

*Not just a good idea but the law: Dr. Hoffmann's argument; Mr. Ose's case; the briefs of Messrs McNaughton, Trame, & Gunn; Ms Natale's facts; Mr. Wright's wit; Staccato, The Dream Journal and 5 Minutes With.*

# The Blotter

MAGAZINE

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## ***Still, a man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest***

Here at The Blotter, what we don't do is music reviews. I love music, but it's not our bailiwick to talk about it. That said, I apologize in advance for stepping on Bart's crank with some of the stuff in this issue.

When I was fifteen I got a stereo receiver from Radio Shack. OBTW, that was one long time ago. I was in love with a girl named Donnie and the theme to that little bit of pimply confusion was Reelin' In The Years. *Everlasting summer!* Donnie kissed like a gourami, and drove her daddy's caddy, and who doesn't like that? And although she didn't, couldn't possibly, last, my love for Steely Dan did. Ever after, they were the quixotic, absurdist musical-combo background for my life. I eventually paid *the words* their due diligence, deciding to grab a piece of something that I think is going to last; latching onto their groove for good or bad. Was there ever anything so hip? I don't think so. Sure, Coltrane, or Miles, but with heartbreaking diminished seventh chords in five-six time, and the unsentimental poetry of American post-graduate/post-WW2 & Korea & Vietnam Sturm-und-Drang? *Throw back the little ones / and pan-fry the big ones / use tact, poise and reason / and gently squeeze them.* Oh, say I, so *that's* how you get chicks. I bought all of the vinyl. Then I got all of their cassettes. I gleaned Burroughs, and Kerouac and grew a Zappaesque Fu-Manchu for good measure.

By joining Mr. Parker's band and adapting to Pretzel Logic, I survived a gig in the Navy. My freshman year in college was tinged with the bite of Dr. Wu. I endured a whole empty summer without what was then the love of my life by putting Here At The Western World on continuous loop reel-to-reel. Discovered you can't play a Steely Dan bit (or indeed Glenn Gould's Goldberg Variations) to death. Can't be done. You can, however, force your parents to toss you out on your ear.

I navigated a long, dry break-up with said love with Deacon Blues' *I crawl like a viper / through these suburban streets / make love to these women / languid and bittersweet* running through my head. Sure, there were those who accused them of disco. But I believe that Dan mainstays Walter Becker and Donald Fagan were actually writing love songs. Terrifically grim love songs. Songs about girls on junk who dance like angels,

girls entirely too young to know, too genetically close to know, girls arriving too late to save you, girls slightly crazy in all of the best ways.

In '94 I finally saw the Dan live in concert, as far as I could tell. I stood in the back of a bandshell arena in Bethesda, Maryland. Almost everyone was as old as me, or older; we all needed whatever prescriptive eyewear we could get to see what was going on on stage. It could have been pre-recorded, animatronic, and I wouldn't have known. But it was well-amplified, even way out here, and as fans we were at worst only curmudgeonly. Everyone knew all the words, could whine along with the boys, knew which songs used to have Skunk Baxter on lead axe, or Michael McDonald's pure falsetto howling the back vocals. The concert was good enough. I bought a Steely Dan baseball cap. I never wear it.

Sure, they're still there, Citizen Dan, still the music of leafless autumn and winter's dirty snow. Incongruously, they've become the agoraphobic *what if everything goes wrong?* voice on cool-jazz FM stations. They put appropriate closure on my 9 to 5 career with their tongue-in-cheeky *if Dave in acquisitions / wants to get in on the action / with his handicam in tow / well, we're going out of business / everything must go*. And my new philosophy is fairly Danian (Danesque? Danite?) you shouldn't be surprised by anything when you've passed through contempt, doubt and cynicism and come out on the other side with most of your teeth intact.

So I have six Steely Dan CDs in the iPod while I stomp the gym's treadmill to control my cholesterol and blood pressure. We're all getting old, and we know it. I'm pretty sure the very idea would make the boys in the band chuckle a bit.

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**CAUTION**

*The Blotter may contain certain words or ideas that offend. While this was in no way our intent, it is a gas. Continue at your own risk.*

# “On Evangelists, Music Reviews and Getting It On, Austin-Style”

by Heather Hoffman

When Garrison Somers tapped me to write a piece on the merits of music reviews, I had to chuckle. The previous editor of The Blotter had told me that he did not want to publish music reviews. “This is good writing,” John Pence told me when I slipped him a review, “but it’s too informational for The Blotter.”

So is Garry really breaking tradition, taking The Blotter in a brave new direction? I mused as we chatted on the phone that December morning, and then Garry reiterated his request, “You tell me the value of music reviews today because I don’t like ’em.”

Why me? Well, I have been pub dipping for over a decade in the live music capital. I’ll also admit that I’m a self-made groupie. And Garry is my

friend. Okay, I’ll oblige.

So off to Austin to do some fieldwork. Christmas Eve found me in the Saxon Pub, listening to the band that MSNBC has hailed “America’s Best Bar Band.” Hmm, I ponder, is this moniker one of the services of a music review—to find new fans for bands?

It worked in January of 1996 when I sat at my kitchen table, reading The Houston Chronicle, looking for something to do one Friday night. A photo of a chanteuse named Toni Price caught my eye, and the caption said that she was bringing some of Austin’s best guitarists to my neighborhood bar. Indeed, she brought along Scappy Jud Newcomb of South by Southwest fame, and the late Champ Hood, one of the originals from Uncle Walt’s Band who later graced Lyle Lovett’s Large Band. Needless to say, that night was not my only trek to the Mucky Duck to see Toni Price. Before long I was making pilgrimages to the Continental Club in Austin for Toni’s Tuesday “Hippy Hour.” And pretty soon I took to following Scappy Jud Newcomb from gig to gig all over Texas because he became my barometer for good music.

And that’s just how I happened to be in the Saxon on Christmas Eve: Ten

years later Scappy was playing his usual Sunday night gig with The Resentments. The Resentments often invite a guest artist, and in the past, the extra chair has been warmed by the likes of Bonnie Raitt, Kris Kristofferson, and Ray Wylie Hubbard. My Christmas gift arrived long about nine o’clock when Resentment Stephen Bruton began heckling audience member and bluesman Malford Milligan to leave his chair in the audience and come onstage.

Malford fit right in, and in usual Resentment fashion, contributed to the stage banter that’s one of the hallmarks of the show. When Stephen asked Malford how he was doing, Malford said that he was doing great—had a new girlfriend. “And don’t tell her, but my prostate is this (makes a gesture the size of a boulder) big.”

“I think she knows now,” Stephen said to audience laughter.

“Oh no, she’s not here tonight,” Malcolm said, in all seriousness. Then Malford obliged us with an outpouring of his vocal gifts, which are flowing just fine thank you in spite of an enlarged gland.



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At the break I approached him to ask his opinion about music reviewers. "The Europeans do it better; Americans don't know a thing about music," Malford said. To prove his point, he recounted that an American writer once asked him what it was like to be a white man singing black music. "He hadn't done his homework," Milligan laughed and threw his cornrows back, "or he would have known that I'm a black albino."

Back at the table, I settled into my spot with my new friends, Robert and his daughter, Kristin, from New York City; they had traveled to Austin just to see what the Live Music Capital had to offer. I was reminded once again of the many times that I have traveled to points unknown and trusted music reviewers in the local independent press to determine where to sample the evening's air waves. That's how I found the Madam's Organ one night in D.C.

The Internet has certainly added a new availability to the music review, which used to leave my hands inked. The week before I left for Austin, I was baking sugar cookies in my Carolina kitchen and got a hankering for John Lennon's "Whatever Gets You Through the Night." In my search to find the album name on the kitchen Apple, I came across a review of the album that revealed Elton John provided backing vocals. With new zeal I hearkened the litany of "Listen, listen," trying to pick out Sir Elton's chops.

Don't get me wrong; I don't wake up every morning to a music review on my home page. And there's plenty not to like about some of them. Take the annoying five star system of ranking an album: hate it. Even worse if you try to stretch the accuracy of the measurement by granting half stars—come on! And nothing peeves me more than the green reviewer who tries to tell me what a song means. Despite one reviewer's take on Beaver Nelson's song "Clean it Up," you can't convince me that it is really about

cleaning up after a party; my relationship odometer would lead me to believe that Beaver was talking about making do after an itinerant love moves on. But you be the judge:

So drive careful where you're going  
Send me a postcard overflowing  
Don't mind the tears, it's just the meaning  
Was worth every bit the cleaning  
And if you're ever back this way  
We'll make a mess again someday  
I'll just clean it up by myself

And yet, I do believe in the good music review—they're out there, and in the Triangle David Menconi has the knowledge and the writerly instincts to pen a solid review. As David's friend Peter Blackstock writes in the editor's preface of the The Best of No Depression—Writing About American Music, reviewers attempt to contribute to "the historical record of the music and its makers." Because I know that Garrison Somers values historical fiction, I could quit while I'm ahead with my editor.

But there's a knock at the door. It's the Mormons. I tell them I have a problem with evangelism. They look at each other (they always come in two's—maybe a nod to Noah's alternative ark?—not likely) and one of them says, "My religion is just like a new CD—I listen to it, and it's so great, I want to tell all my friends about it."

Bingo! That's just the feeling that came over me when I was sitting in the Saxon Pub on Christmas Eve, and long about midnight, Walter Tragert closed out his set with a cover of Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On." The impulse was to reach for my cell phone, call the whole universe, and tell them to transport themselves to Austin tout de suite, but I knew that no one could arrive in time to hear the song. So I just had to sit there and take it like a woman, all by my lonesome: "If the spirit moves you, let me groove you." Now that's what I'm talking about!





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## "Good Neighbors"

by Erik Ose

I've lived in Alamance County all my life. It's funny, but people have long memories around here. They'll remember stuff from a hundred years ago and talk like it was the latest outrage popped up just the other day. Not that you need a particularly long memory to get along in Alamance, lots of folks have moved in from someplace else, 'cuz they like the whole idea of living at least five miles down the road from the nearest Burger King, Winn Dixie, or Valv-O-Lene oil change place. Throw in the cows, and little ponds under every second bridge, and you've got a suburbia waiting to happen for Greensboro yuppies and Chapel Hill city slickers.

Most everybody knows Alamance County 'cuz it was where the whole second half of Roots took place. No lie, that dude Chicken Legs? Kunta Kinte's friend, whatever his name was. Rednecks like to boast about how they've gone to spit or piss on his grave. It all happened right around Green Level, just 15 miles north of the Haw River. Alex Haley, even though he was from Indianapolis, he traced his family back right here, next thing you knew they had ended up in Alamance to try to start a farm or something. Some serious shit has gone down here, for real. And still does, on a lot of levels.

One thing that hasn't changed much is how you're not supposed to mess around with the local courts, or they'll fuck with you right back. That's how I ended up serving a two hour sentence the other week. I had gone to court for only one reason, because Mouse was about to go to jail, and he spent the whole weekend beforehand hanging out with me. He'd decided the previous Friday not to show up for a pre-sentencing hearing. He was tired of all the bullshit and figured he'd just do his time, get it

over with. Probably end up with a little as eight months, but if the judge decided he didn't like him, he could face a year and a half. They had discretion like that. Which is why it didn't make too much sense for him to be skipping out on this hearing. His lawyer had to plead for a continuance.

It was part of the leftover mysterious ways of the local good ol' boys, whose kin were born and raised in Alamance since before the War Between the States. Maybe they couldn't completely control things any more, with a whole world of choices existing beyond Green Level and Graham, black folks being state troopers, and gay dudes owning antique shops in Burlington. But they could still make things tough for anybody unlucky enough to be poor and get in trouble with the law, whether you were black, white, Mexican, whatever.

So from Friday 'til Tuesday, I babysat Mouse while he slipped deep into a bender. He tried to make it extra special, knowing he'd be gone for awhile. Nobody was allowed to call him or know where he was, which was usually passed out on the floor at my place, high or drunk on some potent combination of stuff. Before getting caught for possession of mushrooms, Mouse had been on probation

for a cocaine bust that happened to him almost three years ago. Three years probation over a traffic stop that yielded less than one measly eight-ball of coke. But that's how the law around here keeps its pockets full. They'll put you on probation and keep you on for as long as they can, knowing you'll eventually fuck up. It costs a lot of money to get busted for drugs, besides! First they confiscate whatever stash you had, plus whatever money you were carrying, then calculate how much the drugs were worth, and charge you drug taxes on that amount, like you were a big time dealer who should have reported the illicit sales as income or something! What a crock of shit.

On Sunday afternoon, after we'd watched people say and do stupid things on this show Taxicab Confessions, beamed direct to my TV on one of the five new HBO's we get with our suburban cable package, Mouse let me know how he felt. He sat up from where he was slouched down against the living room couch, and looked straight at me.

"Jimmy, I don't wanna go in by myself," Mouse said, then right away again he passed back out asleep.

But I was convinced. So on Tuesday morning, we both walked



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into the courthouse, and I thought Mouse looked more at peace than I'd ever seen him. Ready to face down the judge, get his time, and be done with it. I wasn't so calm. Actually, I was already pissed off, about some other shit that happened to us down the road from my place, at the ExpressWay, where we stopped on our way into town.

Now, this was some typical Alamance County bullshit. I go in there, all set to pay for the gas, and there's this guy in line right ahead of me, trying to buy something. Not even a beer, or whatever, it was only eight o'clock in the morning. I think it was a box of crackers and a cheese sandwich. They're running his card when I step up behind him with my coffee, and almost immediately, his card won't go through. I hate when that happens. The clerk always looks at you like you don't belong in the store, and it's expected you'll come out with some lame story while you're fishing out another card, or scraping up the cash you need to pay. Only this guy didn't have a choice, beyond that card, it was pretty clear he was plain flat broke. And what do you think happened next?

Even though it's eight in the morning, okay, eight-thirty, there's still three or four other people in that store, just hanging out. No particular place to go. What the fuck, are they stopping by on their way to work or

something? Do they wake up from dreaming, take a shower, and then hang out there all damn day long? So when this guy's card conks out, somebody starts snickering. Then another of them makes a comment. I could almost see the guy start sweating. He's going through his jacket, putting all the little shit he's carrying in his pockets out on the counter, looking for the money he obviously doesn't have. He tells the girl on duty he left his wallet at home, and walked there. Now they're all trading smiles, and everybody's up in his business, real casual, sneering, and mean.

I could feel myself getting red. I pulled out a five and laid it down, that was enough to pay for my stuff and his. You should have seen his face light up like a Christmas tree, embarrassed, but grateful. Everybody else shot me the vilest looks, like I'd blown their little game all to hell. I didn't give a fuck. I turned and left, and it got me thinking about how some people around here really don't know any better to begin with.

So you'd think I would have been prepared for what happened at the courthouse, but guess again. Just when you reckon you've seen the worst of human nature, somebody steps up to the plate and does something else to prove you wrong. That may be harsh, but it's a hard world filled with backwards folks sometimes, people. Deal with it.

## The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

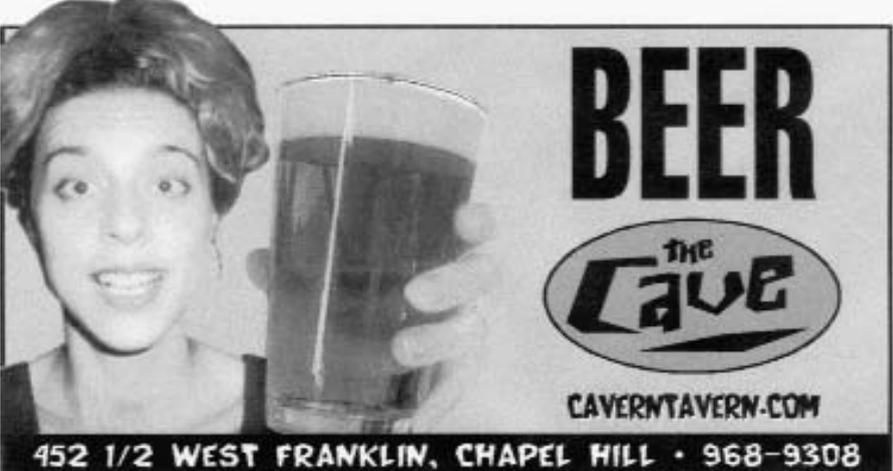
Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterra.com

I turn around in one of those Matrix-freeze frame 365 degree looks. Everywhere there are people that look very hungry, bones showing in their faces and arms and hands. They're not reaching out to me, like I thought they might, because I'm one of them. I've got to escape! There's only one opportunity: a very strong-looking fellow, although his muscles drape from his arms and chest from lack of sustenance. It's Paul Senior from Orange County Choppers, and he will help me get out of this place, if I help him. People are always arriving and being taken away, so the camp is very busy. No one should notice us. We find the one place where the barbed wire doesn't cover the fence, and grabbing the top we do somersaults over and run.

We're now in a labyrinthine hotel-like complex, and I try to find a way out. Paul Senior and I part ways, because we are being chased by security, and it is better to split up than to be caught together. There is a room that looks like a way out, but it leads past a man in a bed. He yells to me that I am a stinking NIK-carrying Katrina survivor and I need to be eliminated like the scum that I am. This bewilders me, because I wasn't in the Gulf when the hurricane hit. When did we start putting all of the survivors in concentration camps? The man picks up the phone and dials someone. By the time that I am finally outside, many security police and hospital orderlies are trying to surround me and inject me with a sedative that will allow them to put me back inside. They grab at me, and try to wrap me up in blankets and nets and straight-jackets, telling me that it is all for my own good.

BB - Pittsboro, NC



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Upper Left - Couple

Above - Rite of Spring

Right - Raven Fetish

Left - Maiden Voyage



# The Blotter

We got seated, and the place was near full of bodies. Everybody with a reason to be there, bored, restless faces, and most people looking like they knew what to expect, having been through the motions before. Mouse's last name is Nash. His real name is Charlie, except he's short, and has red, beady eyes, you get the picture. They go alphabetical, so we figured it'd be awhile before his case got called. I could hardly believe he was looking at eight to eighteen months, variable, and still showed up, hung over, dazed and confused, but ready to face the music. Then again, what else could he do? The judge came in, we all stood up, and then sat down again. I didn't know this judge by name, but he was old and white, and one of the county's regular judges. Business as usual.

Soon enough, I was almost asleep faced with the steady drone of names and faces and stories being told before the court, most involving petty

drug offenses, with the occasional assault and battery or domestic violence case thrown in. When Mouse poked me, we'd been there for nearly two hours already.

"Hey, man, check this guy out." Mouse pointed to the front of the courtroom, where a couple of the balliffs were helping somebody get up onto the witness stand. "He's not looking so good."

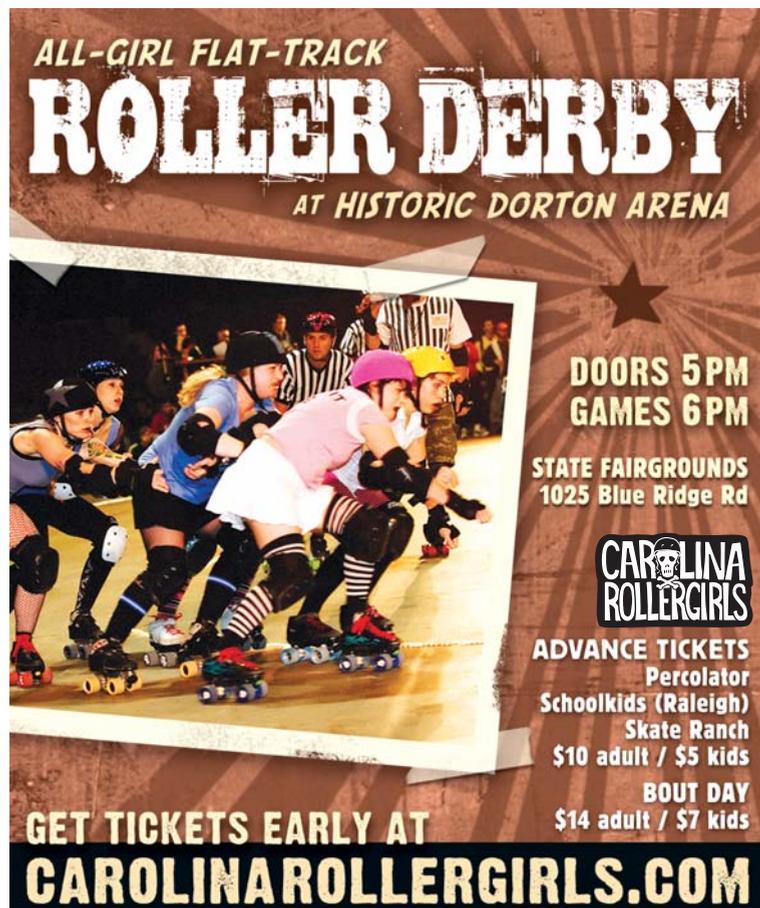
This guy was maybe in his mid-forties, and he needed help just finding his way across the room. We later learned his name was Gary, and he was half deaf and legally blind. When I first opened my eyes, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. One of the bailiffs, this big dude with rolls of fat just spilling over his belly, he was actually

snickering while he helped this guy Gary get onto the stand! Next Gary started feeling around for the bible, like he couldn't find it, and for a second it almost looked like the other

bailiff was waving it around a little bit in front of him! Then the fat one grabbed Gary's hand, real fast, and smacked it down on top of the bible, still grinning like a sick little kid.

Before I'd even had time to process all that shit, they sat him down and we began to hear the details of his case. First off, Gary was sort of mentally disabled, and had at least one life threatening disease, I think diabetes, so he was on disability. For a couple years, he'd been assigned to this one social worker, Miss Barnes, in another town the next county over. Then, she claimed she started feeling threatened by him, and took out a restraining order. A little while later, he supposedly violated it, and that's why he was in court that morning. Oh yeah, he lives in Alamance now, so they were trying him here.

Later, when they put Miss Barnes up on the stand, we found out he'd been sending her money along with little presents and cards for two



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whole years, a few dollars here and there, five or ten bucks sometimes. And that whole time she'd never said a word about it, or explained to him it wasn't necessary to do that for her. Like maybe just sat him down and said, hey, I don't need any presents or money, you don't have to thank me for helping you, it's my job. This is a man who has a family, he mentioned a wife and a little girl, for chrissakes, and that damn check is supposed to be feeding them.

For whatever reason, she was happy to get the money, and the candy, and whatever other presents he gave her. I mean, maybe he got a bit sweet on her. Who knows. I'm not even sure he knew the difference between gratitude and affection, from what he said on the stand. Bottom line was, after Miss Barnes filed the restraining order, he got switched to a different social worker. But right before it happened Gary's check was due to arrive. He'd been calling her about it, and she'd been stalling him for a couple of weeks. By the time he found out he got switched to the new social worker, it was the middle of the month, and he really needed to pick up his check. So he called over to the place, probably still not understanding exactly what was going on, and some dumbass told him sure, come on by to get it.

His brother drove him over there, and for some reason just dropped him off, then left. So he didn't even have a ride back. In fact, he was actually standing across the street from the Social Services building, not even on the property, when Miss Barnes just happened to be looking out the frigging window and saw him. That's when she called the police. Told them she was afraid he was stalking her, when anybody with an ounce of common sense could see the man was just trying to come pick up his check!

It went on in the courtroom like that for awhile. Gary had a court

appointed lawyer, but he wasn't worth shit, and wasn't doing a thing for him. After what happened to me at the ExpressWay that morning, I was really starting to get hot. It wasn't only the good ol' boys in charge of the court who were coughing and grinning. I could hear people in the courtroom start chuckling too whenever he'd say anything on the stand that sounded a little strange. And the judge didn't give a fuck. He wasn't making fun of Gary like the others, but you could clearly see he had no sympathy for the guy.

It just wasn't right. Here's a man who deserves to have his case thrown clear out of court, and instead, when it came time to sentence him, the judge ignored everything Gary said in his own defense, all the holes in Miss Barnes' story, and gave him six months. Then they stood him up and started taking him away.

That's when I stood up, too. Mouse did a doubletake and looked at me in horror, suddenly more nervous for me than he was for himself. But I had to say something. I started off with "WHAT ABOUT HIS DIGNITY? LET THE MAN HAVE HIS DIGNITY, FOR CHRISAKES! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID? THIS JUST AIN'T RIGHT!"

IT'S A TRAVESTY! IT'S AN OUT-RAGE!" That's about as far as I got before the balliffs reached my side and pulled me out to the end of the aisle. The judge was banging his gavel, but I kept on shouting. So the judge cited me for contempt on the spot, and they straight yanked me out of the room, my heels dragging on the carpet.

I was locked up downstairs for two hours, and had to pay a \$50 fine plus court costs. When they let me out, I had to leave the building for the day. Later I found out the judge gave Mouse eighteen months. No surprise there. Hopefully it wasn't any worse because of what I did. I wondered if he might see Gary while he was in. Crazy when you reach a point feeling more in common with the people locked up than you do with the ones who put them there.

You know, I don't want to say there's no good people in Alamance County. I'm from here, and I know there's lots of 'em. But I didn't run into too many that morning, except for the ones getting the short end of the stick. I guess when you stop and think about it, at the end of the day the answer's not very profound. It's really just a question of how you treat your neighbors.



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## Five Minutes With: Joanna Catherine Scott

*Authors are busy. Must ask pertinent, pithy questions. Get on your game! Mutual friend introduced me to Joanna Catherine Scott. Award winning novelist and poet. Check her out at joannacatherinescott.com. Hey, I ask her, I have this idea where I interview you for only five minutes. Surprisingly, she says OK. Here we go. Your CV, please:* Born in England, raised in Australia, took graduate degree in Philosophy at Duke, and now live in Chapel Hill. Latest novel is *The Road from Chapel Hill* (Penguin/Berkley, 2006). Told from the points of view of three radically different young Southerners displaced by war, it deals with resistance to the Confederacy in Civil War North Carolina. Its original inspiration comes from the true story

**Trace of Arc**, inaugural performance by Free Association Theatre Ensemble. At our friends Market Street Books at Arts & Letters Community Center - Southern Village, Chapel Hill. For info, visit <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/10693>. Tickets \$12; students \$8. Reservations: 539-0993, 1-800-838-3006, [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com). Tix may be purchased at the door - same price - but seating is limited so we recommend purchasing tix in advance. General admission - arrive early. Show includes some adult content. FATE is a new theatre company founded by Julya M. Mirro with Rachel S. Zielinski. The ensemble is Collin L. Beck, Donniss Collins, Lisa Klein, Bonnie Perron, and Lamont Reed, under the direction of Julya M. Mirro.

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of a runaway slave from Chapel Hill. Three previous novels: *The Lucky Gourd Shop*, set in South Korea, is the story of her adopted children's birth mother. It was a nominee for Book Sense Book-of-the-Year. *Cassandra, Lost* is based on the true story of Cassandra van Pradelles, a Maryland heiress who eloped with a lieutenant from General Rochambeau's French army after the Revolution and was eventually slaughtered by the New Orleans pirate Jean Lafitte. *Charlie and the Children*, also inspired by a true story, tells about an American GI who fathers an Amerasian son in Vietnam, abandons him, and is held captive by the Viet Cong. *Married?* Yes, to Joe Rogers, who these days works with Re/Max, a lovely man and full of patience with my nonsense.

*Children?* Six. (I know, I know). I have a girl and two boys from my first husband, an Australian. A Korean family of two girls and a boy Joe and I adopted when we were living in the Philippines. Ages range from 24 to 42. My two birth sons live in Adelaide, Australia, my birth daughter in Sarasota, Florida. My Korean son lives in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was with the 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker Brigade in Baghdad and has just returned. My two Korean daughters are living temporarily at home. The older has a husband in the Special Forces in Iraq. The younger married a traditional Korean and left him after two and a half months.

*Place of birth?* Bexley Heath, Kent, England, during an air raid. The nurses wrapped me in a towel and put me in a box beneath my mother's bed. This was so that if the hospital was hit, mother and child would go as one.

*Boxers or briefs?* None of your business.

*Brahms or Bach, Sting or Bono?* I am possibly the last person on earth who loves silence. In it I can hear my voice speak.

*What are the pluses and minuses of living in Chapel Hill?* The only minus is that it's a long way from my two sons in Australia. However, so is everywhere. The pluses, for me, are the high level of education, the easy accessibility of the UNC and Duke libraries for research, and the wonderful friendships I have made with all sorts of people through my work, the latest being an inmate on Death Row whom I just love, and from whom I am learning a great deal about the horrors of life as a throwaway ghetto child. The experience has made me very humble. To be born into my life by the blind dice toss of fate: how lucky can a person be?

*Does living in Chapel Hill impose limitations on your thematic ideas or the kinds of conversations you overhear for use in your writing?* The only limitations I have are those imposed by my own inability to research and conceptualize. I've published books set in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, South Korea, the Philippines, Revolutionary France, early New Orleans, Civil War North Carolina, and Florence, Italy. I think I don't have too much of a problem. As for eavesdropping, I do it all the time, not to steal conversations, but to expand my understanding of people and the way they get their thoughts across.

*Is it frustrating having another author with the same name as yours? Did anyone ever call asking for her and did you redirect them, or just take the call? Do you ever consider putting a secret "my space" on the web that talks behind her back?* Not at all frustrating, valuable in fact. As they say, all publicity is good publicity. Mine works for her and hers works for me, so we both

benefit. For instance, the *Chicago Tribune* did a big piece on the two Joanna Scotts. What's not to like about that? Yes, I sometimes get mail or packages for her. When I do, I call her editor and ask what she wants me to do, send directly to Joanna or via the publisher. Since we share a publisher, this is a good tactic, since they send me free copies of my own books for my trouble.

I would never say bad things behind anybody's back, or even to their face. Joanna is a very good writer. I'm just glad I get confused with her and not with some schmuck who cannot write.

*What is the worst job you ever had?* I've been a schoolteacher, a university tutor, a companion maid, a waitress, a document analyst, a librarian, a traveling management consultant, a newsletter editor, an ambassador's wife, can't think what else. Would not delete one of them from my life. They have all been grist for what I do now as a full-time writer.

*What is your dream job, the kind of job you wake up in a sweat about?*

You've got the wrong babe for that. I tend to dream about whatever book I'm working on. No time to waste on panicked sweating.

*Sorry, out of time, thanks much.*



## The Hound in the Tree by Louis Bourgeois

Vernon and I slipped out the back of the school and uncovered our pellet rifles from a heap of damp leaves. Those nuns were a bitch to get away from but we managed it just the same. We walked slowly to the back of the woods, shooting whatever we saw. Vernon had to his credit one gray squirrel and a good size thrush. I had two blue jays and a small dove. I was jealous of Vernon's squirrel.

We saw him walking and quickly scuffled on the wet morning ground to hide in some bushes. He was a tall man carrying an inert floppy eared blood hound. We watched him walk for a long time and tried our best not to move even though the gnats and mosquitoes were eating us up from head to toe. The man wasn't exactly old, but he wasn't young either. I had the sense that he'd seen us but he didn't show any signs of it. He finally stopped walking and put the dead hound in the hollow of a huge black oak tree. The dog would barely fit and the man had to struggle hard to push the entire dog into the tree trunk. When he was finished pushing the dog down into the tree, you couldn't see any of the dog at all, not even his amazingly long ears. The man stood in front of the tree for a moment and whispered what must have been a prayer. Then he bowed his head and made the sign of the cross and turned and began walking back the way he came; he did not look down toward

Vernon and me, where we were biting down hard on our tongues so as not to scratch our gnat and mosquito bites.

We both trembled, because we knew that the man knew we were there even if he didn't see us.

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## “Senility”

by Zacharia T. McNaughton

“The wood’s wet” my grandpa said  
and I kept on striking matches, he used to  
grab grandma by the wrists and call her  
Jackie Kennedy and say her fingers were on fire.

“It’s wet” he insisted, pressing my shoulder.  
I shrugged him off and tried another match.  
Somehow I always had to babysit Grandpa  
while Doob got to holler bloody murder in the forest.

“It won’t work it’s wet.” Smiling secretly, I said ok  
Grandpa, and tried to add more leaves, I just wanted to  
get the damned fire going so I could warm up after splashing  
around in the nameless creek behind the cabin.

He wandered off and I kept at it, striking match after match,  
but the wood wouldn’t catch, and I was ready to give up and swim anyways  
when he returned with more wood and threw it on the fire. “Try it now...”  
I only had one match left so I cupped it steady and brought it to the new wood,  
and it caught.

## “Seasoning”

by Robert Gunn

Outside, the war breathes heavy under the permanent epilogue and heavy smoke from  
his pockets that gush gray day gray against the wind.  
Inside, we close the blinds and forget.  
We knock over the salt and pepper shakers as we roll across the kitchen table.

# "March Wind"

by Davide Trame

It comes with large vaults of sky,  
with layers of silver and black and behind  
blades of unpredictable brightness.  
It envelops you with the sudden  
turmoil of north and south  
and veins aglow with anger and hilariousness.  
It casts its sweeping breath along streets and stones,  
bangs shutters and roofs, and the hearts of homes  
down into the unknown of your irises.  
And it swarms, with light sand  
and the pride of what is brand-new  
and grows in its own howling.

You gaze at a bin  
that has been picked up and has  
cavorted in the air, the metal frame  
shattered on the beach, foam  
flooding the debris.

At home you close yourself in, outside  
the sky sounds as a drum,  
runs its own rhythm;  
as a world ready to be thrashed about,  
torn, turned upside down:  
behind the fear you feel glad  
to be scared by openness,  
you skin like the skin of the air  
once more cleansed and naked,  
on the shore bared to the walloping future.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Dr. Heather Hoffman** is our resident resident and cut her teeth on 45's of Nancy Sinatra and The Fifth Dimension. Her favorite band this side of the Mississippi is The Old Ceremony.

**Erik Ose** wishes we could all just get along. He has written numerous short stories and is working on a novel. He lives in Chapel Hill with his wife and their four-legged herd.

**Michelle Natale** has a distinguished resume in arts and letters. Her inspiration often comes from walks in the woods with her dog, Bear. Or was it her bear, Dog? I forget.

**Louis Bourgeois** is a New Orleans native, and co-founder and editor of Vox ([www.voxjournal.com](http://www.voxjournal.com)), an experimental literary journal based in Oxford, MS. For all you philistines, that's where Mr. Faulkner hailed from.

**Zacharia T. McNaughton** lives, works and plays in Toledo, Ohio. He dreams of one day travelling to distant exoplanets and in the meantime, compulsively checks NASA's and ESA's websites for updates on their space programs.

**Davide Trame** of Venice writes "I am an Italian teacher of English. My poetry collection "Re-emerging" is published as an email book by [www.gattopublishing.com](http://www.gattopublishing.com). I have been writing exclusively in English since 1993." This is grim for those of us who have been writing exclusively in English for longer than that.

**Robert Gunn** has a cool writer's name, is an English major at U.Ga, and plays in an Athens-based band An Epic At Best.

**John Wright** has been looking through your garbage for comic strip ideas. You're going to be very angry with him next month.

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**YOU'LL CRY!**

**YOU'LL WRITE your  
CONGRESSMAN!**



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