbeard attack on goal. Like all elite players, Simpson picked up his game by performing a skillfully executed reach around on his former teammate for a reverse-court pickpocket and uncontested score to re-cement T2s lead at 4-2.

The score provided a large enough cushion for T2 to cruise to the eventual 5-4 victory.

Notes

Next generation of womyn ball crushers on display

Perhaps sensing that things were beginning to devolve into a debased sausage grudge match after Redbeard

responded to the Simpson reach-around score with a slap from half-court to bring the match to 4-3, T1’s Doerfler and Buckner teamed up for some womyn power. With Doerfler clearing the way, Buckner weaved the entire length of the court like a lead jammer in a ROCK bout, firing off a series of shots on goal as she went. The relentless assault of shots and Doerfler’s bruising clear-out tactics eventually resulted in the tying score, as Buckner, with biceps bulging, finally muscled one in from four feet out.

“There’s a ball there,” Buckner would later say during her post-game interviews, “and if I hit it enough times, it’ll have to go in at some point.”

Though in the end she felt the sting of defeat (along with the rest of T1), longtime observers of the sport find it refreshing to see that, alongside the male rivalry of Simpson and Redbeard, female ball-crushers like Doerfler, Stanton and Buckner continue to flourish within the swelling ranks of Lexington Bike Polo.



Demeaning refs

a bad call

Editor’s Note: Troy Lyle’s recent coverage of the recent ROCK bout against ROSI in Evansville, Indiana, sparked a number of comments on the NoC webpage. Most dealt with Lyle’s treatment of the refs. Below is a solicited response from a league ref, accompanied by Lyle’s take on his coverage.

By Morgan Robertson

Troy,

From your story (ROCK not so rosy against ROSI,” May 19) it appears that you don’t really have an idea of a) how hard reffing is, b) how few good refs there are and how thinly we are spread, and c) how well-integrated refs are into league membership. We’re not the villains out there, we’re part of a large group of volunteers making things derby happen together: skaters, non-skating officials (NSOs), refs, etc. One team. When one of us lets the others down, as seemed to happen at the ROCK/ROSI bout, we all feel bad.

To illustrate my point: I used to ref in Baltimore. At a nearby league during one bout, an announcer got big kicks out of maligning the refs’ calls during the bout. At the end, he loudly hurled abuse that criticized the refs for bad calls that he thought had decided the game. After that game, fans mauled one of the refs in the parking lot, broke his nose, and walked away laughing. After the bout, drunken fans began to loudly plan to go “zebra hunting” and assault a ref in the parking lot -- because it’s all part of the game, right? “Those damn zebras, we’ll show them.” The refs stayed together and there was no incident.

But the fans had beaten up someone and were planning to ambush someone who was considered a league-mate and friend. From the beginning of modern derby, the ref squads have

always been made up of the friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, husbands, brothers, sisters and sons of the skaters. Who else would do it? There are slow moves towards making refs independent of leagues – such as WFTDA national certification – but the reality is that we are as much a part of the derby family as the skaters are.

To portray us as the enemies in the drama of the bout no doubt has narrative satisfactions, but it also has real life consequences. It drives a wedge between the refs and the leagues that they work for/with, and it makes it hard to entice anyone to join the ref squad. And derby simply cannot be played—even a pickup game—without refs. It’s an odd sport that way.

So by all means, report on what happens when the refs screw up, but

continued on the next page



Derby referees hard at work tracking the lead jammer.

Covering officiating

By Troy Lyle

Normally most writers or journalists don’t respond to criticisms, comments or web posts. It simply is not a productive endeavor considering there’s always someone with a beef. But with the overwhelming online response to my ROCK vs. ROSI article in the May 19 edition of North of Center (NoC), I feel compelled to bring this debate to the larger public.

Since the publishing of the article I have been accused of many things, including bias, libel, and poor reporting, to name a few. I’ve been called a “piece of shit,” a “hack reporter,” and not directly, but definitely implied, a malicious person. Fair enough. Everyone’s entitled to an opinion. And what readers think of me is the last thing I worry about when I decide to write an article. Instead I focus on writing what the people I quote see. It’s always their words that set the tone and concentration for a story.

In the coming paragraphs I will do my best to touch on each of the above accusations and explain my viewpoint and motives. But before I begin, I’d like to put a few things on the table about myself, NoC and sports in general. I’m a writer. Whether good or bad is arguable. Nonetheless I write, and often. And for publications other than NoC. What separates me from the average guy or gal is a) I took the time and effort to write in the first place, and b) I write for NoC, a somewhat unorthodox, somewhat radical and always free bimonthly publication.

It’s safe to say NoC doesn’t work under the same standards or principals as other large industry publications. A

couple of visual cues, like the presence of the words “shit” and “fuck,” seem to make this point obvious. That is in no way meant to say there aren’t standards at NoC. There most certainly are. But the common assumptions of objective journalism do not apply here. That’s why we started the paper in the first place, to represent viewpoints often marginalized in mainstream reporting, and to represent those viewpoints in alternative ways. (Hence, a sports page that regularly covers, among other things, roller derby.)

In addition, I don’t receive a single cent for my work at NoC. I write and cover local sports, as well as other subjects, out of a love for community and a desire to bring exposure to fringe activities that are often overlooked. And if NoC were to try and pay me, I’d thankfully decline. I like it the way it is—I write because I want to, not because I have to. Not to mention that NoC has no money. We are constantly rubbing two nickels together to get each publication to print. I can’t begin to explain just how much NoC is a labor of love. In a lot of ways the paper is like a derby team. There’s no money or fame, just friends trying to make a difference in the lives of each other and a community.

As far as sports are concerned, I realize there are few subjects that incite more passion and conviction from fans and participants alike. Look no further than the string of heated responses resulting from my latest ROCK coverage and you’ll know what I’m talking about. But sports do not exist in isolation when it comes to reporting. Some of the individuals who have been quick to criticize my ROCK vs. ROSI coverage say I should be building the sport up, not tearing it down. I couldn’t agree more. That’s what I’ve been doing all along, but which few of the individuals who criticized me even acknowledged. Their gross lack of interest in my previous reporting is a direct slap in the face of the skaters they claim to love, not a slap to me. I could care less what anyone thinks of me personally. But I do care if roller derby has fans in the seats, or if roller derby continues to grow, or what is going on in the lives of the numerous women who make roller derby happen.

Another criticism vaulted my way centered on my so called desire to demean derby refs. Nothing could be further from the truth. But when refs fail, as was perceived in the case of the ROCK vs. ROSI bout, they are by no means immune to criticism. Refs are subject to the pen, just like politicians,

continued on the next page

Opinion

Letters: organs and aesthetics

Mighty Wurlitzer also a part of KY Theatre experience

After reading Colleen Glenn’s informative article (“Kentucky Theatre Summer Classic Movies Series returns May 26,” May 19) about nearly all aspects of the 2010 Kentucky Theatre’s Summer Series—including the anticipation of the series, assemblage of the movies, people involved, Flash Gordon Series, and a synopsis of each feature film—were covered. However, there was no mention of one very essential item which is experienced before each matinee and evening feature picture, and has been a part of the Classic Series Film Series since 2001!

Kentucky’s Mighty Wurlitzer-Theatre Organ Project, Inc continues each Series with pre-show mini-concerts on the 2-Manual Conn Theatre Organ (a 1959 tube model), which recreates the movie patron’s experience of the “Golden Age of the movie palace,” and at no cost to the Kentucky Theatre Group, Inc or movie patrons.

These pre-show mini-concerts foreshadow the return of the 3/18 Mighty Wurlitzer to its original venue, the historic Kentucky Theatre. Nowhere in the Commonwealth of Kentucky can a movie patron have this Kentucky Theatre Summer Classic Series theatre organ experience; albeit electronically, until the Wurlitzer returns home.

Want more information? Visit our website www.kywurlitzer.com for detailed information about this special project for Lexington and the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

H. Steven Brown, President
Kentucky’s Mighty Wurlitzer-Theatre Organ Project, Inc.

Aesthetics do matter

The core of Andrew Battista’s article “The downtown brand wars” (May 19) seems to be a critique over priorities, specifically the concern shown for aesthetics by ProgressLex while the near-downtown poor lack “the amenities that most people in Lexington would deem essential.” Battista points out the deep poverty in nearby wards, populated by many without cars who need a near-by drugstore, suburban box or not. Those poor also suffer from absentee landlords who let their houses crumble, not an aesthetic sight—except, as Battista notes, that Thoroughbred Park blocks the view. The poor, generally, are unaesthetic. Better to keep them out of sight.



And yet, for all these good points, I think Battista sets up a false dichotomy. The drugstore is going to be built and how it looks, how it fits into the “design” of downtown is important. Battista sneers at what he perceives as an elitist sneer directed towards suburban vulgarity. But that vulgarity is real and not just a question of taste. The sameness, the corporate strip-mall, has killed the feeling of uniqueness in many cities and towns across America. I wonder if Battista thinks the poor are not interested in aesthetics. They might not discuss its fine points over wine and cheese, but I believe they are. Generations of architects have thought design was only for the rich and given us housing projects that would kill anyone’s spirit. Poor design is not just aesthetics: it says you’re not worth much. It says if you

have an identity, it’s not a concern of ours.

Of course Battista thinks we should better spend our limited energy on other fights, and maybe he’s right. But picking a fight with other progressives is not a good use of energy, either. I wish ProgressLex well in their struggle with CVS. An inviting, pleasing design welcoming us to the core of downtown won’t recreate Hutchinson’s, but it might say we’re not Anyplace, U.S.A—we’re Lexington. That Lexington should not, as Battista details, be all horsey upper-crust. That also excludes. But a downtown drugstore can be of a design that exudes some atmosphere of respect towards the town and its patrons, some acknowledgment that we are a different place, a place with its own identity. Everyone, poor and rich, will notice such a design. It will make us all feel better.

Joe Anthony

Andrew responds:

I do appreciate the feedback I have received from Joe Anthony and other readers, but I also resent the suggestion that picking a fight with other progressives is a waste of energy (members of ProgressLex have also accused me of wasting energy). I wrote the article because I want to see Lexington move closer toward an egalitarian downtown. ProgressLex is not exempt from critique just because it bills itself as progressive, or because it sees itself as fighting the good fight against vulgar corporations. Even though ProgressLex means well, I earnestly question how progressive their campaign against CVS—or their general lobbying for urban design standards for downtown—really is. I perceive ProgressLex as an enclave of Lexington’s privileged class—designers, craftspeople, architects, tenured academics—who wax nostalgic for fashionable neighborhoods and seek to preserve what are essentially background stage props, necessary to create a fantastical, authentic, and “enriching” urban experience for them to enjoy.

No one in this discussion so far has taken the time to articulate how architectural aesthetics actually improve the lives of people, or why their ideal of an urban design model (whatever that is, anyway) is actually more socially equitable than other models, like stucco and boxes. Meanwhile, multiple arguments can be made that the specific features ProgressLex demands (two stories, rustic brick façades, large windows, wrought iron fencing) collectively reinforce division between a privileged space for upper-middle class, mostly white citizens and an underprivileged space for lower-class, mostly minority citizens, who have to live

with the aesthetic blight of liquor stores with caged windows, abandoned shoe repair shops, and a Family Dollar that illuminates the corner of a residential block during evening hours.

And I do think that poor people care about aesthetics. However, I can say that from my conversations with East End neighbors that there are far more people happy that the new Equestrian View subdivision expansion has produced, safe, environmentally-friendly, and affordable downtown housing then there are people angry that these houses look like the same drab suburban plots you’d find in Masterson Station, Hamburg, or other exurban divisions.

I would like to see this discussion to continue to develop and explore what a just and inclusive urban design model might look like.

Demeaning refs (cont.)

continued from the previous page

try to resist launching simple abuse at the refs. Instead, investigate! What are the reasons behind the complaints? Surely there’s a story there -- find it! It turns out there was a lot going on in Evansville that had nothing to do with our desire to “stuff penalties into a jam.”

Would you write this (“refs” replaced with “ROCK players” in your original text) about ROCK skaters?

- “Then ROCK players went to shit. For some reason they felt compelled to ruin a perfectly good derby bout with a string of senseless plays.”
- “One could tell there was too much pride at stake to let ROCK’s incompetence get the best of ROSI’s seasoned derby squad.”
- “The ROCK players were up to their nonsense once again in the next to last jam of the day.”

You might, but it wouldn’t be considered fair. Yet in fact, you did write that about ROCK members, volunteers and the volunteers of several other leagues.

A ref asking for respect is likely wasting her or his time -- unpopularity comes with the job. And what makes derby amazing is that it’s “for the skaters, by the skaters” – it’s not about refs.

Covering sports (cont.)

continued from the previous page

who conduct their business in public, i.e. a derby bout. All one need do to prove this is type “referee criticized by” in a simple search engine for thousands of examples. What seems to be lost by the numerous individuals criticizing my article is the fact that the overall feel and tone of the article was established by ROCK’s skaters and coaches, not by me. I simply, at worst, embellished their viewpoints of the refs’ performance.

Put differently, my article that appeared in a free Lexington biweekly paper focused on the Lexington roller derby team ROCK; no matter how great an article on the refs might be, that subject was not the subject of my article. And given my audience—a Lexington readership naturally more interested in following the ups and downs of their hometown all-girls roller derby team than the trials and tribulations of a geographically dispersed group of (mostly male) referees—nor should it have been.

For the roller derby refs who felt my reporting was, and I quote, “crass, libel,” don’t take it personally. I know I didn’t take your criticisms to heart. It’s all part of the process of engaging in a greater debate. There’s no reason to be mean spirited since we’re all working to make roller derby better. And if I’ve failed in this regard with previous comments or reporting I apologize. My intentions once again were not to degrade. We at NoC have called out numerous individuals over the course of the last two years. It’s actually quite common if you read our publication regularly, or even just our sports section.

In the past year, for example, I’ve coined the term “Mayer fade” in disc golf to refer to “outstanding early round play...followed by a complete and utter choke-fest, usually occurring on a single hole” (“Mapman blows out the competition,” Jan 13). The name refers directly to the humorously chaotic play of NoC’s editor, Danny Mayer. Other sports page articles have asked for a public apology from an unidentified Alley Cat racer who led his lead pack astray (“Stanton and Hord skate to Alley Cat victories,” Jan 13), noted visible hangovers from bike polo players during tournament play, and renamed Lexington’s richest and holiest saint “Coach Coal.” With the notable exception of Coach Coal—face-man for a hopelessly corrupt and detached perversion of sports—we do these things because sports are games. If Mayer shits the pot on holes 14, 15 and 16 to

But since you’ve taken the time to get to know derby through ROCK, it’d be nice if you tried to understand the time and effort and dedication put in by refs. We train weekly, memorize a 36-page rules book, and simultaneously call penalties and count points while dodging fallen skaters and keeping up with the sprinting jammers. We skate 7 miles each bout, and never sit down. There may be harder officiating jobs, but I don’t know of any. It’s incredibly rewarding, however, and I encourage any smart, athletic men and women out there to put on stripes and join us.

None of this is meant to imply that the refs at the ROSI/ROCK bout were doing a great job. They clearly had some problems and there is a crying scarcity of well-trained refs out there. Except for WFTDA-level bouts, most refs are currently learning on-the-job. This is a real problem -- but the solution probably does not involve vilifying referees. You should really try volunteering as an NSO for one bout. From the infield you get a much better sense of how refs make the bout work. A blown call here or there seems a lot less significant (not that it should happen) when you realize how much the refs have to do just to keep the wheels moving.

Morgan Robertson is a Certified Referee, Level II, in the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association

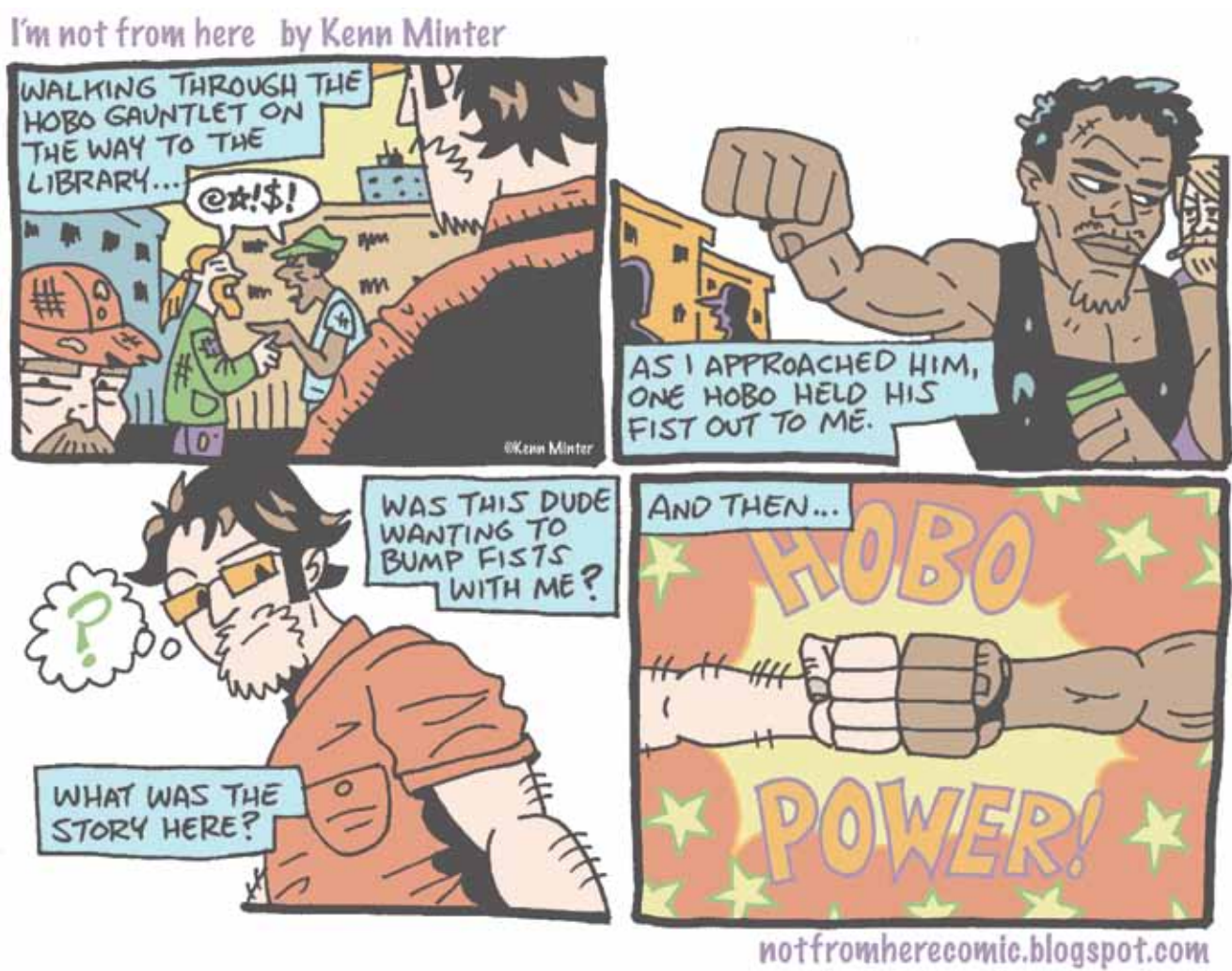
absolutely devastate his score and any hopes of placing in the PF Open, so be it. He can still laugh about it. The same goes for refs who blow calls. Get over it; sports are meant to be fun.

There are two other points worth fleshing out here. One has already been stated above. NoC functions under a more progressive and independent set of reporting rules. The other is a very narrow view of journalism displayed by many of those who posted on our website. Journalism is not designed to report on subjects only in positive manners, of which I have done so extensively when it comes to roller derby. Instead journalism is meant to be the voice of the people, in this case the women of roller derby. That voice is, and should be, both affirming and questioning. Both are valid and much needed to maintain a healthy democracy.

What has not been mentioned by myself, or by those criticizing the piece, is the fact that no roller derby women, not one ROCK or ROSI skater that I know of, has come forth to wage a single dissatisfied comment about how I covered their bout or my critique of the refs that day. Not a single one. I’m not saying this makes my position correct. It’s simply to point out a much larger and unspoken truth in all of this exchange. It’s high time I, and dare I say, we men quit confiscating a sport meant for women. Haven’t we men done enough to confiscate what little women have to call their own? I think we know the answer.

Roller derby is supposed to be about empowering women, about uniting females and giving them a platform by which to compete and have fun—all while making them more active citizens and stronger individuals. I can’t count the times I’ve heard a derby girl say she was shy, or unconfident, or a loner, until she started derby. Roller derby builds confidence, promotes positive expressions of womanhood and allows individual skaters to realize their potential through the greater actions of the whole.

With that said, this is the last time I’ll comment on my reporting of roller derby. You will hear nothing else out of me on this subject. Instead I’ll let the women do the talking. I’ll let the women take control of their sport that was started for their benefit. Oh, that doesn’t mean I won’t be there cheering on the girls of ROCK. I there certainly will, and I’ll continue to cover their matches in NoC. And if ROCK says the refs screwed up, then that’s what I’ll report.



FUNK. ROCK. BLUES.

Lipstick Pistol

BUDDY'S BAR & GRILL

FRIDAY 6/18

SQUIRE'S TAVERN

FRIDAY 6/25

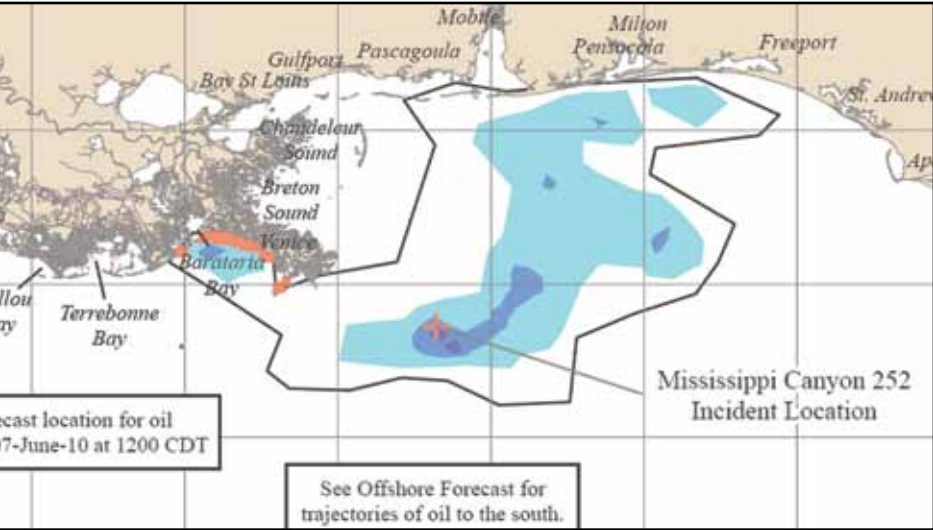
The Bees Knees

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NOAA 24-hour oil trajectory map, charting the spread of the Deepwater Horizon spill.

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