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THE LONDON YODELLER

March 13, 2014
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A Fraternal Reunion in the Antipodes

Herman Goodden

DECADES ago I recognized that summer is the season I find most oppressive. Not wanting to be a year-round whiner I made a sort of pact with the world that I'd restrict my meteorological grumbling to June through August and this hasn't been a hard bargain to keep. Not being a driver I've been able to maintain a child's love of snow – the heavier the better, say I – up to the present day. No matter how inconvenient snow might be or how boring it is to shovel the stuff multi-

ple times during the same day, I can never go out into a freshly polarized landscape without thinking to myself, "This really is one of the most beautiful things that our world gets up to."

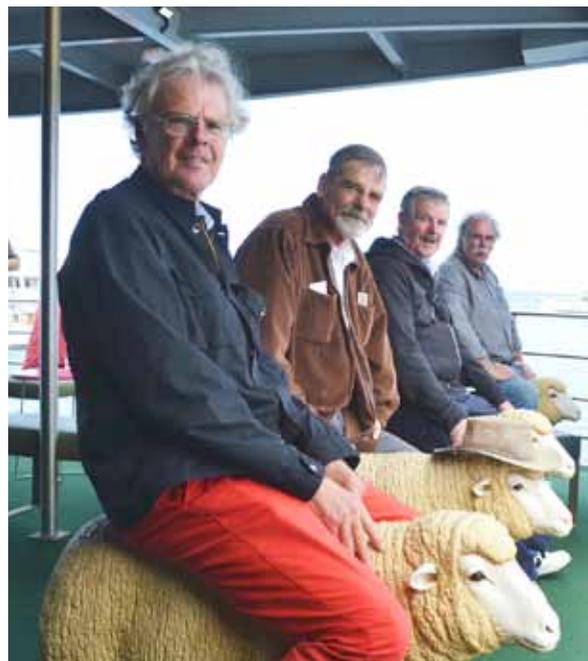
So I've never wanted to flee a Canadian winter but this past month I have been doing just that when an opportunity arose to be with all three of my brothers in Australia – the first time we've all been together since burying our father ten years ago. It was my oldest brother Dave who first threw a spanner into easy Goodden-reunion planning in 1969 by chasing his wife-to-be Liz down to her home town of Melbourne after meeting her in Canada on the last leg of her own globe-trotting trek. With or without Liz and/or daughter Kate in tow, Dave manages to make it up to Canada every three or four years and unfailingly extends his invitation to each of us to come out to the other side of the world.

Our parents made the gruelling, international dateline-crossing trek in 1980 to see their then-five year-old (and only) grandchild in her natural habitat. Crossing that dateline lends a decidedly Twilight Zone aspect to Canada/Australia treks. My airline itinerary says that it took two days to fly from Toronto to Melbourne and will take no days whatsoever – in fact I gain a couple hours - to fly from Melbourne to British Columbia where I'll stay for another four days with my eldest daughter and her family before returning to London where I hear that winter is hanging on with a vengeance just for me. Sorry about that.

My other two older brothers and I were able to resist Australia's call so long as all three of us resided in London and Dave was prepared to schlep his way up to us every few years. But then Ted, the second-born, started messing with that arrange-

ment by routinely summering out on B.C.'s Hornby Island and then moving there altogether two years ago this spring. It's always great to get together with any of the brothers but all four of us were starting to miss that special frisson – a sort of snapping into place of all the necessary elements to empower a full electrical circuitry of unadulterated Goodden-ness that only occurs when all of us reconstellate in our original formation.

Accompanying us has been Dave Dell, aka the Dell Dog, first an early childhood friend of third born Bob, who, because the older three were born within 17 and then 14 months of one another, was soon taken up as a good friend of all of them. (In an act of regenerative mercy that our mother greatly appreciated, I followed three and a half years later.) He's always been a sort of avuncular figure to me;



The brothers Goodden en route to the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart, Tasmania

one of the few of my brothers' friends who never gave me a hard time and would even put up with me if I wanted to sit in with them. Being practical and technically competent in a way that Gooddens sadly are not, Swamper Dan (he also has more nicknames than should be allowable; I'm sparing you at least two others) has been indispensable to our entire Australian mission – helping to book our flights, ensuring that we meet them, presenting us with agendas each morning for the day ahead and photographically chronicling the entire adventure.

I had my first real swim in an ocean on our first Wednesday here

and it was a revelation. Ted successfully got me to float for five minutes at a stretch; something I've never been able to do in fresh water. It's the salt in the water that does the trick, and boy, can you ever taste it. I think it was my first acquisition of a major life skill since my wife taught me how to blow bubble gum bubbles on our third or fourth date in 1970.

Aside from koalas and platypuses and 'roos, an absence of snow, a plenitude of large, noisy birds and palm and gum trees, and having its own distinctive architecture largely defined by measures taken to mitigate the glare of the sun, Australia really is a lot like Canada.

You have the British Empire influence at its almost simultaneous founding (place names feature the same mix of Empire and Aboriginal nomenclature), the struggle against overbearing American culture (I sighed when the first thing I spotted on Australian TV at the Sydney airport was Ellen Degeneres) and the preponderance of settlement taking place on the fringes - along the American border with Canada, around the outer rim here.

Early last week we rented a van for a four day tour of the southeastern island-state of Tasmania - the most wooded and mountainous and temperate (its closer proximity to Antarctica shaves a few degrees off the blistering daily highs) of all eight Australian states and territories. On our second night we lucked into a beautiful inn on a steep hillside in Bicheno with a heart-stopping view of the ocean and nocturnal visits from a herd of kangaroos.

The next morning I dropped into the manager's office to pick up some email with his wi-fi and walking me back down to our van, he said he'd never hosted an expedition like ours before. "I think a lot of people would like the idea of doing what you're doing but then they'd have to ask themselves, 'Could I really stick it with my family for three or four weeks?' You fellas really seem to get along. You're lucky that way." Indeed we are.

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London, Ontario N6A 1H3

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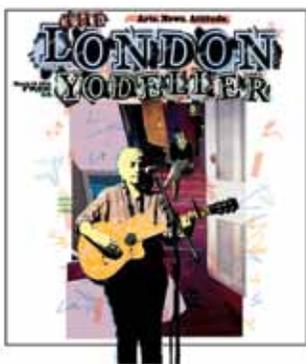
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
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The London Yodeller is
published bi-weekly.

Next issue: March 27, 2014

Printed in London, Ontario, Canada
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FRONT COVER: OLENKA
ARTWORK: JUSTIN WARREN



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The Ides of March herald the future for Gondola Joe Fontana

Barry Wells



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AS WE APPROACH the third full moon of 2014, the ominous Ides of March and ancient Roman festival of Mamuralia - when a scapegoat in the form of an old man dressed in animal skins was ritually beaten like a rented mule and driven from the city - it's an apt time to consider London's unfolding municipal election, Gondola Joe Fontana's May 26th criminal trial and his iffy chances of re-election.

Voting Day is Monday, October 27th, when 2014's autumn frost will be on the soon-to-be-carved pumpkin.

Municipal election years are always a fun-filled time; some even call it "silly season," when our "lame duck" city council and its members are prone to proclaiming wacky things as they face their Day of Reckoning in the finicky court of public opinion. In Fontana's case, there's also the Middlesex County Court of Justice at 80 Dundas Street.

In the silly season department, you may remember Mayor Joe floated the unusual idea last January of

a system of cable cars strung high above the scenic Thames River.

"It came to me that one of the most beautiful things we could do is to put a gondola overhead of our river as it connects SoHo and the Forks of the Thames, especially when we're going to have cafés, walkways, cycleways along our river," said Mayor Joe. This nifty idea went over like a lead balloon amid much hilarity from London's plebes.

Was Gondola Joe into the vino when he concocted this vision of alpine urban splendour? Unfortunately, we may never know. I predict here and now that Mayor Joe, 64, won't be filing his nomination papers for re-election, regardless of

the outcome of his upcoming trial for allegations of fraud under \$5,000, breach of trust of a public official and uttering a forged document, dating back to 2005 when he was a veteran Liberal MP for London North-Centre.

If I'm wrong on that, I predict mayoral candidate Matt Brown, the respected one-term councillor from Ward 7, will soundly defeat him in October. "Why is that?" you likely ask.

SHAM CHARITY: Tarnishing Fontana's credibility and reputation is his involvement as chairman of the board of the sham charity, Trinity Global Support Foundation, which purported to fight HIV-AIDS and assist disadvantaged children the world over. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) revoked Trinity's charitable status on May 4, 2013 - following an April 23, 2013 ruling by the Federal Court of Appeal - after a CRA investigation revealed, amongst other irregularities, that eight million dollars in tax-receipted donations were shovelled to Fontana's boyhood pal-former business partner, Vince Ciccone, who in Sept. 2012 was ordered to repay investors \$15.5-million, as well as \$750,000 in administrative penalties and \$100,000 in costs to the Ontario Securities Commission.

This unseemly chain of events prompt two (slightly altered) adages to spring to mind: "A

shyster friend in need is a friend indeed" and "A sham charity begins at home."

As a result, in my view at least, our mayor-chief magistrate's goose is likely cooked, noting Fontana defeated his predecessor, Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, by only 2,537 votes on Oct. 25, 2010. Simply put, JoFo's chances of re-election, with such a shaky mandate to begin with, are slim to none and Slim Pickins left town.

ELECTION ROSTER: At press time, there's 45 registered candidates for London's municipal election, six for the mayor's swivel chair and 39 for London's 14 wards. No one has registered for the lower-profile school board trustee positions, although that will change in the months ahead when people discover the pay's not too shabby (about \$17,000 annually), with one-tenth the media scrutiny or hassle of council members.

With Ward 7 Coun. Matt Brown running for mayor and Cllrs. Joni Baechler, Nancy Branscombe, Dale Henderson and Judy Bryant announcing they're throwing in the towel, no incumbents will be running in Wards 5, 6, 7, 9 and 13.

Incumbent Cllrs. Joe Swan in Ward 3, Paul Van Meerbergen in Ward 10 and Harold Usher in Ward 12, have yet to announce their noble intentions, although it wouldn't be surprising if at least one of the above three all-stars declined to seek re-election. Swan, in particular, as Fontana's Kamikaze co-pilot, is likely to return to private life, either by the ballot box or on his own accord.

There's a chance, however, Swan could migrate over to run in Ward 6, an area he represented for 12 years when it was Ward 2 from 1988 to 2000 - if former Ward 3 Coun. Bernie MacDonald, 70, comes out of retirement (Lord forbid) after 48 months of year-round golfing, here and in Florida.

Visit www.AltLondon.org daily to see the updated list of candidates.

CITY HALL TRIVIA: Ward 1 Coun. Bud Polhill has nearly 26 years of uninterrupted service under his belt, after first being elected in 1988. Next in the seniority line is Ward 2 Coun. Bill Armstrong, who has nearly 20 years of service after first being elected in 1994.

Bud Polhill's son, Steve Polhill, is running against Bill Armstrong in Ward 2 for the third time. In 2006, Armstrong defeated Polhill the Younger by 879 votes; in 2010, Armstrong won by only 200 votes, so Armstrong is understandably nervous in the service in 2014. Bud's Polhill's daughter, Sheri Polhill, works for the City of London and has been a trustee with the Thames Valley District School Board since 2006. Both Bud and Steve Polhill are licensed grease monkeys aka "automotive technicians" at Bud Polhill Automotive on Admiral Court in London's east end.



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Paula Adamick



Courtesy: trolinukitus.it

DAYS AFTER Russian puppet Victor Yanukovich fled his presidential palace amidst massive demonstrations during the final days of the Sochi 2014 Olympics, Russian president Vladimir Putin responded by sending troops into Crimea. This was soon followed by the Crimean parliament voting to join Russia.

Will Putin invade the rest of Ukraine? As I write, the answer is obvious: Putin will do whatever he wants because he can.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry can splutter about Putin playing 19th century politics in a 21st century world all he wants. He can't conceal the truth of the Obama administration which has been exposed as never before as disastrously incompetent and inadequate, while leaving Putin fairly certain that the West, including the European Union, will do nothing of any consequence to stop him.

Putin knows Ukraine cannot defend itself, either financially or militarily.

For that, the Ukrainian people can thank U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. In December 1994, Ukraine signed a Memorandum on Security Assurances in which Ukrainians were promised by then U.S. president Clinton (and reaffirmed in 2009 by Obama) that their territory, including Crimea, would be inviolate if they would agree to reduce their army and largely destroy their weaponry.

So much for warm and squishy assurances. Twenty years on, the self-congratulatory smiles of Clinton, British prime minister John Major, Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma, and Russian president Boris Yeltsin stand for nothing.

The historical reality – that the world has always been governed by the aggressive use of force – has again reasserted itself, along with information from the British press reminding readers that it was Barack Obama who, as a new senator in 2005, travelled to Kiev with U.S. senator Richard Lugar to further weaken Ukraine by supplying \$48-million in federal funding to help Ukraine destroy more than 400,000 small arms, 1,000 anti-aircraft missiles, and more than 15,000 tons of ammunition – the very weapons now unavailable to the Ukrainian army as it faces down Putin.

At the time, Obama said: “We need to eliminate these stockpiles for the safety of the Ukrainian people and people around the world, by keeping them out of conflicts around the world.”

Oops.

Whether the reality-free Obama administration is embarrassed remains to be seen.

The point was not lost on the editors of such venerable American publications as the Washington Post, however, which weighed in on the crisis in order to look less idiotic than the regime it has been so blindly supporting.

In a scathing editorial March 4, titled Obama's Foreign Policy Based on Fantasy, the Post lamented: “For five years, President Obama has led a foreign policy based more on how he thinks the world should operate than on reality. It was a world in which 'the tide of war is receding' and the United

Tell Vladimir that after my election I will have more flexibility.

Barack Obama to Dmitry Medvedev
in an open mic gaffe in Seoul, March 26, 2012

States could, without much risk, radically reduce the size of its armed forces. According to this vision, other leaders would behave rationally and in the interest of their people and the world. Invasions, brute force, great-power games and shifting alliances — these were things of the past. Kerry displayed this mindset on ABC's This Week when he complained of Russia's invasion of neighboring Ukraine: 'It's a 19th century act in the 21st century.'"

Unfortunately, the Post noted, Putin did not receive the memo on 21st-century behaviour. Neither has China's president, Xi Jinping, who's engaging in gunboat diplomacy against Japan and the weaker nations of Southeast Asia. Putin's government is also negotiating with Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Algeria, Cyprus, the Seychelles, Vietnam and Singapore for access to facilities that could be used to extend the long-range capabilities of Russia's navy and strategic bombers.

Is Putin planning to reassemble the former Soviet Union? Or is he simply reacting to the threat to his gas pipelines posed by the overthrow of his Ukrainian stooge?

Russia's main export to the 28-country EU and Ukraine is natural gas. This is Russia's lifeline, providing the EU with a quarter of all its gas and billing \$100-million a day. Half of Ukraine's gas comes from Russia too, giving Putin a near stranglehold on the entire region.

This is real geopolitical power. By threatening to turn off the lights, heat and taps, Russia can exert critical pressure on the EU's already fragile economy. Such power also gives Russia the potential to starve Ukraine, just as Stalin did in 1932.

So, given Russia's leverage over Kiev, what are the chances the EU and the U.S. will back away from imposing meaningful sanctions or blocking important Russian bank accounts?

Very high, particularly given the number of times Russia has turned off or reduced gas supplies to Ukraine in the past ten years, and given the fact that the EU and Britain are already captive customers.

Through Gazprom, Putin has the ability to make or break the Ukrainian economy, pushing Ukraine off the economic precipice unless the IMF comes to their rescue with conditional loans.

Meanwhile, troubling questions remain about Obama's handling of Benghazi, Egypt, Libya and Syria as president Bashar al-Assad wages a very 20th-century war with Russian support.

As for the effectiveness of Obama's repeated threats over crossing 'red lines', the Syrian dictator's military and diplomatic position has only strengthened. Nor will Assad, Xi Jinping or Putin be deterred by the disapproval of peers or the weight of world opinion. As with earlier leaders in world history, they are concerned primarily with maintaining their holds on power.

This while Kerry harrumphs: “You can't fight a Twenty-First Century war with a Nineteenth Century tactic! You can't do that! You can't violate pieces of paper!”

Sadly, such elitist naivete and hubris eventually produces dire consequences. In a world which has always been governed by the aggressive use of force, America's allies no longer feel confident the U.S. can be counted on. As America retreats and reduces her military strength to pre-1940 levels, her trustworthiness under Obama has also been found wanting, even laughable.

In addition, Obama's catastrophic foreign policy is turning the tide against democracy – a postwar tide of freedom that once seemed so inexorable.

Which means that the crucial importance of the U.S. acting as an agent for good in the world since World War II by helping nations to attain democratic freedom is now being demonstrated in the breach created by Obama.

The Ukrainian people can now depend only on themselves to determine their future and whether or not it will be free.

The Ugly Truth about Public Sector Unions and Entitlement

Mary Lou Ambrogio

NEITHER SNOW nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

Those inspiring words are the unofficial motto of the United States Postal Service.

I had occasion to think about these words recently when I realized that the swift Canada Post letter carriers assigned to deliver mail to my house, hadn't been stopping by for about two weeks. The only mail I get with any regularity these days is a few bills and a lot of junk mail, so I was in some ways happy for the break from the unwelcome mis-sives and wasn't overly fussed about the "why"?

It was the appearance of a passive/aggressive sticky note that some scold left on my mailbox that clued me in to the "why". According to this, "Break the Ice," sticky note, snow and ice were an impediment to the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

I have some sympathy with our noble couriers and will concede that this winter has been a challenge with regard to shoveling and ice picking but I found it passing strange that the kids who deliver the Penny Saver (for pennies a piece!) and the Jehovah's Witnesses who voluntarily bring the good news of God's Kingdom in their "Awake!" magazine, were still managing to scale the (apparently) Himalayan terrain in front of my home. I guess it all comes down to motivation.

Which brings me to my point and one of our biggest problems: **Entitlement.**

There's a funny thing that happens to people once they find themselves in what would appear to be an ideal employment situation. An "ideal" employment situation would include things like: better than average wages, top of the line perks in the form of benefits and pension plans, (especially non-taxable benefits) and rock solid security of the kind that means you will not experience any major disruptions during your income earning years no matter how much you deserve to lose your job.

Given that most people have experienced the opposite of ideal at some point, if not throughout their whole working career, if you suddenly found yourself in the ideal situation, wouldn't you be inclined to count your blessings every day and commit to not losing that perspective? That perspective would mean that even while no job is perfect, you'd be able to dismiss minor annoyances because, on

balance, you'd know how fortunate you are to be in a situation where the negatives of a job are seriously outweighed by the positives which you enjoy.

Unfortunately, there's no utility for the union bosses in having public sector workers who know how lucky they are so they must instead sow dissent and stoke the sense of entitlement that the union workers carry. "The Union makes us Strong", indeed.

Interestingly enough, private sector unions are quickly going the way of the dodo. While they served a very important purpose at one point in history protecting workers and improving working conditions, much of those gains have been entrenched in regulations as well as in our collective psyche so now union membership is all about the money and the jobs for life!

According to a Canadian Press article from 2012, Statistics Canada figures show, "the labour movement in Canada is in a 30 year decline", but "the public sector, including civil servants, Crown corporations, schools and hospitals dominated. More than 71% of the public sphere was unionized, while in the private sector that number plummets to 16 per cent." In the private sector, constantly agitating for more is somewhat pointless because businesses are constrained by the reality of a bottom line. Not so in the public sector.



If you want to get a sense of how seriously un-hinged from reality people in the public sector can become, it is instructive to review a Statistics Canada report entitled "**Understanding public-private sector differences in work absences**". Some of the findings in this report beggar belief, including:

> Among full-time employees, those in the private sector took 8.3 days off on average, while those in the public sector took 12.4 days.

> Differences in union coverage, and the higher proportion of older and female workers explained about 80% of the gap in absences between public and private sector employees.

> Some differences in work absences could be found across occupational categories, but did not explain public-private sector differences.

But how on earth does this rarefied group manage to hold the tremendous advantages they've gained over the rest of us? William Gairdner, author of "The Trouble with Canada Still", rightly points out that in Canada, one third of the populace are workers, one third is government, and one third lives off government, so naturally two thirds gang up on the working one third and clearly, the working third lose. Not only are they seriously outnumbered, but they're also tired because they actually have to work for a living.

If we had principled politicians, they would see that something needs to be done about this but instead, they work hand in hand with the union bosses. In order to give themselves special privileges and continue their trough feeding uninterrupted, they understand they need to give similar entitlements to at least the more vocal and more organized segments of the voting public.

While politicians do know what they're doing is unsustainable, success for them simply means preserving their own privileged positions while managing the decline in such a way that those who are hurt by it don't rise up to open revolt.

Adding insult to injury, Ontario Premier Wynne is talking about adding another layer of bureaucracy with a provincial pension plan because we aren't saving enough. It's really quite rich to have the government chastising us for not saving enough while at the same time forcing us to carry an over-sized public sector. Maybe if taxpayers didn't have this burden to carry, we might be able to take care of our own retirement needs?

Back in 2005, former Liberal Minister and one-time Royal Canadian Mint CEO, David Dingwall, famously said, "I'm entitled to my entitlements" while giving testimony before Parliament about why he should receive a severance package after his voluntary resignation. One of Dingwall's portfolios was Minister responsible for Canada Post. I think I know why I'm not getting my mail and it has something to do with how fish rot from the head down.



JAYSON McDONALD

so what now?

Contemplating the Significant Weight and Heft of The Twilight Tomes

Jayson McDonald

I KNOW, I KNOW. Twilight is so done, right? All the movies have been made, all the remaining merchandise is being cleared through the dollar stores, and the world patiently awaits the reinvention of mummies as sexy young rock stars with a penchant for dried flowers. But recent events have spurred me to take you on one more last look at the series of vampire novels that the New York Times has called "a series," "PG-13" and "over 2000 pages."

So back in 2012 or so, a friend decided that my interest in horror fiction had been under-served for far too long, and presented me with a deluxe collected edition of Stephenie Meyer's **Twilight** series. This friend had read them all and declared that they were "miles better" than Anne Rice's novels of the previous decades. "How so?" I asked innocently.

She squirmed to articulate a reason. "I dunno, the vampires are just more accessible."

I thanked her for her thoughtfulness and promised I'd sit down and find out what all the teenaged girls loved about the series once and for all. Later that week, I pulled out the first book and sat down to experience the sensational Twilight saga for myself. Was pasty, perpetual high school student Edward really more accessible than The Vampire LeStat? I certainly hoped so, because I'd always felt that vampire folklore hadn't been diluted enough to make it completely pointless yet. The idea of a nocturnal, intelligent, immortal, humanoid parasite always frightened me as a youth, but I'm able to sleep a lot better now knowing that vampires are actually just awesome boyfriends who sparkle in the sun.

Thirteen pages into Twilight, my phone rang and I never picked up the book again. Well, I never attempted to read the story again; its

usefulness in other areas have kept me reaching for the book since then. For example, I have an outbox next to my desk where loose script pages pile up as I write. And it used to be that every time the front door was opened, whoosh! There they'd go, hither and thither, spinning about the apartment like leaves. But not anymore! Twilight sits atop the pages now . . . heavy, solid, almost preternaturally inert. As if the weight of a thousand sparkling vampires anchors it to reality.

The second book of the series, **New Moon**, has become an indispensable help in the kitchen. Our table wobbles like a drunken sailor - likely because the kitchen floor rolls like the roiling sea. But New Moon opened to page two hundred fifty-three is the exact, perfect-sized shim needed to steady the table. No longer are poker games interrupted by a deluge of mixed drinks spilling off the port side into the laps of hapless gamblers as some enthusiastic player knocks the table with his knee. Jacob the Werewolf is keeping that table steady with his rock-solid abs.

The celebrated third book in the series, **Eclipse**, finds Bella torn between her love for Edward the Sullen and her friendship with Jacob the Frequently Hirsute. The heated rivalry between the two adorable

monsters provides the perfect step ladder for my partner Marlene to reach the top shelf of the kitchen cabinets, where we keep our serving dishes and extra-large bowls. There was a time when it was necessary to drag a whole chair over to the cabinets, which was really too large a step - you'd find yourself having to crouch under the ceiling as you dug out the appropriate dishware for that impromptu dinner party. But not anymore! Eclipse is overwritten just enough to be the perfect-sized step.

But the real winner of the series has to be the final volume, **Breaking Dawn**. This novel is so weighty we never actually got around to picking it up off the floor where Marlene had thrown it in a fit of disgust following a second attempt to read it. If it was ever in the way, we'd just kick it and watch it slide across the floor like a curling stone. Sometimes I'd make myself sad by thinking about the tree it once was, gently swaying in the summer breeze on the side of some quiet and solemn mountain.

On a recent fateful evening, Marlene and I arrived home from a drunken night out hucking day-old doughnuts at cars to find a burglar in our home. He was foolishly filling a pillowcase full of compact discs he obviously thought he could sell. My first thought was, "Are you from the past?"

Marlene, the quicker and more sensible thinker among the two of us, immediately sprang into action and grabbed the nearest object at hand. While I was busy yelling, "I'mma police, you I'm call, you don't, I'm police - " Marlene picked up Breaking Dawn and flung it at the burglar's head with the grace and power of an Olympian shot-putter. There was a sickening 'crack' as the novel made impact with the interloper's skull and he went down like a tonne of bricks. We would learn later that not only did he suffer a laceration requiring five sutures, he was also concussed so heavily by Meyer's work of extreme gravitas that he required medical observation for two and a half days. But our **Best of Britney** CD was safe, so . . . screw that guy.

And then at the end Bella gives birth to a vampire baby who grows up to be Count Chocula.

So if you're thinking about picking up a set of Twilight novels for someone else as a joke gift, I say do it. We've taken to rigging up our copies above doorways and windows in Home Alone-style booby traps when we're away, and we've never felt safer. Oh, Stephenie Meyer. You might only have an estimated net worth of a hundred twenty-five million dollars, but you're worth two hundred million to me. Wink!

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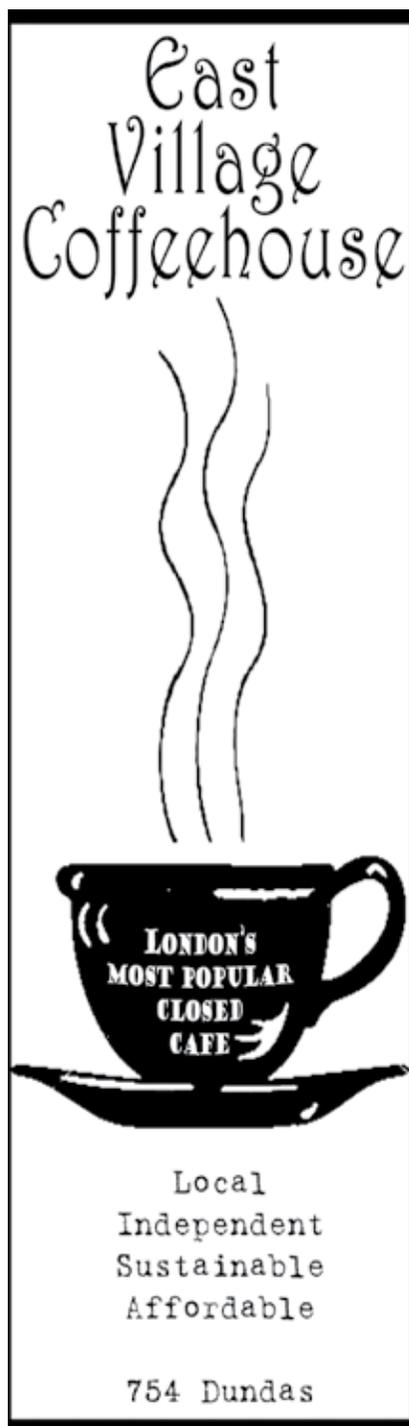
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London's Journalist Playwright

Jeff Culbert

HERE'S TO Peter Desbarats (1933 – 2014). Most people knew him as a journalist, a news anchorman for Global TV, the Dean of Western's Journalism School, a biographer of Rene Levesque, a commissioner for the Somali Inquiry or the author of a book expressing how pissed off he was at the Chretien government for terminating the Somali Inquiry.

But I knew him mostly as a playwright.



Peter loved writing for the theatre and with his journalistic eye and sensibility, he wrote some pretty topical and provocative stuff.

In 1969, when he lived in Montreal, some black university students accused a faculty member of racism and staged a protest. This grew into a much larger demonstration and sit-in, and when the police were called in, the students destroyed the computer lab and tossed thousands of 60s-era computer punch cards out the windows. It was the biggest student riot the country had ever seen and it resulted in 97 arrests.

Peter turned this incident into a play called **The Great White Computer**. It was the sensation of the inaugural season of The Centaur Theatre Company, which became the main English language theatre in Montreal. It must have been pretty electrifying for audiences, especially on the night when some of those same black students came into the theatre to protest the show. A Montreal journalist recently cited it as one of a few plays from those early days that would have inspired young people to become lifetime theatre-goers.

Over thirty years later, when Peter was in his late 60s and living in London Ontario, he approached me about directing a play he'd written based on one of London's biggest controversies: Mayor Dianne Haskett's refusal to proclaim Gay Pride Week in 1995.

In case that's before your time, I should explain. It was common in those days for the mayor to take requests to attach a certain theme to a week or day or month, and it was all usually quite uncontroversial: Volunteer Week, Clean Air Day, Salvation Army Red Shield Month, GM Diesel Division Appreciation Day – that sort of thing. But when asked to proclaim Gay Pride Week, Mayor Haskett declined, because of her Evangelical Christian beliefs. Of course, many gays in town were insulted at being singled out as the only group not worthy of acknowledgement in the procla-

mation department, and there was considerable anger and embarrassment in the general population as well. There was also lots of support for the mayor's position. She quickly announced that she would no longer issue such proclamations, but the cat was already out of the bag and scratching.

This remained a highly-charged issue in London for many years after that, so a play by Peter Desbarats called **Her Worship**,



PETER DESBARATS

based on the Dianne Haskett controversy, was publicity gold. Lots of buzz and media coverage, and not only in the entertainment section – this was front page news. We had sold-out houses for every single performance, with people turned away at the door.

One of my favourite moments during the performances came at the end of the third scene, when the mayor and her advisor, an aging political warhorse with liberal leanings, are walking out of his office:

MAYOR: I've got a little job for you.

MENTOR: Another speech about downtown redevelopment?

MAYOR: I wish it was that simple. You know they want me to proclaim Gay Pride Week?

MENTOR: Yeah. So?

As they left the stage and the lights went down, the audience would go, "Oooooooooooooohhh." They knew what was coming. Or at least they thought they did. In fact, it was at that point that the plot of *Her Worship* and the Dianne Haskett story diverged significantly.

In the play, a charismatic preacher is working with the mayor on plans to make the city into a sort of Christian version of Mecca by building a 100,000-seat prayer stadium and bringing in the biggest North American names in preaching, attracting pilgrims from around the world. With the required hotels, trailer parks and spinoff businesses, religion would become the city's

major industry.

The proclamation issue never even goes public in **Her Worship**. The woman who plans to make the request gets convinced to drop the issue, so that the shady dealings of the preacher can be exposed and the Christian Mecca plans can be torpedoed. Does this sound like anything that ever happened in London? No.

Peter and I tried to tell people that, yes, the play was based on the Dianne Haskett scenario, but it departed from that story, allowing Peter to explore the themes of politics and religion that had interested him for many years. Such were the heightened sensibilities of Londoners at the time though – on both sides of the divide – that nobody believed us.

Some critiques from the gay community complained that the play went too easy on the mayor character. They wanted to see her skewered for her discriminatory attitude.

Others condemned **Her Worship** as another swipe at a popular mayor who was only following her conscience. One letter-writer to the Free Press denounced the play, proudly declaring that he would not be seeing it. I replied with a letter of my own suggesting that there may be a special place in hell reserved for those who criticize plays that they haven't seen.

Peter wrote some other plays during his years in London, but **Her Worship** was the big one. After his death, I dug the script out and read it for the first time in over a decade. It's so enjoyable: funny, provocative and filled with ideas that we as a society are still grappling with. There is a great scene in which a separatist Quebecois chef, a black preacher and a lesbian activist, fuelled by after-dinner drinks, argue about race, nationalism, gay politics and religion, each issue cascading into the next, with constantly changing alliances. Very funny dialogue built from deadly serious issues.

It made me wonder what would have happened if Peter's life had been a little less journalism and a lot more playwrighting.



Pegg's World

Peabody and Sherman - an Improbable (But True) History

Robert Pegg

the first chapter of the Old Testament. Many agree that it probably began with 'Puck's pet goat 'Willy' in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. More extreme history buffs speculate on the recent discovery of ancient cave drawings in southern Spain in which a Neanderthal artist depicted a domesticated wolf wearing horn-rim glasses and directing a Mastadon hunt. In more modern times we only have to look as far back as H.G. Wells' 1895 novel *Lassie and the Lost Continent of Atlantis* to see where Jay Ward 'borrowed' his time-travel story-telling device for the Peabody cartoons.

Prior to Peabody, the genre enjoyed its greatest popularity in the 1950s with the Francis, the Talking Mule film series starring the voice of character actor Chill Wills and Donald O'Connor as the jackass's straight man. When this was followed by the five-year run of television's *Mister Ed* starting in 1961 (coincidentally during the same time period as Peabody's *Improbable History*), is it any wonder that film enthusiasts consider this period to be the Golden Age of Talking Animal Buddy movies?

Mister Ed starred a talking Palomino and storylines revolved around the hi-jinks and hilarity which result because Ed chooses only to talk to his new owner, the perpetually baffled and perplexed 'Wilbur Post' played by Alan Young. Ed was a bit of a smartass and his personality owed a great deal to W.C. Fields.

However, the gimmick eventually got old and when a feature-length version of the show was released in theatres in 1967 it suffered a quick death at the box-office. Titled *Ed, Why the Long Face?*, the film alienated audiences by straying from what they knew. In her review of the movie in *The New Yorker*, critic Pauline Kael cites the example of 'Michigan J. Frog' in the Warner Brothers' animated-short 'One Froggy Evening' as being the pinnacle of art in the Talking Animal Buddy school and laments the fact that Ed's writers didn't follow in that direction and instead turned it into yet another mere Talking Animal flick. In

the movie, Ed moves out of Wilbur's stable and gets a job at a race-horse track where he organizes the horses into joining a union. And they ALL talk. Not only that, so does the burro used for comic relief. "By giving all the animals the ability to speak, the film-makers do a disservice to *Mister Ed* and his background story," writes Kael. "By making him the same as all the other horses, they rob Ed of his uniqueness and this in turn changes the dynamics of his relationship with his 'buddy' Wilbur."

Oh dear gods of the cinema, please do not let the same thing hap-

pen to *Mister Peabody and Sherman*. If the movie trailer is any indication, the new movie lacks the charm and sophistication of the original cartoons but there are indications that Jay Ward's spirit remains somewhat intact. For one example, a trip to the past has the exact same plot as the original six-minute cartoon. Peabody and Sherman travel back to help Leonardo Da Vinci because Mona Lisa has a toothache and is unable to smile while sitting for her portrait.

Fans do not like it when young Hollywood tampers too much with an established format. Familiarity is what works best with this genre. As Kael points out, audiences expect certain story-telling devices within the format and this accounts for the failure of *Ed, Why the Long Face?* Speaking of which, with that film, that was not the original title. The actor who voiced 'Ed' was a little hoarse. Surely dear reader, you must have heard of *The Horse Whisperer*. Neigh?

ADMIT IT. You've done this. Taking off your glasses, putting them on your dog and announcing in a know-it-all voice, "Peabody here."

Needless to say, I'm referring to the 'Peabody's Improbable History' short which was a regular feature on Jay Ward's *Rocky and Bullwinkle* cartoon series in the early 1960s. But that goes without saying. There were a hundred episodes starring the genius bespectacled albino beagle and his pet-boy Sherman who travel through time via the Wayback Machine to ensure history plays out as it has been ordained.

All of which brings us to the new CGI-animated feature film **Mr. Peabody and Sherman** which opened on March 7th. Directed by Rob (The Lion King) Minkoff, it is voiced by Ty (Modern Family) Burrell and Max Charles doing the title voices originated by Bill Scott and Walter Tetley respectively.

For students of the cinema, the movie marks the revival of the nearly forgotten film genre known as the Talking Animal Buddy flick which was popular in the post-war era of the last century. Talking animals are nothing new in movies. In fact through Disney and family entertainment they're a dime a dozen in any era. What differentiates the Talking Animal Buddy flick, however, is that there is only one four-legged friend who has the ability to speak. If they walk upright, like Peabody, they are accepted by society. However, in most examples of the genre, they share their secret of speech with only one human. The animal and its chosen human become buddies and then have adventures and stuff.

Film scholars have long debated on the origins of this genre. Many erroneously claim that it all began with 'The Nun's Priest's Tale' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Hogwash, I say. Christian and Jewish historians point to the talking serpent in

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| 23 | REANIMATOR GREAT BALLS | 24 | TRIBUNE TALES |
| 25 | THE BLOW THE BLOW | 26 | ELAQUENT GREEN APPLES AND ORANGES |
| 27 | INSURRECTION PROTOTYPE | 28 | THE LAWRENCE ARMS METROPOLE |
| | AGAINST ME! TRANSGENDER DYSPHORIA BLUES | 30 | WILD CHILD THE RUNAROUND |

CANADIAN | LOCAL

Oil spills, Opium and the sweet stuff with The Honeyrunners

Deanne Kondrat

ON MARCH 1ST, a London Music Club audience witnessed the sticky, sweet sounds of **The Honeyrunners**. The Toronto band, who performed over 80 shows across Canada in 2013, brought their infused mix of classic rock, Motown and folk to London audiences for the second time.

The Yodeller sat down with band members Dan Dwoskin (keyboard and lead vocals) and Brandon Robins (drums and vocals) before their highly-anticipated set.

My mother told me to never run with scissors, is it okay to run with honey?

Dan: It's encouraged to run with honey, how can that not feel good?

I have to ask the stereotypical question . . . where did your literally sweet band name come from?

Brandon: It's actually from the Keith Richards Biography.

D: This is the real story.

B: So clearly in this book there is a chapter on drugs. (The Rolling Stones) go to Colombia and they (not the Rolling Stones, people in Colombia) lather up small kids in honey and have them run through the opium fields to help them catch the pollen. The kids run through it and it's a game to them but out of this fun "game" is something so messed up. Those kids were honey runners. But we all made up a fake story because we didn't want people to think we're massive drug heads.

So this band isn't a drug smuggling front? (For legal reasons we must state the band is not.)

B: No. So that's why we're like, okay, we gotta make up a fake story! Dan and I went to high school together . . . which isn't true.

D: Well, we went to high school.

B: And we called the female persuasion the honey pots. And we were The Honeyrunners.

You guys did a song for Coca-Cola ("My Garage"), about being a garage band. I thought since Joey Jeremiah and The Zit Remedy, Canadian garage bands weren't really a thing anymore.

D: I think since The Black Keys, there has been a major garage-rock resurgence throughout the music industry. But like literal garages, I mean it's too cold - we're in Canada you can't play in a garage year round.

B: Growing up in Thornhill, that's all I ever knew was playing in peoples garages we had a really bad PA and really bad equipment and would just thrash out.

D: Like, the whole neighbourhood could hear you.

B: There's rehearsal space . . . but as you get older . . .

D: BOOOO! For the record Brandon is only 17.

B: But when you get older and move into an apartment you can't bang on your drums. But I like to think that innocence - this is going to sound so clichéd - but that pure happiness of just playing with your pals still exists.

D: That place that smells like woodchips, spilled oil and sweat rags.



PHOTO: SHAWN HUGHES

For more on the band and to listen to some of their tune-age, click over to:

honeyrunners.com

Twitter: [@honeyrunners](https://twitter.com/honeyrunners)

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You describe yourself as having a Motown-tinge to your sound. I love Motown - so I have to ask: Who's your favourite Motown act?

(They start singing **Reach Out** by the Four Tops)

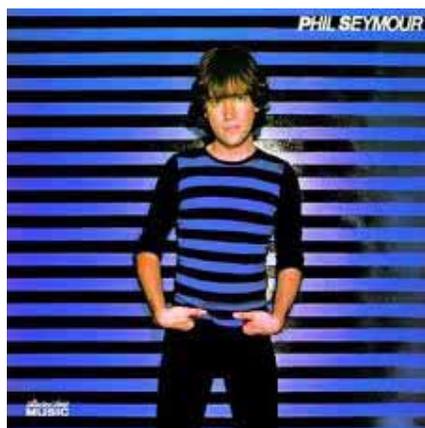
D: Is this why you only wanted to interview the two of us (versus all four band members), so we wouldn't get off track like this?

Oh, no, no (correct answer: yes)

B: This is a hard one, I'm going to say The Temptations!

D: I have to go with Dion and The Belmonts. When we were getting the band together it was important for us to have four voices that could sing harmonies. Things like the Temptations would do, a lot of oo's and ahh's that really fill out a room. It adds such a presence to a song.

If you have the chance to see The Honeyrunners in concert, I would highly recommend you bask in their glorious harmonies. Dan even breaks out a couple of Motown dance moves. The packed London Music Club couldn't get enough.



Re-Reviewed

PHIL SEYMOUR
Phil Seymour
Boardwalk 1981

EVEN THOUGH he released only two solo LPs in a career shortened by cancer, Phil Seymour's initial release is one slice of power pop heaven.

Seems like karma that Phil first met fellow power popster Dwight Twilley at a 1967 showing of "A Hard Day's Night" in their native Tulsa Oklahoma. They went on to form the Dwight Twilley Band with Bill Pitcock, finding some success with the singles "Sincerely", "Looking for the Magic" and "I'm on Fire". Seymour left the band and filled in time until his solo career took off as an in-demand session drummer and background vocalist. It's his background harmonies on Tom Petty's "American Girl" and "Breakdown".

His self-titled release includes originals by Seymour as well as songs written by his cohorts Dwight Twilley and Bill Pitcock and the Go Gos' Kathy Valentine. A couple of non-originals include the best cover version of Bobby Fuller's classic "Let Her Dance" and a nice saucy take on Elvis' "Trying to Get to You". The Seymour-penned "Precious to Me" saw some chart action peaking at 22 on the Billboard charts and garnering a top 3 in Australia where they seem to have much cooler taste. "Love You So Much" not surprisingly has the signature Dwight Twilley Band vibrato.

Other highlights include the Peter Gunn-meets-Woolly Bully, "Don't Blow Your Life Away", the Drifters-like power pop ballad "I Really Love You" and "Won't Finish Here" which I swear must have been a major influence on Wilco's "Outtасite (Outta Mind).

A second solo lp was released which has it's moments but was rushed due to the demise of the record label. A third album was recorded but never released, when Seymour succumbed to lymphoma at the age of 41.

Record Collector's Odyssey

CHAPTER 8

RECORD SHOW ME THE MONEY

THOSE WHO know me are well familiar that I now avoid attending any Record Shows. It is from frequenting and working at way too many shows over the years and not from the hordes of sweat pants-wearing record hounds that wander the show looking for the latest score. More on these fellows later in my story.

There was a time in my early days that I looked forward to Record Shows and would attend them in many Ontario cities and even venture to other countries to hunt down the black gold to fill my record shelves.

The first London Record Show was held at Fanshawe College, and I was there selling promo music posters I had hoarded from my record store job as well as some records of which I had grown tired. I don't remember making a ton of money but enjoyed the camaraderie and ended up spending all my profits. The next London show was moved to a much easier location to get to at Centennial Hall. It was at first held upstairs in the dimly lit hall, much to the joy of the dealers since slight record flaws suddenly turned invisible.

The show was eventually moved downstairs at the hall where it still thrives in its fall and winter dates. A couple of memorable shows included one in Stratford which had somehow secured a beer and wine license for the occasion. It was a pretty happy show as the thirsty dealers got progressively pissed and the deals just got better and better. The other show was in Detroit and wasn't quite as happy as the promoter had disappeared (I suspect) with the table money, leaving only two persistent dealers in the vast hall. I still managed to buy a couple of records before hitting the record shops which luckily were open on Sundays.

Getting back to the stained sweat pants-wearing record show patron stereotype. One must remember that these roomy outfits have abundant crotch room, and for many attendees, the sexually charged selection of vinyl is the most erotic experience that they will enjoy.

CONGRATULATIONS to this year's honorees for the **Jack Richardson Music Awards Hall of Fame.**

Jazz pianist **John Noubarian** led the house band at the famous Campbell's Night Club in the 50's and 60's, backing such jazz greats as Ben Webster, Bobby Hackett, and Ernestine Anderson. Noubarian continues as a revered part of London's jazz scene.

Multi-instrumentalist **Garth Hudson,**



Review

MARCELLUS WALLACE
Marcellus Wallace

Indie

FROM THE "testifyin" intro track "Brothers and Sisters" I could tell that Marcellus Wallace's debut CD was going to be one soulful slab of R&B floor-fillers. The five piece band's soul and London roots run deep, with frontman guitarist Ajay Massey being a former member of the funk conglomeration, Zuul's Evil Disco and guitarist Dan Tran's participation in Stay-lefish. They are joined by bassist Will Nyssen, drummer Jimi James and background vocalist Alex Kane.

The 10 original tunes on their self titled debut features tight arrangements and clever lyrics reminiscent of 60's era Motown. Speaking of Motown, mention should be made of the fantastic background vocals that perfectly accentuate the lead vocals and give it a true authentic sound, especially on the tracks "Ain't Got No Thing", "It Ain't Easy" and "Take it Higher". I also got a real Edwin Starr vibe from the tracks "Movin' On Up" with its crunchy guitar sound and "Everything's Alright". It's an impressive debut and can proudly take it's place with any of the new soul revival releases.

You can catch the band live at their CD release party March 15th at Call the Office, where they share the stage with The Salads, KC Roberts and the Live Revolution, and A-fos and the Rude Youth. Advance tickets are \$10 and doors open at 9 pm.

gained fame in Ontario as part of the Hawks, Ronnie Hawkins backing band, and world wide fame as a key member of the Band. This master of any instrument with a keyboard, and specifically the organ, gave the Band their distinctive sound.

Both will make an appearance as the Jack Richardson Music Awards celebrates their 10th anniversary weekend April 12th and 13th.

Olenka is a London Lover

Bonnie Goodden with Vanessa Brown

THE FIRST TIME we saw Olenka and those cheekbones that span the 49th parallel was at the first incarnation of the Alex P. Keaton on Talbot Street. That would have been around the time that **Olenka and the Autumn Lovers** formed in 2008 and began making their mark on the Canadian music scene. Today, the band has three albums and three EPs under their belt - all recorded while Olenka has been here in the Forest City. This blond Polish goddess has been the stalwart leader of a band of somewhat rotating musicians, developing a sound that blends folk with pop and an orchestral sense of composition. She's been interviewed on CBC's **Q**, had massive amounts of radio play on Canadian college stations, and been featured at festivals like **NXNE**, the now defunct **LOLA**, **Home County** (of course), and the **Halifax Pop Explosion**. Sadly, Olenka is moving back to Vancouver. The Yodeller talked with her this week to see what was driving a decision that many Londoners will have difficulty with.

Why are you leaving London?

Some of it is practical. My boyfriend and I are moving together . . . In terms of creative projects, it feels like the right time to shake things up, for me. For myself. One of things I've discovered in myself, as a musician is that - as I've pursued art more, I've realized that you need to take risks. I've become very comfortable in London. I've felt like an established within the community for a while, and I've felt like I've had an approach to making music that is kind of based in the contacts that I have here, and I think in some ways it's made me conventional within my own approach. You know? I have an approach I have followed successfully in my mind for the last little while and I feel like I need to shake that up. I think that's gonna happen because I'm going to be exposed to a lot of different musicians with similar aesthetics but different approaches [in Vancouver]. It is a place where I have a lot of contacts, I have a lot of friends because I grew up there, and because I have played with people out there since I was quite young. I'm really excited about exploring what will happen once I start thinking about arranging, a new album, and getting ideas for new songs underway.

Can you still wear your Ushanka hat out west?

It's funny, I was thinking about that today, because it's freezing in Toronto and I was like, I'm never gonna have to wear that hat again! I don't know. There was snow on the ground a couple of days

out there . . . there are mountains out there. Perhaps at those elevations, I'll still be able to sport the hat. There will be a few well-chosen opportunities for the hat.

Are you going to start a punk band in Vancouver?

I think [local musician] Tim Glasgow would die if I did (laughs). He would be the happiest man! I don't know. Right now I feel like I could really go in a lot of different directions in terms of the next project. One of things that I want to do is really start thinking about playing electric again, and see whether that eventuates in dirtier, louder sounds? That's very likely. That's where I started. The people that I have access to out there certainly have that about them. But I think it's still gonna be rooted in my desire to really enjoy arranging. I've become very much enamored with intricate, careful and thoughtful arrangements of strangely contrasting instruments and letting the listener become aware of different instruments. I want to develop that more, and do unconventional things with arranging and melody and instrumentation.

Which Londoner do you wish you'd made your perogies for? And do you have any recipe secrets you'd like to share?

I would make them for Christian [Hegele, local musician]. He's always really appreciated the Polish cuisine. He's just a connoisseur of all manner of food, and I think I promised some to him over the holidays and we never met up, so he didn't get any. I feel bad!

As for a recipe secret, it's not too much of a secret, but the Polish recipe for perogies isn't what I think most people presume, which is the kind that is the standard for perogies in North America, which is



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potato based ones. The Polish ones are onion and mushroom and sauerkraut that's fried together with just salt and pepper. You kind of have to keep adding salt and pepper until you reach the right amount, so that I can't help you with. That's just something you've got to learn from a Grandma. A Polish Grandma. When you try those Polish perogies it blows your mind if all you're used to is store bought potato ones.

What is London's best kept secret?

It's the tradition of its own music community. I think people both within London and outside of London aren't aware of how longstanding a tradition of a variety of different musical movements have come out of London. You can tie that to, let's say, Home County. You can tie that to the Nihilist Spasm Band. Even the little movements that happened around Open House when we were doing stuff, and LOLA.

There have been these moments, these little flickers, where really wonderful things have happened and that's something that the London community doesn't keep in its collective memory well enough. The community needs to do that itself in order for the rest of the Canadian scene to recognize how this community incubates that kind of art.

One of the things that surprised me when I first moved here -because I hadn't had too much experience living in Ontario before that. I lived in Kingston when I did my masters, and I remember feeling very isolated in Kingston and feeling like there wasn't really much of any kind of artistic community there. It was just an academic community. It didn't feel like much was happening. I would go to the odd show, but it was really, really rare. There was nothing really there, nothing to incubate anything locally.

Whereas when I came here, I felt like there was an explosion of opportunity and there was a lot of stuff happening. We forget that, of course, when you're entrenched in a particular scene, let's say the indie-rock scene or the folk scene or something, that there's a much broader musical community. I was surprised by the variety of ages of people who are involved in the music scene here. There's a lot of older people playing blues, there's a lot of rockabilly stuff happening, especially for a community that I didn't think was that large. It is actually a large city, but it's this weird blend of small and big.

It is an incubator for stuff that has a lot more potential and that isn't just people finding ways to entertain themselves in a small town. Some of the stuff that was happening was nationally recognized, if not beyond.

That's its secret. It's a good quality to hold dear and inspire in future generations of people doing stuff here.

What are the career milestones that have happened for you in London?

I would say that all of them are associated with this community. On the first album, I had a kind of schizophrenic experience with that, because songs were recorded with people from London and people from Vancouver and the recordings happened in very haphazard ways, both in the Ontario area and back in B.C. In that sense, on that album I felt divided between the two communities. Then I really settled into who I felt I was becoming as a musician through my musical collaborations here, and the people I was exposed to, or was inspired by. All of my biggest career milestones to date are directly tied to this community.

It's interesting that there is a touchstone with that first album to Vancouver, because now that I go back to Vancouver, I feel like there's a circle that I'm kind of returning. There's a connection that's being re-made. I'm coming back to that community a much more professional and clear-headed musician.

The first album we put out was a huge deal, because it felt like there was a large community behind us. The CD release we did at the Aeolian - that felt like a huge moment because, once again, I could feel a large group of this community embrace it.

When we were on **Q** I got a lot of texts from all over Canada congratulating me . . . but that little moment felt so tied to London. Even in my interview there, I talked about the London community as being central to what propelled me forward. I definitely think that the work we did with the arts collective, despite the fact that it kind of fizzled, which is the nature of any collective, that's just

bound to happen, I think - that was a huge experience as well in terms of feeling excited and feeling inspired and knowing that you can bring people together to do things. It's hard work and there's a lot of conflict but it was a really rewarding thing and it taught me certain skills.

This summer when you're on Facebook and you see that photo set of your friends back in London doing something without you, what is it that they'll be doing that you wish you were here for?

Playing music. I think a lot of the various shows that I've attended and performed in, and the art shows that I've gone to - I will definitely miss all of that. Catching up with people and hearing people's stories and their plans and then being inspired by that, and seeing people's performances and their plans taking shape in their artwork, in their songs, and not being able to see that unless they decide to tour the west coast - which I'm suggesting everyone should do, at this point.



photo: Patrick Schmitt

Beauty is Only Skin Deep

IT WAS A PERSONAL experience with her son that led Trish West to write *Skin Deep*, a play about self-image. "He had a project in Kindergarten where they had to explain what made them happy, sad, etc... His teacher pulled me aside one day to share with me what he said."

While West insists that you have to see the play to find out what those words were, their importance made a shattering impact. "It was at a time when I didn't like what I saw in the mirror, but my little boy saw what really mattered instead."

The play will be performed at the Arts Project from April 2 to 5.

There will also be a special performance at the Elgin Theatre in St. Thomas on April 12th with proceeds going to Wellspring London. In conjunction with the play, a display of artwork centred around ideas of self-image will be ongoing at the Central Library's Red Wall for the month of March, before moving to the Arts Project from March 25th to April 5th.

TAPS is also holding an opening night for the exhibit on March 26th at 7 pm, including an auction of artwork related to the theme and giving 100% of the proceeds to Wellspring.

Skin Deep tells the story of a family with two daughters, and the struggles of both girls and their parents to understand

how the way they look relates to how they value themselves. It's not just about how young women feel either. West delves into concepts of aging and how adults represent themselves in the workplace to get ahead. Still, the playwrights wants the play to get across their message to young women, and



SKIN DEEP: A Play about self-image at the Arts Project

to anyone else who might have doubts about their place in the world based on how they look.

"Looks, unfortunately, are the first thing that people use to make an assumption about who you are. You know the saying, 'You can't judge a book by a cover'? It's true. It's important to get to know who someone is besides their complexion, outfit or figure and see that they have interests, dreams or smarts. As the people who influence these girls, we need to try our best to support and encourage them to be themselves without the need to 'fit' into any other mold than that of their own."

You can buy tickets for *Skin Deep* through the Arts Project by phoning 519-878-4452.

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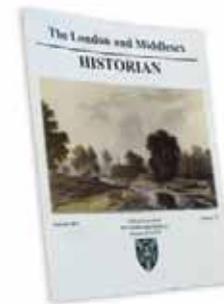
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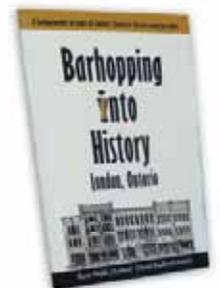
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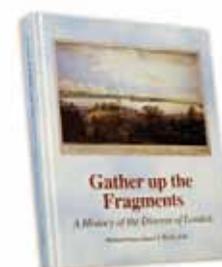
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The Infinite Inspiration of the Dutch Landscape

Vince Cherniak

IT'S NOT EVERY day that some Rembrandts come to li'l ole London, but that's just one of many good reasons to take in this not-to-be-missed exhibition this month. **Storms and Bright Skies: Three Centuries of Dutch Landscapes**, at Western's McIntosh Gallery until April 5, is a touring show from the National Gallery of Canada and it offers a fine survey of the emergence and evolution of the landscape genre beginning in the late 16th century. These 65 prints and original drawings, including great masters Jacob Ruisdael and Jan Breughel the Elder amongst the 20 artists represented, give us a rare up-close view of works that you normally won't see outside a major gallery.

National Gallery curator Sonia Del Re has created a very informative presentation of these selected works from their collection, arranged to emphasize various themes, from scientific and economic development to the use of motifs such as trees and sky. "The Dutch landscape has been a source of infinite inspiration for Dutch artists," she underlines, "and their work entirely influences the course of art history, not only in the Netherlands, but all of Europe."

It's easy enough to get lost in examining the exquisite detailing and technical accomplishment in the line work of etchings like Jan Van de Velde's **On the Ice** (1641). This robust rendering of hectic activity on a frozen canal is effectively a time-travel document, transporting you into an environment long gone. Or Hans Bol's **Bird Catchers With Nets** (1582) will take you back further in this charming illustration of a way of life. In Rembrandt's **Landscape With a Cottage and Large Tree** (1641) the realism achieved reads like a photograph from a short distance.

But the real power of this show is in tracing the many social and cultural forces that brought about the rise of the subject of landscape within artistic practice. Certainly the Reformation was a major influence in shifting the importance of religious themed work in the hier-

archy of representation, where landscape was hitherto subjugated to playing a supportive role in compositions, mere backdrop. This shift initially brought about an imaginative or fantasy view in early landscape work. The views tended to be "God's eye", from on high, and this popular approach was mostly vestigial from the idealized compositional practice of religious work.

But by the 16th century, starting with Breughel, artists began to



Hendrick Willem Mesdag — Seascape [detail]

look more closely at the landscape around them, and you can follow that development towards higher realism as you move through the work in this show.

As artists turned from the realm of the imagination in the studio to working directly from nature, the Dutch landscape emerges as an elaboration of national identity, and native motifs become common. The Dutch sky is given prominence, with the special quality of light in these lowlands by the sea highlighted in many of the works here by Roelant Roghman, as well as in the focus on clouds by Ruisdael.

Equally important is the interaction with the sea for economic and military purposes, and the obvi-

ous major motif in many of the pieces here, the reliance on canals and water management infrastructure. A third of the land in Holland lies below sea level, and by 1750 there were 10,000 windmills employed in pumping water. It seems natural enough that a windmill would come under the artist's gaze on the landscape, as quaint as it may look from a contemporary point of view. But it also raises questions about ideas of beauty regarding landscapes in our own age of technical and industrial development. You can't help but think of the contentious divide in public sentiment surrounding the recent development of wind farms, for example. Do we have our own Rembrandts today celebrating wind turbines?

Certainly notions of the beautiful are ever in flux, and economic or technological develop-

to the emergence of sub-genres within the Dutch landscape — fields with cattle, or heroic trees anchoring an entire composition — that parallels that move from the rural to the urban. Trees in Rembrandt's **The Three Trees** from 1643 still bear a symbolic or iconic purpose, referencing the religious theme of the crosses of the Crucifixion. But a few years on, as seen in Anthonie Waterloo's **Water Mill Among Trees**, or Simon de Vlieger's **Forest Scene**, or **Study of a Tree in Leaf**, trees become an aesthetic subject of study in their own right. And that raises an interesting question: does it take a divide between the urban and rural, where cattle and trees are mostly commodities, for the artist to find a way to appreciate them in a new light?

The McIntosh is presenting complementary educational programs in support of the exhibit, with curator Del Re delivering a lecture on the show, as well as three artist-led exhibition tours by local artists of Dutch heritage — Wyn Geleynse, Gerard Pas and Rosemary Slood — all promising to give interesting personal perspectives on these historic works.

Slood, whose recent Immigrant group of paintings explored her Dutch roots, said she will be framing her talk in reference to her own oeuvre. "Do the works in the show bring back memories or evoke some other emotional reaction? Have my Dutch origins influenced my work? I will be giving a little historical background and then taking a very personal approach to these landscape works and drawing some comparisons to my own recent work," she says.

Pas says he will be discussing the shift from Church sponsored art to the market of merchant class consumers. "One can't understand the post-Reformation Dutch landscape work without understanding the theology and philosophy of the day," he notes.

ARTIST-LED TOURS AT MCINTOSH GALLERY

GERARD PAS
Tuesday, March 18 at 12:30 P.M.

ROSEMARY SLOOD
Tuesday, March 25 at 12:30 P.M.

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ments bring new insights or revelations to our collective aesthetic taste. The wealth brought through those changes in 1700s Holland created an urban life that made space for contemplating the rural life that got left behind, a space to romanticize an idealized past, a nostalgia for a way of life that was undergoing great upheaval. Equally, wealth brought about a middle class with disposable income and thus a market hungry for images. As Del Re notes, many of the images here came out in large editions with the advent of printmaking technology, and therefore had greater influence in the dissemination of style and subject than single paintings.

Del Re brings emphasis here

The Matthew McConaissance

Jeremy Hobbs

I'D LIKE TO introduce you to a friend of mine. His name is Matthew McConaughey. Not the vapid, shirtless McConaughey that surfed his way through countless rom-coms and incomprehensible stoner vehicles.

Nor the chiseled, airbrushed McConaughey that trolled for pirate's treasure alongside Kate Hudson and fought to get Ben Stiller his TIVO. Not even the confused, dwarf-spawned McConaughey of **Tiptoes**: quite possibly the most puzzling film ever made. No, I'm talking about the gaunt, brooding McConaughey who just might be the most interesting and capable American actor working today.

The curly-coiffed, Texas-born actor burst onto pop culture radar with his hilarious performance as moustached, ginger-loving David Wooderson in Richard Linklater's nostalgic ode to 1970s adolescence **Dazed and Confused**. His coy spouting of now-classic lines like "Alright, alright, alright," and "I looove them redheads," succeeded in landing the largely untrained actor roles in a handful of modest productions, culminating in his star-making 1996 performance in the John Grisham legal thriller **A Time to Kill**.

In addition to his laconic charm and obvious natural talent, McConaughey's Marlboro Man looks and trademark Southern drawl instantly secured him a place in the fantasies of suburban housewives everywhere. He then turned in a handful of solid performances in films as varied as **Amistad**, **Contact**, and **U-571**, as well

as the shamefully underrated **Lone Star**. However, in the wake of the new millennium, the actor drastically shifted gears, taking on a never-ending procession of goofy, almost self-parodying roles in a series of puzzlingly vacuous romantic comedies and/or family-friendly adventure films. There



Matthew McConaughey in HBO's *True Detective*

were a few exceptions to the rule, like his bald and bearded dragon-slayer in the post-apocalyptic **Reign of Fire**.

However, after a full decade of work in films like **The Wedding Planner** and **How To Lose a Guy In 10 Days**, it became evident that McConaughey had sacrificed his reputation as a serious dramatic actor for his all-star status as Hollywood's ultimate Rom-King.

Then, sometime around 2010, the McConaughey tide shifted and

another fascinating sea change took place. In the wake of turning 40, the actor took a brief break from movie-making and in the process reevaluated his career. He triumphantly reemerged in 2011, having decided to only take on more challenging roles in unique independent or art-house productions, beginning with **The Lincoln Lawyer** and the aforementioned Linklater's oddball opus **Bernie**.

However it was his simmering, occasionally frightening performance as a sociopathic, fried chicken-loving hitman in William Friedkin's **Killer Joe** that reminded the unsuspecting public he was actually an actor, and a pretty damn good one at that. Based on a play by Pulitzer Prize-winning bad boy Tracy Letts, the film was an NC-17-rated pitch black comedy that featured stellar performances by its entire cast, and made viewers forever reevaluate their feelings about Kentucky Fried Chicken.

It also demonstrated that McConaughey wasn't afraid to take chances or visit some darker-than-usual places. Said experiment paid off, as it landed him (in addition to a brief yet hilarious cameo in Martin Scorsese's greed-opera **The Wolf of Wall Street**) subsequent roles in the Mark Twain-inspired coming-of-age tale **Mud**, and (in a humorous nod to his bongo-playing nudist persona) Steven Soderbergh's cinematic sausage party **Magic Mike**.

The culmination of all this arrived with the truly magnificent (and magnificently true) biopic **Dallas Buyers Club**. If there was any remaining doubt as to McConaughey's abundant talent, then this film finally laid it to rest. In portraying notorious healthcare antihero Ron Woodroof (an HIV-infected rodeo champ who ruffled FDA feathers by importing unapproved medications into the U.S.), the committed actor lost 48 pounds, and staggers about the film like a walking corpse.

Due to the unavoidably downbeat subject matter, the film could have easily wallowed in its own misery, however the distressingly skeletal McConaughey's disarmingly charismatic performance as an utterly driven man who refuses to stop fighting no matter how bleak the circumstances, turned the film into a bold, sometimes even humorous testament to the triumph of the human spirit.

It's incredible to watch this bigoted, homophobic character slowly metamorphose into a compassionate, well-rounded human being,

fighting for the rights of a subculture that was once completely alien to him. The complex, difficult role succeeded in earning the actor his first Golden Globe, and now the Oscar for 'Best Actor' at last week's 2014 Academy Awards.

Fans and critics alike have lovingly dubbed this brave new aeon of the actor's career 'The McConaissance', the most impressive aspect of which is perhaps his eye-opening turn as detective-cum-philosopher Rustin Cohle in Nic Pizzolatto's über dark, vividly atmospheric HBO crime series **True Detective**.

Each Sunday night, an almost unrecognizable McConaughey drifts through its barren Louisiana landscape like some sort of possessed ghost, imbuing the enigmatic, synesthesiac Cohle with a palpable sense of melancholy.

Reuniting with his friend and **Surfer, Dude** co-star Woody Harrelson, the two A-list actors portray a pair of diametrically-opposed lawmen searching for a mysterious killer of young girls, as they unwittingly fall into a hallucinatory rabbit hole of occult-laden, possibly supernatural horror (think of it as a less cartoony **Twin Peaks**).

Still slender from his weightless turn in **Dallas Buyers Club**, the born again actor seems like an entirely separate entity from the tanned, grinning poster boy of escapism fare like **Fool's Gold** and **Sahara**. His coif is trimmed, his cheeks are sunken, and his gaze could seemingly burn a hole (or perhaps a flat circle) straight through prime time's cable-connected soul.

The two actors play off each other wonderfully, with the pessimistic, existentialist Cohle not only being the most interesting embodiment of McConaughey's career, but also one of the most interesting in the history of televised drama (meaning he could well top up his Oscar win with an Emmy in the very near future).

So how does this scribe feel about Matthew McConaughey's unexpected transformation from rom-com royalty to one of the most intense and challenging American actors working today?

Alright alright alright.

Jeremy Hobbs runs the **Black Room Theatre company**, hosts **Retro-Mania** at Hyland Cinema, performs with musical groups **Exit 2012** and **Audioforge**, and dissects cult cinema in **Rue Morgue Magazine**. He cannot wait to see how **True Detective** ends

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ALLY SHEED in JOHN HUGHES' THE BREAKFAST CLUB

Film Voir – Not Quite as Advertised

Sean Twist

(SCENE: A pristine white office. A white desk sits within. A woman with a lethally professional smile sits on one side of the desk. She is also all in white. The words FILM VOIR glow politely on the wall behind her. A wafer thin laptop seems to float in front of her. A slumped man sits on the other side of the desk. A black helmet with eight-inch goggles sits between them on the desk.)

TWIST: *I want my money back. This sucks.*

TIFFANY: Well, sir, I hardly doubt that. This isn't the adult model.

TWIST: *You know what I mean. I paid a lot of money for your Film Voir 4000 and it's been about as enjoyable as an Expendables sequel.*

TIFFANY: So you've said in your (checks white laptop) 28 emails to our company. Oh, some with video! Cute. I do so like impotent rage in a man. So what exactly is your problem with the Film Voir 4000, Mr. Twist?

TWIST: *Well, where to begin? Let's just say it isn't as advertised.*

TIFFANY: I doubt that. Does the Film Voir 4000 allow you to insert yourself into your favourite movies? Allow you to become part of the films you've loved all your life? Let you experience beloved narratives from a brand new perspective?

TWIST: *Well, technically, yes, but . . .*

TIFFANY: Have a pleasant day. (Reaches for lever beside chair)

TWIST: *No! Wait! You didn't say it was also a bloody game!*

TIFFANY: It's all there in EULA. Page 3,042. You clicked I Kinda Agree, so we're done.

TWIST: *Look, I just wanted an escape from this hellish winter we've been having. Everyone else gets to go to Costa Rica or Disney World. I thought I'd just escape into cinema. (Sighs theatrically)*

TIFFANY: Oh God you're going to cry, aren't you? Fine. Let's take a look at your particular case. (Checks laptop) Oh, I see you went for the Economy Package. No surprise there. The three films bundle.

TWIST: *Three essential films. But they all turned into Apocalypse Now.*

TIFFANY: Well, let's take it one film at a time. You chose Lost In Translation. Sofia Coppola's love letter to Japan and Scarlett Johansson's vulnerable wistfulness. So what went wrong? Bill Murray call you a knucklehead?

TWIST: *I saw Scarlett and Bill like for one second! I ended up in that pachinko parlour they run through after that weirdness at the bar. I ran after them and hit some stupid force barrier. I couldn't get out! I didn't know you had to get three Maru cat symbols to open the barrier! Have you ever played pachinko?*

TIFFANY: We thought it added to the Lost In Translation experience. Once you did that, you leveled up and would be allowed access to other parts of the film.

TWIST: *Funny how the micro trans-*

action menu popped up then. For ten bucks I could get the three cats I needed.

TIFFANY: Which you paid. Thank you! So you had a great time?

TWIST: *I never caught up with them. I made it to the hotel, and was thrown out of the lobby twice. They called me a weeabo. And when I tried to make at least the last scene where they kiss, I got hit by a minibus in Shinjuku. Knocked the helmet right off my head.*

TIFFANY: Oh, I'm sorry. I suppose you wanted to canoodle with Scarlett in the opening scene? You pervert. Besides, that option is available to our premium members only.

TWIST: *Yeah, I bet it is.*

TIFFANY: So, let's see. Your second film was Dazed and Confused. Richard Linklater's love letter to the Seventies, classic rock and tight blue jeans. We didn't bother to gate this film, since only losers . . . I mean, a certain demographic . . . chooses to watch it. So what went wrong here? You get Foghat stuck in your head for a few days?

TWIST: *No, worse. I got stuck in the same car with Fred O'Bannion.*

TIFFANY: Never seen the film. I went to business school.

TWIST: *The douche played by Ben Affleck. He's a bully who gets into initiating the new high school kids waaaay too much. Paddles them with a mallet. The latent sadomasochism there is as subtle as a KISS lyric. You know, it's almost a shame Joe Schumacher isn't directing the next Batman movie, now that I think about it . . .*

TIFFANY: (blank stare)

TWIST: *Ben Affleck is the next Batman.*

TIFFANY: Funny man. So what else happened?

TWIST: *I spent most of the film trying to get out O'Bannion's car after the paint was dumped on him. Of course, your stupid machine put me about five miles away from the actual film. I was hitchhiking, panicking like crazy, and O'Bannion picked me up. Of course he did. He raged. A lot. By the time I leapt out of the car at a stop sign, the film was ending with the big party scene. Parker Posey pushed past me on her way to her ride home. And then the sun began to rise and wham, I'm thrown out of the film.*

TIFFANY: We did say you'd enjoy narratives from a brand new perspective.

TWIST: *Yeah, wandering around 1975 Texas was just what I wanted. It's just like London in 2014.*

TIFFANY: Poor baby. And oh! The last film was The Breakfast Club. John Hughes' love letter to marketable high school angst and epic detentions.

TWIST: *I guess. Your machine materialized me in Carl the Janitor's break room. I spent the entire film playing crib with Carl and hearing about the sweet overtime he was booking for working a Saturday. All I wanted was to eat a Cap'n Crunch sandwich with Ally Sheedy. It's all I wanted. It's all I ever wanted.*

TIFFANY: With our 'Don't Forget About Me' upgrade, you could have that and a slow dance with Molly Ringwald. Our customers rate it as 'Some Kind of Wonderful'.

TWIST: (blank stare)

TIFFANY: (smiles)

TWIST: *You should be ashamed.*

TIFFANY: The magic of cinema! (Pulls lever)

Blogging Pioneer Kathy Shaidle

Mary Lou Ambrogio



KATHY SHAILDE

KATHY SHAILDE is an author, blogging pioneer and regular contributor to **PJMedia**, **Taki's Magazine** and other online publications. Her books include **The Tyranny of Nice**, **God Rides a Yamaha**, **Lobotomy Magnificat** (shortlisted for the Governor General's Award) and her latest is **Acoustic Ladyland: Kathy Shaidle Unplugged**. Kathy has been called "one of the great virtuoso polemicists of our time," by Mark Steyn and one of her best lines directed at Canada's Thought Police at the Canadian Human Rights Commission, "You're too stupid to tell me what to think", has been immortalized on a t-shirt.

Your blog, "Five Feet of Fury", is one of the most popular political/culture blogs in Canada and was, I believe, among the first. What got you started blogging and what were you doing before that?

I started blogging in 2000, using the free Blogger platform. I already read protoblogs like **RobotWisdom** and **PopCultureJunkMail**, and was thrilled to see how easy it was to create my own blog, which I called **Re-lapsedCatholic.com**. The blog allowed me to collect all the cool stuff I found on the web in one place; I used it as a "sandbox" for my then-weekly religion column for the **Toronto Star**. I've blogged pretty much every day since then, although I changed the name of my site to **FiveFeetOfFury.com** around 2007.

I was really pleased to find that we came from a similar background, i.e. formerly "punks", and that we experienced a similar political evolution. Do you find it as strange as I do that so many former punks are left of centre, big government types now instead of smaller government, 'don't tell me what to do', right siders?

I came to anarchy via punk, and luckily, the first books I read that

touched on the topic of anarchy approached it from what I suppose you could call "the right," that is, anarcho-capitalist, free market, small government libertarianism. On the left, meanwhile, "question authority" has always meant "question the Right" because the Right are always the bad guys. That's the lens through which they read books like **Animal Farm** and watch movies like **A Face in the Crowd**, **Invasion of the Body Snatchers** or **The (original) Manchurian Candidate**. Yet there are valid conservative "readings" of those texts too.

Many punk songs are far less open to interpretation, and come down on the side of the left. Obviously, this is a pain in the ass. However, these songs were often written by people barely out of their teens who came from terrible backgrounds, and therefore shouldn't be held up as wise universal manifestos for living!

"Question authority" has GOT to mean question everyone, including your punk heroes. That's what sets us grown up "conservatives" apart - we took this stuff literally and eventually felt compelled out of intellectual honesty to question authorities on the left, too.

It's sad to troll around Tumblr and see 14 year-old girls swooning over something Joe Strummer said 30 years ago, like he was Jesus. Whereas Strummer was an astonishingly gifted man who also used lots of drugs (perhaps self-medicating undiagnosed manic-depression), who cheated on the mother of his children countless times (with the girlfriends of Topper AND Don Letts, no less - who both still love the guy.)

We should all consider ourselves lucky Strummer went into music and not just because of his creative legacy but because he would've made a good cult leader, and by "good" I mean successful in the very worst imaginable way.

The irony is that when England was

falling apart in the mid-70s, when punk was gestating, it was falling apart under a Labor government. **The Sex Pistols** and any number of early punk bands had broken up by the time Thatcher came along! Through mythological sleight of hand, British punks convinced themselves (and music history) that Thatcher and Reagan were the cause of their problems. It just makes for a "better" story and on the Left, narrative is almost everything.

Another irony is how conformist a lot of punk really was. There was a Stalin-esque, Year Zero attitude towards former hippie friends and "uncool" music, as anyone in the **Clash** will tell you now. And you were severely judged by the type of boots you wore and what color laces you chose, how skinny your pants were and so on. So again, it is so much easier being a liberal/leftist: they run the academy and the media, after all.

You do a regular column for **World Net Daily** which is a recap of conservative Talk Radio highlights for the week. Talk radio seems to be the one medium where conservatives are not only present but in fact seem to do better than the left. Do you have any thoughts about why right wing radio shows prevail, and left wing radio shows often fail?

Conservative talk radio got me through my last cubicle job. I'd download the previous day's Dennis Miller, Michael Medved and Dennis Prager shows and listen on my iPod. The failure of leftwing radio puzzles everyone on both sides. I guess it just seems superfluous because the left already runs the rest of the media. Whereas even 25 years later, with his audience of 20 million, listening to Rush Limbaugh still feels like audio samizdata - something vaguely forbidden, naughty and outrageous. That in turn inspires fierce listener loyalty and passion.

I've noticed you aren't a big fan of party politics and instead encourage people who aren't happy with the status quo to focus on changing culture rather than trying to effect change through politics. Why do you think that's the best and most effective course for fixing things?

It doesn't really matter who gets elected because our day to day lives are overseen by the unelected: government bureaucrats who can't be



fired; cops and judges; lobbyists and lawyers. Electoral politics is about as important as the Super Bowl. As Mark Steyn says, how do we expect people to put an "X" by the conservative name one day out of every four years, when the other 365 days they get Hollywood and the universities campaigning for gay marriage or whatever the cause de jour is - and bureaucrats, judges and cops happy to arrest those who don't conform, like the baker who was just ordered to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple.

Your blog covers a fairly wide range of subjects so hunting down all the material that you think might be of interest to your readers must be very time consuming. Do you spend a ridiculous amount of time searching for and reading through material yourself or have you managed to find a way to become efficient and effective?

I subscribe to well over 100 rss feeds of blogs and mainstream sites that cover politics, religion and pop culture. NetNewsWire serves them all up in a manageable format. Plus my readers pass along suggestions.

When you post articles about controversial subjects, you often introduce the article by saying, "As always, the real story is in the comment section". That really resonates with me because I'm always struck by this phenomenon myself whereby, you'll read a very milquetoast article on a touchy subject and then see that in the comment sections, readers let loose and talk like real people. Is it just the anonymity that makes people feel safe about expressing themselves honestly? And what, if anything, does that say about how we are being served by the main stream press when it seems like people aren't satisfied with the kind of coverage touchy subjects get?

One place you'll really see that phenomenon in action is in daily papers covering a "controversial" local story. For instance, a few years ago, there was a "racist" incident at a high school basketball game in the States; allegedly some white players had called the Hispanic players names. In the comments, however, people on the scene argued that the Hispanic players had started the name calling, but that the naive reporter didn't realize that what they were saying was an anti-white phrase - or knew but didn't want to report that, because

that would ruin the liberal narrative. So while the comments are often full of cranks, you can also see a lot of Average Joe wisdom and insight (and fact checking) in there. That's why I often say, "Read the paper upside down."

. . . enemies of free speech have simply revved up their use of libel laws to silence critics . . .

You co-wrote a book called *The Tyranny of Nice: How Canada Crushes Freedom in the Name of Human Rights*, and have been at the forefront in the fight to bring awareness to the detrimental effects that Human Rights Commissions have had on freedom of speech. You also participated in a highly successful event we held in London several years ago along with Salim Mansur, Ezra Levant and Chris Essex and, one could arguably say, Randy Richmond and the London Free Press who inadvertently contributed to the success of that event by maligning you, but I digress. Have you noticed any difference since the government struck down the most offensive provision of the Human Rights Act (Section 13) or has it not made a whit of difference?

Unfortunately, enemies of free speech have simply revved up their use of libel laws to silence critics. Like all horrible things, libel laws were originally passed as an enlightened alternative to something "horrible," in this case, the popularity of aristocratic dueling to settle matters of "honour". Canada's libel laws are particularly draconian, and still reflect a kind of feudal social structure that doesn't (or shouldn't) exist. As well, the Streisand Effect [term used for the phenomena whereby an attempt to censor or stifle a story instead leads to greater interest and more coverage] means that suing someone for libel also does the complainant more harm than good in the long run. However, in the short run, it only costs a hundred bucks to send out a Statement of Claim, so libel suits are a great way to frighten your enemies into submission before a trial is even necessary.

There's anti-SLAPP [Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation] legislation in the works but I agree with the Ontario Civil Liberties Association that that bill doesn't go far enough and libel laws should be abolished. Then we should bring back dueling. Like lots of "old fashioned" things, it is preferable to the "progressive" alternative.

You are a very strong, independent minded woman and you express great frustration for what feminism has become. It seems like the current crop of feminists hate the so-called patriarchy more than they care about women. Can you cite a few examples of how some women in the west appear to be missing the boat on the real problems that still exist for women around the world?

In the 1970s, feminists joked that if men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament. Of course, abortion IS a secular sacrament now. So often its defenders sound as deranged as pro-lifers used to sound, when they hung outside the Morgentaler clinic, calling women sluts, throwing around little plastic fetus dolls and basically guaranteeing that an entire generation of women would never listen to them. The old, truly patriarchal, puritanical, bumpkin-ish pro-life movement has the souls of millions of aborted children on their hands. Luckily, the movement is being taken over by attractive, articulate young people who don't fit the old 1970s stereotype of crusty old men with misspelled picket signs.

This clearly frustrates feminists for whom abortion is the be-all and end-all, the way pot is for libertarians. Along with idolizing death and decadence, progressives live in the past and are forever fighting long dead enemies. Bull Connor is dead! George W. Bush is long gone! And A Handmaid's Tale is not a documentary!

Also, feminists lie again and again to "raise awareness" about imaginary problems. There is no "30 cent wage gap" between men and women that isn't caused by women themselves, voluntarily choosing lower-paying professions and taking time off to raise children. There is NO annual outbreak of domestic violence during the Super Bowl. One out of four women in America is NOT raped. The Duke Lacrosse team was inno-

cent. And their cowardly refusal to challenge the real systemic abuse of Muslim women means so-called feminists have forfeited their moral authority on other issues anyhow.

I often say that because of all this intellectual fluffery, women shouldn't be allowed to vote. I would happily give up my right to do so - since I don't really believe in voting anyway - if it meant no one with a degree in women's studies would be allowed to vote either.

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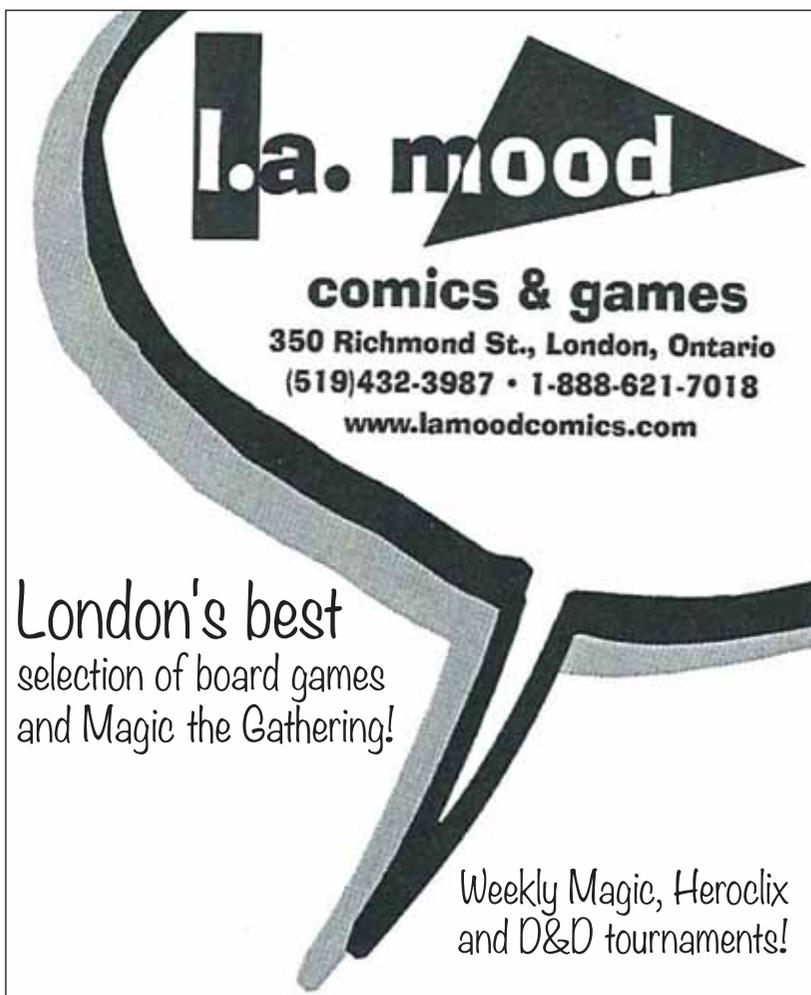


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"The strongest poison ever known Comes from Caesar's laurel crown."

A LEARNED MAN like Michael Ignatieff might have understood and taken this lesson to heart; he would thereby have saved himself, his family, perhaps even the country, some grief.

The theme of Ignatieff's new book **Fire and Ashes**, Random House, 2013 is hubris (actually the title of chapter one), a Greek derivative perhaps best defined as "overweening ambition". Ignatieff writes:

"One night in October 2004, three men we had never met before – and whom we later called 'the men in black' – arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to take my wife and me out to dinner. . . After a drink or two [Alfred] Apps came to the point: Would I consider returning to Canada and running for the Liberal Party? . . . What the men in black were proposing was incredible. . . When the meal ended and they headed back to Toronto, I said merely that I would think about it."

Think about it he did, and then Ignatieff leapt for the gold ring. Today, "I want to explain how it becomes possible for an otherwise sensible person to turn his life upside down for the sake of a dream, or to put it less charitably, why a person like me succumbed, so helplessly, to hubris."

What makes this book so engaging, and sets it apart from most political memoirs, is that Ignatieff is honest about his foibles and failures. He acknowledges that he never really determined why he wanted to become Prime Minister; he speculates that it might have been to fulfill the dreams and ambitions of his deceased parents. He admits that he found the political grind a hard slog and that he often wanted to quit; it was Quebec Premier Jean Charest who told him that the cardinal virtue in politics is perseverance. Ignatieff acknowledges how devastating the Conservative's "Just Visiting" attack ads proved to be. We have grown unaccustomed to such frankness from our politicians.

It takes real courage, not the phony stuff mustered when an occasion seems propitious, to write this: "When the three strangers invited me to go into politics, it

was if I had been waiting my whole life for them to show up." Or this: "You can't find yourself a place in the politics of a country unless you have lived its dramas, and I could be accused of having been missing in action . . . I must have thought that sheer romantic faith in my place of birth would make up for the fact that I hadn't actually lived there." And what other Canadian politician recognizes, let alone would dare to write about "the encapsulating effect of illusion in politics, how everyone ends up saying the same thing, even though it happens to be wrong."

As it happens Ignatieff and I are roughly contemporaries; we were both at the University of Toronto in the 1960s

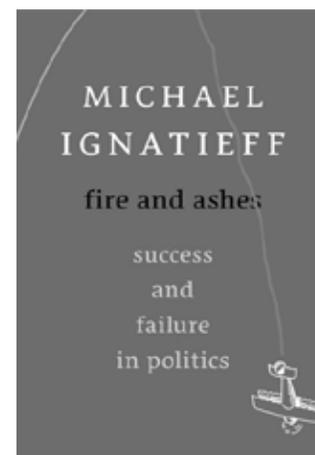
where Ignatieff was much influenced by the liberal idealism of JFK and the myth of Camelot. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, to be twenty-one and to feel that the political activism of your own generation could be that powerful", he writes. *Fire and Ashes* provides evidence that Ignatieff never outgrew this naivety, and perhaps that is more a compliment than a criticism. Ignatieff is a man of some wit and insight. He is willing to re-examine former

assumptions and positions. Clearly he has not emerged unscathed from five bruising years of leading the Liberal Party of Canada, but nor has he become bitter or cynical. This is how he sums it up: "I knew moments of exaltation when I thought I might be able to do great things for the people, and now I live with the regret that I will never be able to do anything at all. In short, I lived the life. I paid for what I learned. I pursued the flame of power and saw hope dwindle to ashes."

While I never voted for him, I think that I would rather have a convivial dinner with him than with almost any other current Canadian politician. So, good on you, mate, you put up with a lot and survived.

Just one other thing. *Fire and Ashes* is a relatively slight book but it has one of the longest Acknowledgements ever. I could not help but reflect that if all those thanked in the Acknowledgements had actually voted for Ignatieff, he would be Prime Minister.

Ian Hunter is Professor Emeritus in the Faculty of Law at Western University.



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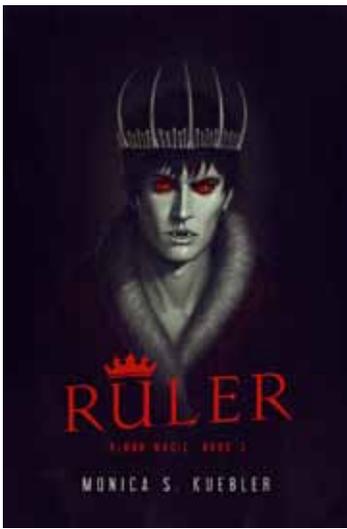
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Interview with an Unrepentant Genre Junkie

Jason Dickson



MONICA S. KUEBLER is a polyglot of sorts - writer, editor, publisher, performer, even sometimes model. Her work as editor and writer at the horror magazine **Rue Morgue** is how many people know her stuff. She also runs the literary department at that mag - The Ninth Circle. On top of all that her Young Adult genre fiction (Bleeder, Ruler), as well as her work as publisher of Burning Effigy Press (Bram Stoker Award nominee) have also developed her audience. She used to live in London. I remember meeting her at the old Ecks zine readings (most vividly at a Museum London reading). Full disclosure means that I think her work as a genre maven makes her totally cool. I had to interview her for the Yodeller.

Tell me about your fascination with Horror Literature.

I've been fascinated with horror since I was about five or six years old. At first it was all about the monsters and confronting fears in a safe way, but as I got older I discovered how the genre can be used to tell all sorts of stories, about all sorts of issues (controversial and otherwise), and is in fact comprised of a lot of stuff much bigger than simply that which frightens and unsettles us. In recent years, I've become taken with the way that horror cross-pollinates with other genres and how much more diversity that also brings to contemporary narratives. And, of course, I'll always love the genre because of the sheer escape it provides from the mundaneness of everyday existence.

Your book Ruler uses the web successfully both as a means of promotion and publication. You gained a large readership that way - 10,000 reads just recently. Tell us how it is to embrace these unconventional ways to find a readership?

From the perspective of getting your work out there in front of eyeballs, the web is really an incredible tool. Having no bankable name in young

adult fiction, I decided to release my first series, the Blood Magic saga, which Ruler is Book 3 in, free online (through its own website and various fiction-sharing websites, such as Wattpad). I considered it a way to say, "Hi, nice to meet you, here's the kind of stuff I want to write, what do you think?" It was an opportunity, if you will, to potentially build a fan base and get instantaneous feedback from teens in my target demographic at the same time, and in both those regards, I consider the series a success. (The first book, Bleeder, for instance, surpassed 200,000 reads earlier this year on one site alone). The problem, of course, is that there is currently very little monetary return for writing online in the serial format, though many readers have expressed a great deal of interest in owning the series as proper, physical books, should they ever be released as such.

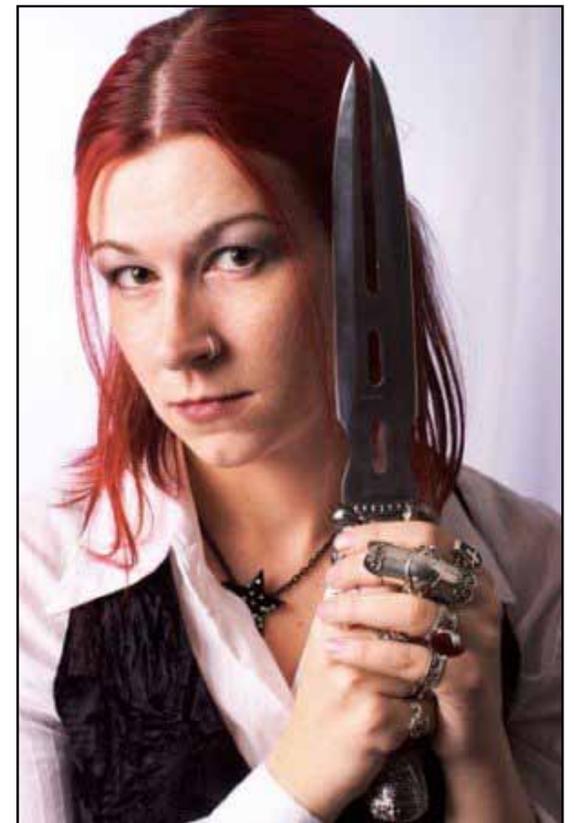
How would you describe your experience at the crazy, excellent and cultish mag Rue Morgue?

It's been a great experience all around. Of course, there is a lot of hard work involved with producing a monthly magazine, but nothing is better than getting to do something you love for a living, which in my case translates to writing, editing, getting to interview my heroes, and travel about to conventions and participate in set visits, among other things. As I said, I've been an unrepentant genre junkie since I was a kid and this has proven to be an ideal, dream-come-true career for me.

I remember you reading poems at Museum London in the 90s. How did that poet become an official aficionado of all things creepy and literary? What was the development?

Even during that period of my life I was a huge fan of TV shows such as The X-Files and horror movies (those were, after all, the halcyon college days of yearly Evil Dead fests and my first genre conventions). At the time, I was also deeply immersed in the fiction of John Shirley, Nancy Collins and Nancy Baker, among others. I just never really got on the whole spooky poetry train as a writer, because unless it is done really, really well (in the vein of, say, Edgar Allan Poe, or Helen Marshall's 2013 collection *The Sex Lives of Monsters*) it tends to come off as hokey and juvenile. Interestingly, in the late 1990s, I was already experimenting with serial horror fiction via an untraditional vampire story I was writing in monthly installments for a small Windsor, Ontario-based 'zine. I think in many ways penning horror stories was always my end goal, but during my late teens and twenties, I had neither the attention span nor the dedication level

needed to complete entire novels, and since the poetry thing was going so well, I didn't feel overly pressured to move in that direction just yet. When I more or less retired from the spoken word scene after getting hired at Rue Morgue full-time and subsequently became very serious about learning the craft of journalism, things changed. Over time, I found myself missing having a creative outlet, and that's when the dream of fiction once again raised its head and I've been writing horror stories for teens ever since (at the rate of about one novel per year).



MONICA S. KUEBLER :
AUTHOR OF THE YOUNG ADULT BOOK, RULER

Lastly (I have to ask) tell us about your time in London, Ontario. What do you remember most?

School. Friends. Dancing at clubs until last call multiple nights a week. My first poetry readings. My first serious adult relationship. In short, a lot of firsts, I guess. London was the first city I lived in on my own after moving out of my parents' house. It marked a really incredible period of self-discovery, and I loved every moment that I spent there, even though a time did eventually come when I needed to move to Toronto to pursue a career in my field. I've gone back a few times over the last sixteen years, but the magic that seemed so integral to that specific place and time is unfortunately not something that can be easily recaptured. Now it only lives on in history and memories.

Thank You, Weezi!

Deanne Kondrat

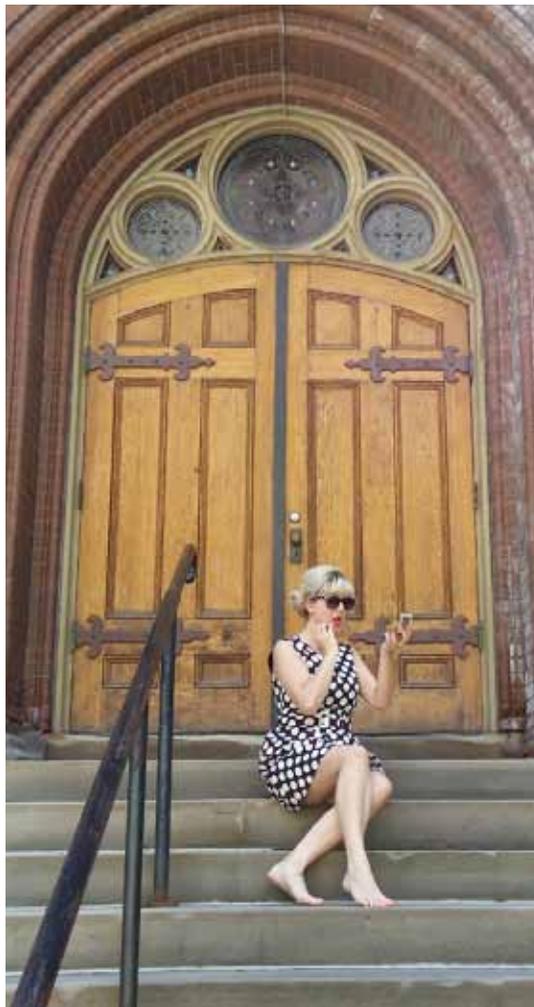
ON MARCH 30TH, The Weezi Studio on Albert Street will be closing its doors. This does not mean the Weezi entity as a whole is done. Designer, creator, shop owner Lisa “Weezi” Gaverluck has assured us that the shop will continue online and customers can make appointments to visit her if they are needing a little retro-inspired flair in their wardrobe.

To me, a Weezi fan since my high school days, this brings mixed emotions. Although I realize this is a smart business move as most small companies do the majority of business online, I will miss the pretty-in-pink shop full of personality located in the heart of downtown.

I have been shopping at Weezi’s since high school (when the store front was located in what used to be the booming Galleria Mall!) – but I came to know Lisa personally in college, right before she moved her studio to the current location at 204 Albert Street (upstairs unit.) Just for time references, when we first met we exchanged MySpace addresses!

You see, when you become a friend of Lisa’s, you know you have a personal cheerleader at all times. When I was in school for journalism she would let me interview her and assisted me with countless stories and documentaries. When I continued my studies in public relations, Lisa let me handle press and marketing for her events, allowing me to build a credible resume. It always amazes me how she became a champion for practically every girl who walked through her door.

When I moved into my first apartment I always remember her instilling the wisdom, “A girl



Deanne doing a shoot for a New York beauty blog – full of confidence in her favourite Weezi dress!

needs to live by herself first, she needs to be able to decorate her own place and have her own space to discover who she really is.” We would ra-ra about independent women as I picked out coasters and planters from her shop, she even brought me some cool vintage blankets that she spotted at a Goodwill and knew I would enjoy.

Lisa always sees the beauty and fierceness in every gal. Whether you are a size two or twenty-two, she wants you to feel fabulous and unstoppable in her designs. And I can’t speak for everyone, but I know I do! When I was at my heaviest weight right after college, I definitely struggled with body issues and insecurities (sorry, after school special moment.)

So you know what Lisa did? She used me as a model in two of her fashion shows! Nothing bumps up your self-esteem like having your hair and makeup professionally done and being put into beautiful clothes tailored to your body type. All my insecurities faded away by the time we had to strut the runway in some retro lingerie.

Deanne doing a shoot for a New York beauty blog – full of confidence in her favourite Weezi dress!

If you have not met Weezi yet, you have until March 30th to visit her in her wonderfully-pink studio. This is a must for any self-proclaimed fashionista in the city. After that, you can probably still find her some evenings at her partner’s pub: Milos’ Craft Beer Emporium. She will be the tiny blonde perched on a bar stool.

And if you need a conversation starter, you can’t go wrong with kitties or Downtown Abbey! For those of us who do have the pleasure of knowing her, be sure to buy her a drink and say thank you.

To check out Lisa’s designs, and more from the mind of the pint-sized wonder, visit:

weezi.com

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red headed snippet

Roller Derby Needs Room to Grow

Vanessa Brown

The floor, however, is still an issue. For a while, my league skated in a church basement. The church secretary was an enthusiast of our sport and wanted to help us out, but the shiny tile made it almost impossible to stay upright on the corners. "Polished concrete or hardwood would be ideal," says Rebekah Zinger, a co-founder of the Stratford league who made their presentation to city council. They need "approximately 6,370 square feet of floor space." Basically, a big empty warehouse is all that is required. "We would ideally like to be able to accommodate a minimum of 200 spectators, in a 'sports complex' environment," says Zinger. While London's FCDG declined to participate in this story, I can tell you firsthand that upwards of 1,000 people regularly attend their games at the Western Fair. A minimum of two hundred? That's just the beginning.

London's low-contact league, LMRD, is simply looking for a reliable practice space. While most of their games are held at Medway Arena, they've had to rely on the cooperation of the YMCA to keep things going. They hold their practices at the Bob Hayward branch on Friday nights, and while league President Lesley Kennedy says the staff are super friendly and the venue is safe, "The gym is small and we aren't able to have a full track. Also, with the other groups using it before us, there is dust and debris on the floor that has to be cleaned [before every practice]."

Kudos to the YMCA, however, for understanding how important roller derby is to women's sports. The YMCA in Stratford has also been instrumental in the survival of their local league. The truth is that derby offers women an empowering way to stay in shape, build community and experience personal success. Institutions like the Universities of Alabama and Edinburgh have studied everything from the bacteria on wrist guards to the way these women run their organizations - each one unique, each one connected. It's not only a great sport to play, but it's highly entertaining to watch

and usually family friendly. While sports promoters in the United States have picked up on the fastest growing sport in the world, making mad money from sold-out games, here in London, Ontario there has yet to be an investor who would step in and take advantage of the junior, full-contact, low-contact and even men's roller derby that have built a vibrant community of skaters right here at home.

Kennedy says, "We struggle every year with renting facilities. Some people that are not educated about derby frown when we tell them we're a roller derby team and fear that we'll damage floors and create an unsafe environment. We not only need a permanent flexible space, we also need to educate society as a whole to accept this as a truly clean, fun sport. Our organization spent five months trying to find a place for

our teams to practice after we lost our last space. We try to keep our costs down, so we don't have a lot of money to spend on rent."

The North London Optimist Community Centre, at Cheapside & Highbury, already hosts roller skating nights. It seems like a natural fit for London's derby leagues to practice there, but rental costs make it nearly impossible, as do better funded groups who pre-book slots months in advance for sports like indoor soccer. It's pretty hard for self-run, grassroots groups to get ahead. Perhaps derby leagues in London can take their search to city hall like Stratford did and find support from our own city council? Unlike the Festival City, London already has a city-run roller rink. It seems pretty ridiculous to have over 200 skaters constantly hunting for stable places to skate when there's one right there.

If you want to see what all the fuss is about, check out **Forest City Derby Girl's** double header on March 24th at the Western Fair Agriplex, or **London Middlesex Roller Derby's** upcoming game on May 3rd at the Medway Arena. You can also go to www.forestcityderbygirls.com or www.lmrdrollerderby.com. Support Local Derby.

STRATFORD'S roller derby league, the **Festival City Rollergirls (FCRG)**, recently appealed to their local city council to help them find a permanent space for practices. Like derby leagues around the world, the Stratford derby girls run everything themselves - from huge games attended by over a thousand people, to pub nights, league meetings and the simple logistics of finding a place where they can practice the sport safely. The approach of seeking municipal help is, however, kind of unique.

I can speak to the situation. Having skated with **Forest City Derby Girls (FCDG)** from 2006-2009, and then co-founding **LOCO Roller Derby** in 2010 - now **London Middlesex Roller Derby (LMRD)** - I know firsthand what it's like to get on the phone and make call after call, hoping that someone will give you a chance. One of the biggest objections to letting derby groups skate in a facility is concern about damage that could be caused to floors - a worry that is uninformed. While rubber wheels from the 1970s might have left marks, new high grade urethane wheels are designed to grip and don't rub off. Derby leagues also maintain their own insurance. A facility can rent to skaters without liability, and without worrying about their floors.

PHOTO ABOVE by JOE MAC:
Ashley "Sewer Princess" Rammeloo skates with London Middlesex Roller Derby.

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