

# THE ANTENNA



©

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# HIGH VOLTAGE: PRIMARY PRELUDE

With the primary looming and political tensions on the rise, we thought it only appropriate to infuse some politics in this issue; however, in the interest of remaining politically neutral, two articles have been printed. Both writers have been featured among The Antenna's pages before. Both are volunteers---one for Barack Obama, and one for Hillary Clinton---and both are equally passionate about their respective candidate. Perhaps this will give you, reader, insight as to who you will vote for in the Pennsylvania primary. Without further interruption, The Antenna presents Amy McKiernan and Sabrina McLaughlin:

## **"No Country for Qualified Women?" Why I Will Vote for Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton**

***Amy L. McKiernan***

It all began with a photograph. Two months ago, I knew very little about the primary elections. When asked if I would support Clinton or Obama, I replied with the can't-go-wrong, enlightened, liberal answer: "Not sure yet." I quickly added, "Either way I am happy to see a woman and a black man as serious presidential candidates." Friends nodded. Phew. They didn't press me. We sighed and finished

our coffee. I must say, we lacked luster. Some said, "We need a fresh start." Others said, "As long as he, or she, is a Democrat." Soon I felt negligent. Why hadn't I researched the experience of the Senators? Why didn't I feel passionate about either of these candidates? Oh right. I knew nothing about their lives. I searched for information and images. I visited the websites for each campaign. Then I saw the picture, and for me, it all began with that photograph of Hillary Rodham at Wellesley College in the late 1960's. Think civil rights, student protests, Goldwater, and The Beatles. Think 1968.

In September, The New York Times featured the article, "In Turmoil of '68, Clinton Found a New Voice." Yet, in 1968, she was not a Clinton. She was not a mother yet. She was not a Senator yet. She was not a lawyer yet. She was a student. She was a young woman known to wear clunky boots, dark-rimmed glasses, and a navy pea coat. She wrote, challenged authority, and spoke in public. She sounded a lot like my favorite artists and activists in this city. In that article, you will meet a student who cried out in anger upon hearing the news of Dr. King's assassination, a woman chosen by her classmates to serve as the first ever student commencement speaker at Wellesley. During her address, she read a poem created by one of her classmates. The poem and the speech ended, "Earth could be fair / And you and I must be free / Not to save the world in a glorious crusade / Not to kill ourselves with a nameless gnawing pain / But to practice with all the skill of our being / The art of making possible." Get to know Ms. Rodham. Then find Mrs. Clinton in Beijing.

If it began with a photograph, it flourished with

the speech. As the First Lady of our nation, Hillary delivered remarks at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Although this speech has become well known for her assertion that “women’s rights are human rights,” I urge you to read the entire work. Summary will not do. Her words are poetic and practical: “As we sit here, women around the world are giving birth, raising children, cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning houses, planting crops, working on assembly lines, running companies, and running countries. Women also are dying from diseases that should have been prevented or treated. They are watching their children succumb to malnutrition caused by poverty and economic deprivation. They are being denied the right to go to school by their own fathers and brothers. They are being forced into prostitution, and they are being barred from the bank lending offices and banned from the ballot box.”

Learn more about Hillary’s work to establish legal aid clinics, her vision to provide Americans with healthcare—work that she began before it was popular. Learn about Hillary’s work

within the foster care system or her role as staff attorney for the Children’s Defense Fund. Get to know this woman! You will feel her fierce desire for justice. You will find heart, intelligence, style, and substance. I trust her, and her experience. I want a leader who can balance stability with ground-breaking change. This is Hillary Clinton. This is her time. She has earned this place in our nation. She will listen. She will act. Will we deny her this opportunity to lead? On April 22nd, I will vote for Hillary Rodham Clinton. For our nation and for our daughters, I hope that you will do the same.



## A People's Candidate, and a People's Campaign

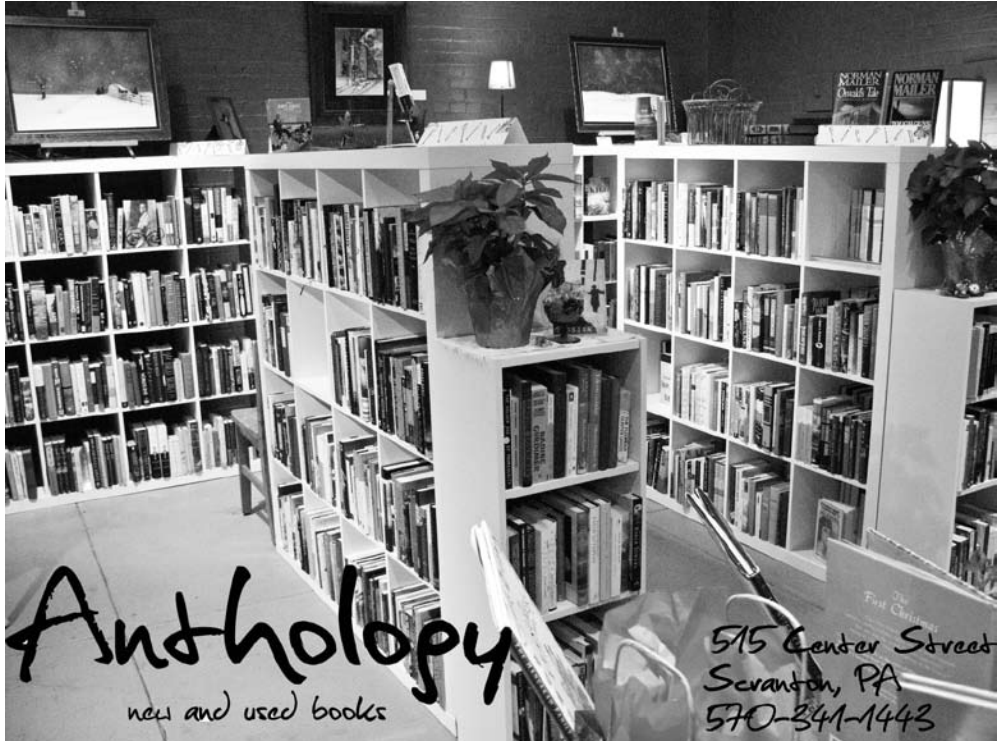
*Sabrina McLaughlin*

The nostalgia for the years of idealism that began with the Kennedy era is still strong in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and there are strong signs that a similar feeling is stirring—promising relief from these times of trouble and strife, disillusionment and disappointment. In my opinion, that has a lot to do with Barack Obama, not just the man himself, but what he represents, the people who are standing with him, the promise he holds forth, and the political philosophy he has espoused.

Obama impressed me, but I wanted to be certain I was making an intelligent decision to support him. I read his books; I watched the debates, and I listened to his speeches,

investigating the substance behind the rhetoric. I was not disappointed. My choice was made with all seriousness. Those who think politics is boring or who have become victims of their own self-absorption must realize that politics is often literally a matter of life and death. I have come to know people whose lives have been profoundly effected by our current wars—a young veteran afflicted with hearing loss, nightmares, and survivor's guilt after having served multiple combat tours, as well as people my age who come from families in which as many as three brothers or sisters are deployed at the same time. We owe these individuals and ourselves a leader who is worthy of them. I would not be voting for Obama if I didn't think he could be that leader.

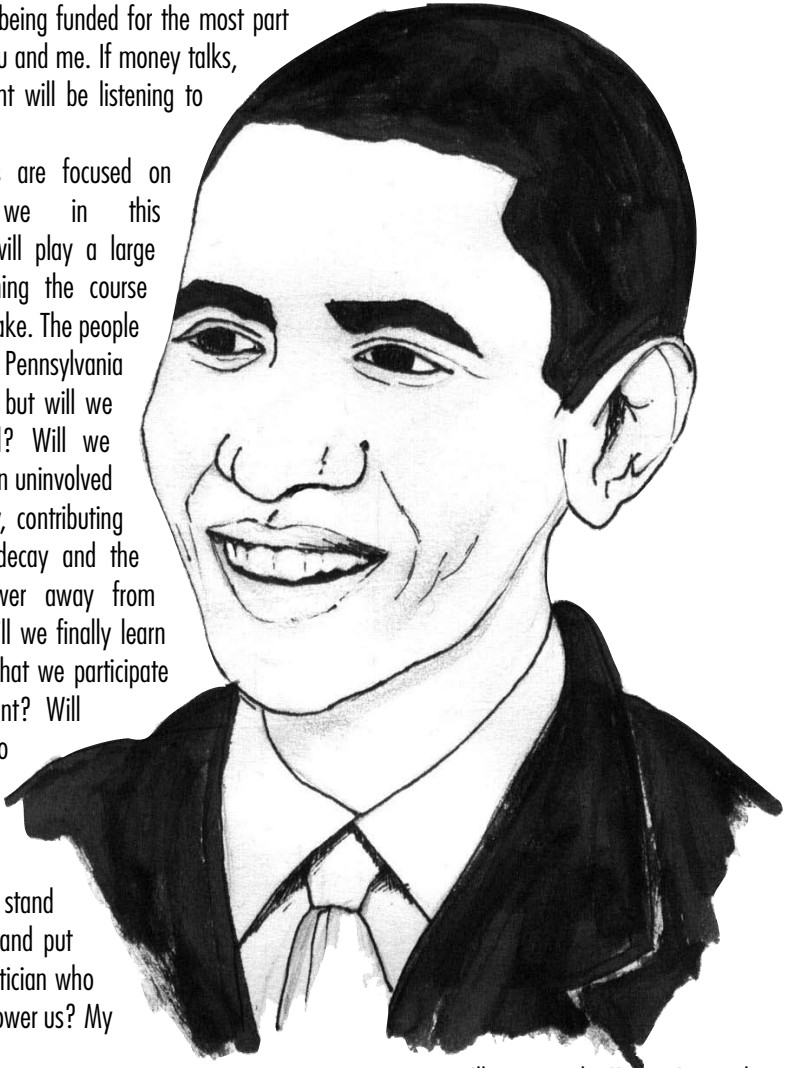
This is a genuine peoples' candidate and a peoples' campaign, and there is the chance, if Obama is elected, that we will have a true people's



government once again, a real democracy. Reason tells me that no man who cared about his own power more than the will of the people would so strongly urge them to participate and take ownership of their government in the way that Obama has done. Rather than being managed by a top-down approach, his campaign is driven by and draws its strength from the grassroots level and the supporters who operate and empower each other according to the best democratic principles. Rather than being bankrolled by media, finance moguls, and the powerful wealthiest among us, this campaign is being funded for the most part by people like you and me. If money talks, then this president will be listening to us.

All eyes are focused on Pennsylvania; we in this commonwealth will play a large part in determining the course this country will take. The people of Northeastern Pennsylvania are being called, but will we answer that call? Will we continue to remain uninvolved in our democracy, contributing to its eventual decay and the wresting of power away from the people, or will we finally learn that it is crucial that we participate in our government? Will we continue to surrender our autonomy to the powerful few, or will we finally stand up for ourselves and put our faith in a politician who has and will empower us? My

conviction is this—that by supporting Obama we are doing what is right for this country, and the generations that will come after us will look back on this critical moment in time and judge whether we were equal to this challenge, or whether we were proved to have been found wanting. I am asking you, for all our sakes, don't let history happen to you. Do your part in determining history. If we are brave enough and strong enough, we can all take ownership of this country, and, in Barack Obama's words, we can come together "to heal this nation, and repair this world."



# Who is Alicia Grega?

*By Andred Talarico*

**Birthplace and Hometown:** I've lived in Scranton since July 1999 and consider the Electric City my hometown, as my ancestors on both sides emigrated from Eastern Europe to the Dickson City/Troop area in the early 20th century. Both of my parents are graduated from Dunmore High School, but I was born on an Air Force base just outside of Sacramento, CA, and grew up in the Bay Area and the Lehigh Valley before attending North Pocono High School.

**Current Occupation:** Writer/Editor for Electric City & Diamond City weekly newspapers, and by association, the570.com.

**Education: B.A.** Theatre Arts w/a minor in Women's Studies from Drew University.

**Family:** Two daughters—Miranda Anais (12) & Frances Maia (10)

**Vice of Choice:** Love

***I would consider you a bit of a renaissance woman. You write drama and poetry, you're a photographer, activist, foodie, actress...the list goes on. Which of your art forms takes priority over the others, and how do you decide that?***

Theatre encompasses every passion—words, visuals, music, and politics, etc—and so it's easy to put it first. Unfortunately, there are only so many hours a day one can look at a computer screen, and my day job demands most of them.

So, I don't work on my playwriting, which has long been my primary calling, nearly as often as I'd like, and that's really where the rest comes in. I've experimented with visual arts since junior high and really got into set, lighting, and other three-dimensional design in college. Photography began as something I had to do for work but soon became something very nourishing to me—another way to tell a story and an escape from the words. I love words, but it's refreshing to communicate in images. I've never been a creature of habit, really. Variety is like air. The only thing I do every day without fail is pee... and brush my teeth.

I'm a thinker, but I'm also a very sensual person. I like to use all my senses as often as possible. That's why we have them, right? To interpret the world through touch, taste, sight, sound and smell.

As far as activism goes, I don't think I do nearly enough. At the same time, I don't think you can separate your philosophies from your daily practices. I try to make the best decisions I can as often as I can, and that's really the most that any of us can do. I like to know where my food comes from and if the people who made my clothes are making a decent wage. I shop at small, local business almost exclusively. I try to do things the right way and that's not usually the easiest way. common sense—war does not make the world better. Why horde when you can share? Love is the answer.

***Does living in Scranton affect your work, artistically, politically? Would you consider yourself a Scranton artist/activist?***

Moving so often for most of my life, I always had that feeling of wanting to belong somewhere. I never thought that place could be Scranton, until my daughters were born, but I do love it here. I've been here for almost 9 years now, and for the first time in my life, I really feel like I'm part of a community. It's more wonderful than I ever imagined. I care very much about this city just as I would care about any place I chose to make my home. It's also meaningful that this region is the one my great great grandparents chose. Pete Seeger said "Participation is what will save the human race." I try to personally support as many events, projects, benefits, etc. as I can in the region. Sometimes that means making art and adding to our cultural landscape, and sometimes that means sitting in the audience and being a spectator. I'm fortunate that my work at Electric City/Diamond City has allowed me to push that

philosophy—to help people find ways to connect with each other and to become actively involved, productive citizens in their communities. Is that activism? I think it's humanity 101.

***I know you usually have about 25 pots on the stove, so to speak. What projects are you currently working on and where can people see them?***

My biggest project at the moment is launching the Jason Miller Playwrights' Project with Scranton Public Theatre at the Olde Brick Theatre on Providence Square. It's a very exciting writing co-op that I've likened to a script hatchery. We're planning to share a new quality script penned by a local writer every two months at a social event that will also feature hors d'oeuvres by Stirna's and live jazz music. The first one of those should



be coming up in June.

My personal script in development is a contemporary adaptation of the Greek myth of Arachne. I want to present an accessible yet quality theatrical experience for an adult audience that achieves the ultimate role of art—to help us process and potentially better understand the increasingly complicated and confusing world we live in.

Updating a Greek tragedy to our modern dilemma helps define its universal timelessness. There has been a lot of talk among social scholars about the glass ceiling and women being held back in the workplace. While the status quo system should be held responsible to an extent, I'm fascinated by the very human flaws in women which have led them to compete against each other instead of nurturing each another. Arachne's conceit is realizing that she is just as talented, if not more so, than her superior, a should-be "mentor," who chooses to destroy the career of this threatening talent lest she cease to be the best, but in doing so, she also destroys herself.

What appears to be a tragedy is given a twist as both women find greater happiness outside of the corporate rat race pursuing their own, more personal passions, rather than the ones they had accepted as prestigious per society's definition of success.

I'm also working on a script and photo project about the town of Palmerton, Pa, and I've been developing an audio podcast program with Maureen McGuigan that should debut by April. We call ourselves Street Owl Productions and address timely topics by theme, weaving submissions of poetry, music, story, and commentary together. The pilot program is all about transportation and essentially it's encouraging alternatives to the one car per person mentality that's really not working

and won't even be feasible for much longer.

***There's a saying that "the photographer is never in the photo." You spend so much of your time interviewing other people, reviewing other people's work, taking other people's photos. Do you ever find it difficult, especially in a smaller city, to be fair? How does that affect your own work?***

I've never found it difficult to be fair because I've never thought of it as my job to judge. It always comes down to doing what's in the best interests of the reader, the community. Is this something that people would want to know about or not? I have the utmost respect for hard work, and if people are putting their heart and soul into an endeavor, they deserve respect and recognition for that. I suppose I do lean toward the underdogs to an extent, but that's also part of the role of Electric City—to expose what's not necessarily going to make it in to the daily media or to look at the story in more depth or from a different perspective. I suppose, it helps that I'm not easily impressed by celebrity or fame.

There are stories that call for explanation, for exploration, and those that are self-explanatory. It's pretty obvious where to put the energy. I do have to give my opinion from time to time, especially in the case of theatrical reviews, but I always write with the reader in mind. It's not about me. My personal agenda is personal. If I want to put it on a soapbox then I'll do that in my own plays, poetry, photography, blogs, etc. There are bands I get more excited about or artwork that personally intrigues me, but if the readers aren't inclined to benefit from that excitement then it's just not right for me to harp on it.



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# Anthology Recommends...

By Andrea Talarico

## **The Bird Artist**

by Howard Norman

You'll have to read the first paragraph twice. The Bird Artist introduces

its narrator and central themes with an unforgettable passage:

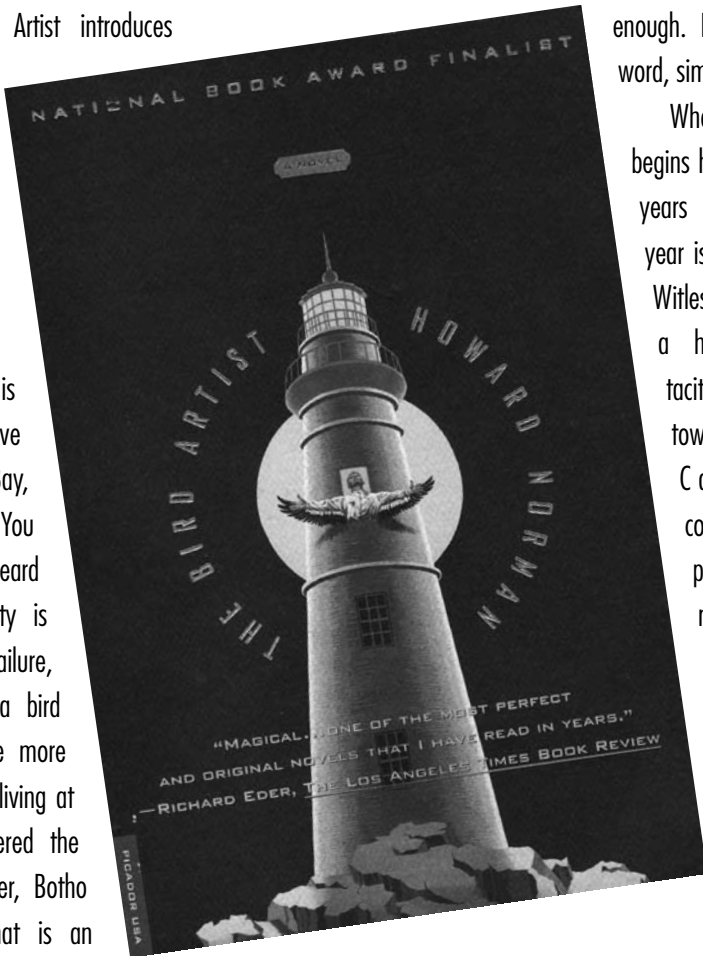
"My name is Fabian Vas. I live in Witless Bay, Newfoundland. You would not have heard of me. Obscurity is not necessarily failure, though; I am a bird artist, and have more or less made a living at it. Yet I murdered the lighthouse keeper, Botho August, and that is an equal part of how I think of myself."

So we are introduced to Fabian, an artist who

makes his living sketching the birds of Witless Bay for literary journals like Bird Lore. He is content to wake up each morning, get dressed, and draw birds. He likes his girlfriend well enough. He is, in a word, simple.

When the story begins he is twenty years old. The year is 1911 and Witless Bay is a hardworking, taciturn little town on the Canadian coast, a place where men wear "knitted underwear all year round lined with fleece

calico." It is filled with strange characters with stranger names—Fabian and Botho, of course, but then there are Fabian's parents, Alaric and Orkney, a stern fisherman and his airy,



philandering wife; Lambert Charibon, Orkney's sturdy and simple best friend; and Helen Twombly, who manages to win the title of town eccentric, by obsessively hoarding iced milk and telling stories of mermen. Margaret Handle is Fabian's romantic interest through most of the book, though there's really not much romance involved; they sleep together on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Margaret spends most of her time swilling whiskey, riding her bicycle, and purposely offending Alaric, Fabian's mother.

The ensuing action weaves together two important romances: the first between Fabian and Margaret, which leads to the arranged marriage of Fabian with his fourth cousin Cora Holly, and the other between Alaric and Botho, propelling the plot to its climax. Botho is painted as an arrogant and aggressive man, and Fabian describes him as having "a rudeness that provided him and you with an immediate reason to turn and pace away as in a duel." He belittles Fabian for drawing birds and shows not a twinge of remorse for taking up with Alaric. The idea of violence against Botho isn't really the shocking part; it's the fact that someone as seemingly harmless as Fabian Vas commits it.

The Bird Artist is a mystery-in-reverse, with the act following the confession. The act in question is built by a bizarre and meandering series of flashbacks. Fabian's recollections rarely travel a linear path, but rather take the time to notice everything, from the weather to bird anatomy to history, before making a point. Norman's prose would be perfectly at home in a Lynch film, and

Fabian is the perfect first-person perspective to guide us through this dream-like journey.

I wasn't at all surprised to discover that author Howard Norman's first writings weren't novels, but in fact, translated folk tales. Many things seem mythic in Witless Bay, and Fabian's journey is nothing if not heroic—the hubris, catharsis, and ultimately, the redemption, which is wrought when he paints an enormous mural on the church wall, depicting the towns' people as well as the murder of the lighthouse keeper.

The prose in this book can be as distant as its isolated location. With a name like Witless Bay, you have to wonder which came first—the name or the disposition. While many of the stories are told with flecks of humor, stunning confessions are made with almost no emotion. The originality of the characters and the need to know why Fabian committed the murder are really what keep you reading. By the time you reach the end of the novel, you feel the smothering isolation of Witless Bay as deeply in your bones as any native. You almost, if you let yourself, feel completely justified in killing Botho August, and I think that's exactly what Howard Norman wanted.

The Bird Artist was March's selection for Everhart Reads at Anthology, a book group held on the third Thursday of each month. The book selections relate to the Everhart's current exhibit, Flocks and Feathers, showing now through June.

**If interested in joining the book group, please email Andrea at [scranthology@gmail.com](mailto:scranthology@gmail.com)**

# THIS MIGHT NOT BE FOR EVERYONE, BUT IT JUST MIGHT BE FOR YOU

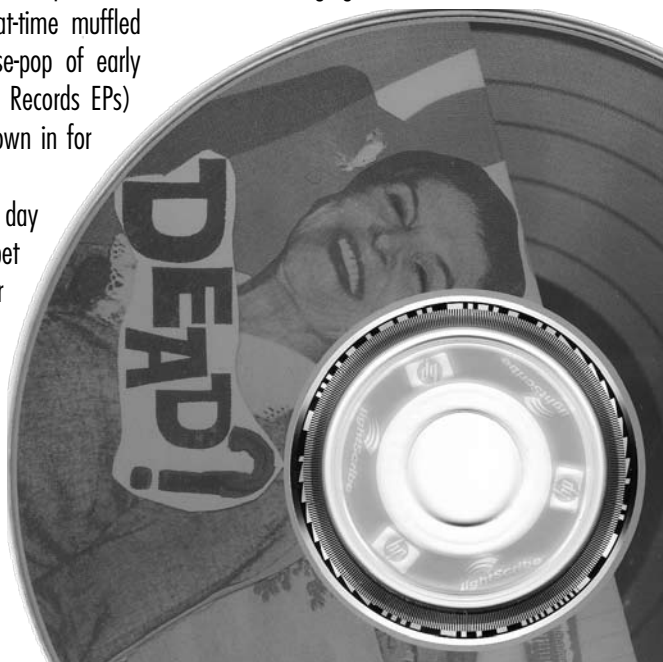
*By RJ Harrington*

**M**idnight Railroad Carpet Flyers are four very different words that don't seem to exactly fit together, but it is also the name of the band headed up by Wilkes Barre native Matt Rattigan. Much like their name the new CD titled "Birds Fly Far From Land To Die" consists of many different ingredients. List these ingredients on paper, and they would seem to make little sense but mixed in just the right fashion. Matt has shaped an interesting and enjoyable journey through music and sound. The concept for the CD has been with Matt for sometime, and it finally took form late fall of 2007. "I had a lot of these songs spinning around in my head for a while. I locked myself away for three weeks and crafted this album," Matt claims. The musical style ranges to include influences as diverse as the spaced-out guitar work of Hawkwind, the at-time muffled vocals of the Fall, and the noise-pop of early Pavement singles (The Drag City Records EPs) with some nice surf-rock riffs thrown in for good measure.

Friday, April 18th marks the day when Midnight Railroad Carpet Flyers will official release their first CD, and they are kicking it off with a record release show at Test Pattern. "I think Test Pattern is the perfect place to have this CD's coming out party," Matt says. "The disc is so many different things not just one settled statement—just like Test Pattern."

The date will also be the first time Matt performs these songs live with a full band: "When I was recording the record I played everything myself. For the show, I have some of my friends playing the different parts, and they can shred." The band will be a collection of musicians playing different instruments—guitars, mandolins, banjos, flutes, and more, all merging together to create one unified sound and all with a touch of the good old theatrics.

The release of Midnight Railroad Carpet Flyers' "Birds Fly Far From Land To Die" also marks the first exclusive release from Embassy Vinyl (Shameless plug? And how!). The music is something that I enjoy and the primary reason I wanted to help get this CD released. The different aspects and the challenging



## *Acting Alone*

### **April 3 & 5: The Ten Commandments**

*A one-man version of the epic film, featuring Andrea Brugnera (performed in Italian with some English clues). When a janitor falls asleep after his last night in a defunct cinema, he dreams himself into two of history's most epic films.*

### **April 4 & 6: The French Revolution**

*Another film, another one-man epic from Andrea Brugnera*

### **April 10–13: The Syringa Tree**

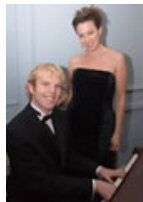
*An Africa saga with 24 characters played by Maura Malloy. A personal, deeply evocative story of an abiding love between two families, one black, one white, and the two children that are born into their shared household in early 1960's South Africa.*

### **April 17–20: Wingbone**

*The amazing life of Beryl Markham, featuring Sigrid Heath, who brings her to life again, from childhood, through her days as a horse trainer, her triumph in making the first east to west flight across the Atlantic, her career as author, to her death in Kenya in 1986.*

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## *New York Music*

### **April 5: Kazzrie Jaxen**

*Improvised piano. "Kazzrie is not about cliches." — John Grabowski*

### **April 12: Jim Dawson**

*Unique American originals. "Under the tinkling stream, though, there usually lurks a bed of rocks with sharp edges." — Rolling Stone Magazine*

### **April 26: Jessica Medoff & Michael Bunchman**

*Classical piano and song. Jessica is a professional opera singer, Michael is an accomplished classical pianist, together they are astounding.*

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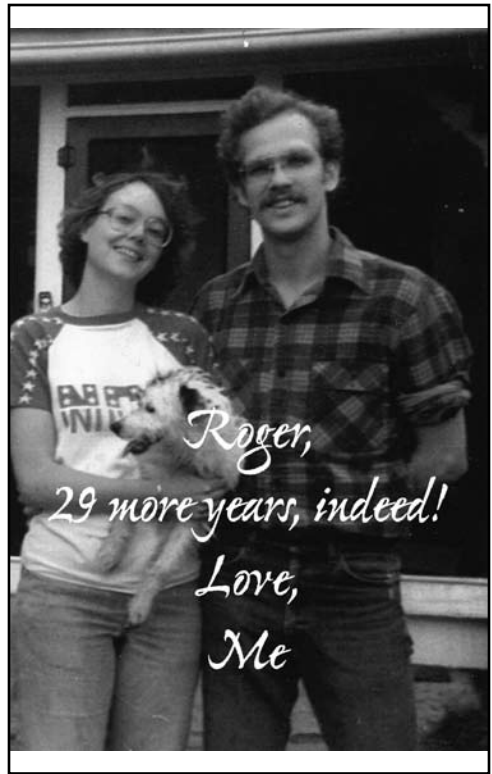
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nature of the disc got my attention right away. This music might not be for everyone, but it just might be for you. That is what I dig about what Matt has constructed the most. So, for those who seek a complex trip through some neat-o songs with a touch of well-placed, fuzzed-out noise, this is for you, but you don't have to take my word for it.

**Midnight Railroad Carpet Flyers CD release show will be held at Test Pattern on Friday April 18th with Tigers Jaw and other special guests. Check it out!**



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**April 12**

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**Billy Rogan**

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This project was supported by a Lackawanna County Arts and Cultural Grant, a program of the Lackawanna County Commissioners and the Lackawanna County Council on the Arts, Education and Culture.

# S t a t i c

## Still

By Jose Antonio Rodriguez

He is arrived covered in dust  
as if draped in a mosquito net,  
with tan eyelashes  
from the huertas de naranjos.  
He makes his way to the bathroom outside  
in small steps -  
toe heel toe heel toe heel  
because these are the only steps he takes  
barefoot.  
His sister-in-law prays behind her front-door screen.

The running water is a church choir in the  
background of my games.  
I am always the geisha in a play-pretend without  
geishas.

He is sitting under the porch  
in weathered khakis  
always khakis -  
a photograph I never took  
and a white crewneck with a small tear at the  
stitch of his left armpit.  
He stretches and I glimpse white skin,  
like the cheek of a neighbor's baby.  
His chest covered in soft fabric reminds me of a  
pillow,  
one that would never go flat and hard with drool.  
Dame un piquito, he requests, as he leans down.  
And I kiss him on the lips, a peck  
with curious traces of Brute  
and a stiff moustache that pricks me.  
It hurts and I smile still.

**Jose Antonio Rodriguez comes from the southern tip of Texas and is currently a graduate student of creative writing at SUNY-Binghamton. His poems have been published or are forthcoming in *BorderSenses*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Rio Grande Review* and *The Paterson Literary Review*.**

## Onteora Lake

By Alicia Grega

fallen trunks and death grey stumps  
the arms of one hundred women  
reach in vain, desperate  
... so thirsty

their bodies sprout ferns and moss  
in coitus with the sun  
they have given vertical birth

able to feed other lives  
though their own have resulted in tragedy  
unable to nurture their own leafy promise  
swallowed, they surrender without regret

it is this cooperation with nature  
the authorities of the human species oppose

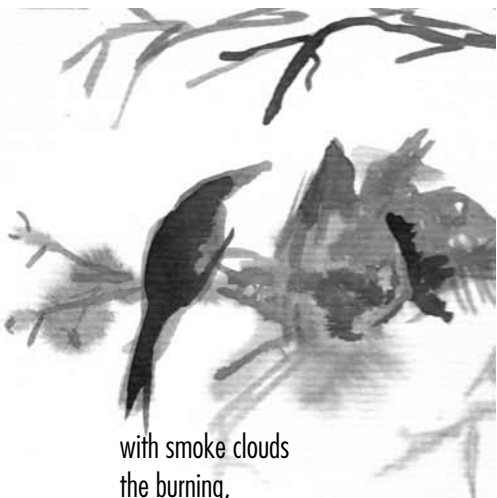
we are misplaced  
a race in exile  
unknown to each other  
united only in denial

why is women's gift  
looked upon with scorn?  
the sacrifice labeled foolish  
for they see nothing to gain in exchange

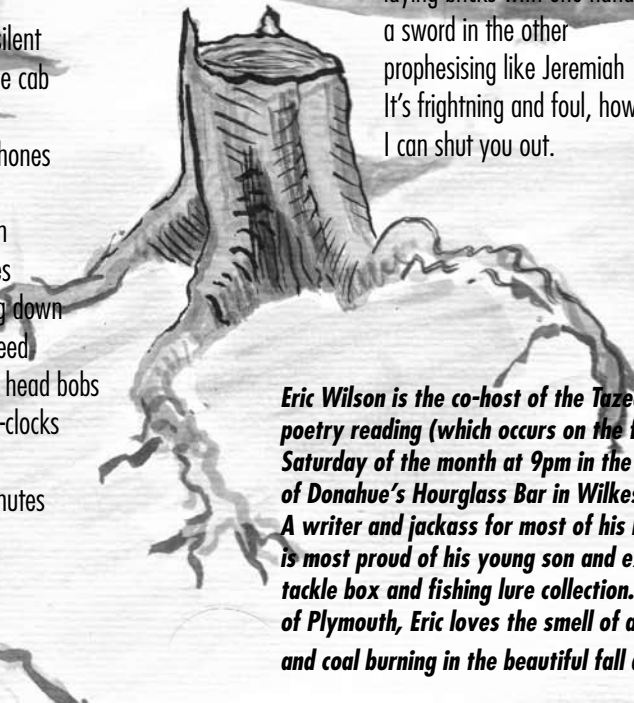
## cutting the construction blues

By Eric Wilson

blithering and bound, gagging  
in the choke of this truck  
I'm sick without sound  
locked in headphones  
and banging hip hop  
in new tones and old stones  
in rock. "I hate you. Is that okay?"  
"play button, spin, turn it up."  
cutting the construction blues  
fading in the madness  
of metal riffs  
and bass pounding  
tongue twists  
I said, "turn it up!"  
keeping time in my eyes  
in tracks living lies, soaking  
I'm floating on smoke clouds  
and funk sounds  
locked in and intact  
writing stuck blithering silent  
bound, super small in the cab  
of this truck—  
shutting out with headphones  
and slick tones  
pulling pins from my pen  
handgrenade poetry lines  
blowing up and breaking down  
counting rhythm and speed  
in eight hour blocks and head bobs  
on time-sheets and time-clocks  
I'm dynamite  
passing seconds and minutes  
in setlists and albums  
playlists like valium  
in cigarettes  
I figure its better



with smoke clouds  
the burning,  
the melting, like boreholes  
in journals and cold paper notebooks  
with liquid hot lines  
and napalm dancing syllables  
sneaky like cat crooks  
stealing words from God, buying time  
prowling quick like Nehemiah  
building walls like lightning  
laying bricks with one hand  
a sword in the other  
prophesising like Jeremiah  
It's frightening and foul, how quickly  
I can shut you out.



**Eric Wilson is the co-host of the Tazed Monkey poetry reading (which occurs on the first Saturday of the month at 9pm in the back room of Donahue's Hourglass Bar in Wilkes-Barre). A writer and jackass for most of his life, Eric is most proud of his young son and exquisite tackle box and fishing lure collection. A native of Plymouth, Eric loves the smell of a filthy river and coal burning in the beautiful fall air.**

# The Random Acts of John Kilker

*By Dan Brennan*

Most films made today, much to my chagrin, exist simply as products of an enormous industry trying to sustain itself, digging deeper and deeper until, SCORE! There is that gem, that one type of script/director/actor/special effect that will peak the public interest and flood Hollywood with millions and millions of dollars. Then, a year later, another version of the same film and then another and so on, until finally, after years of terrible sequels, rip-offs, spin-offs, and parodies, the studios finally decide to move on to the next industry cash cow. Films are no longer judged by artistic quality—writing, direction, innovation, cinematography, the strength of the actors—as much as they are by how much money they bring in or where they rank at the box office. However, I was pleased to find that an NEPA native is still making his own independent films.

Recently, I had the opportunity to talk with John Kilker, who has seen a lot of attention from the media lately, but to be sure, he didn't mind a little more. Much of John's press has focused primarily on *Bonneville* (as it should being that the movie is currently in theaters), but I was more interested in John's inspiration, his motivation—i.e. why he chose to go the route of independent filmmaking, rather than opt for a major studio contract. However, for those of you who are out of the loop, let me give you all a brief rundown of John's latest achievement:

John Kilker, a native of Blakely, along with co-producer Robert May recently celebrated the release of their first feature film *Bonneville*, which opened locally on March 21st and stars Jessica Lange, Kathy Bates, and Joan Allen. The film, as John describes, depicts the journey of three women who learn that “even later in life, they

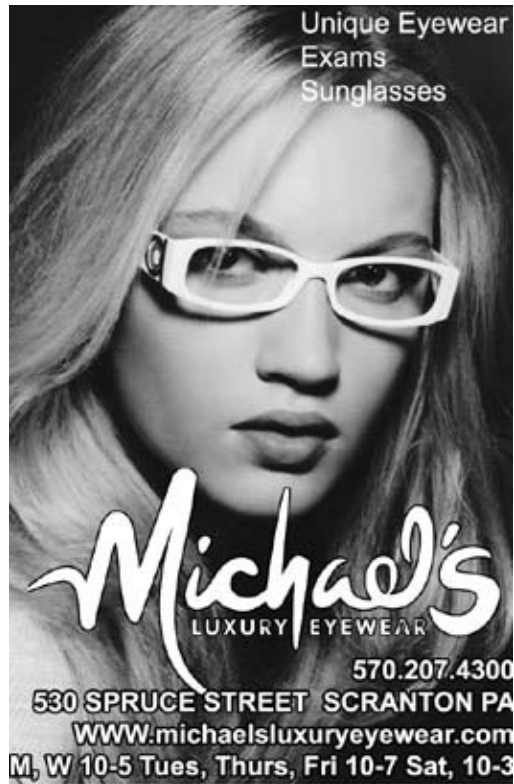


can start over, can still start life anew." Bonneville is a story about women, rebirth, renewal, and looking forward to what the future holds, even in the later years of life. John admits that the strong women in his life, as well as the lives of director Chris Rowley and writer Dan Davis, inspired the film. They wanted to make a film celebrating the strength of character that these women have demonstrated to them and the courage with which they have faced their later years, something in film that for years, John says, has been "typically reserved for men."

Wait a minute...no formulaic love story starring Matthew McConaughey and Kate Hudson (or two lesser known and marginally talented actors)? No disasters? No big-studio, lackluster superhero movie? No propaganda driven wartime film? Where did this guy get his film degree anyway? Oh, that's right, USC, the school that graduated the most successful independent film maker of all time and one of John's idols, George Lucas. I knew I liked him for a reason.

John began his foray into the world of filmmaking, as most filmmakers do, by staring up at that big screen, longing and wondering. In John's case, Star Wars was his first big movie experience; he was five. Even as a child, John admits, he had an "innate affinity for mythology." He latched to the character of Luke Skywalker as the harbinger of truth, good, and justice. Although, his conception of good and evil, right and wrong was limited as a child, and as he grew older, Han Solo became a more sympathetic character for him. "I began to appreciate the subtleties and the nuances of how much more admirable it is for someone like Han Solo to do good, when he has so many tendencies that would lead him the other way," he says.

John has moved back to the area to make his next film, Random Axe, a story a little closer to the adventure genre of films he was drawn to as



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a child and a far cry from women cruising on the salt flats in Utah. Though both movies, he claims, hold a special significance for him. "The thing that draws you to any film is something you know. In the case of *Bonneville*, it would be my mom, my grandmother. I was inspired by strong women. On the surface though, it makes no sense for me to produce *Bonneville*, because my idea of a perfect movie is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*," he laughs.

John wrote the script for *Random Axe* while resting at home after the completion of principal photography on *Bonneville*. "Random Axe is more my voice as a filmmaker," he says. "Bonneville is only a movie I could have produced, not directed or written. It came up as an idea between three friends as something we all wanted to make. Whereas, *Random Axe* comes more directly from me, from my soul," he says.

*Random Axe*, also the name of the vigilante character in the script, has the virtue of being an independently produced film amongst countless big budget and studio comic book genre movies. The script details the story of a mattress salesman by day and crusader by night, who chooses to execute random acts of justice upon petty criminals, picking them one by one and slowly cleaning up the town. Until he interrupts a money exchange between some mobsters, and all hell breaks loose. Now, the mob is gunning for him, and *Random Axe* must confront crime on a scale that he never intended to. According to John, he will be shooting in and around Scranton, doing everything local that can be done, including hiring local actors.

John was inspired by the example of

his idol to come back to Scranton. George Lucas, after graduating from USC, established himself as an independent filmmaker by forming his own company not far from his hometown of Modesto, California. "When he established Lucasfilm, there was no film industry in Marin County," John says, "but he went home to do it; that's where he felt comfortable." "I love home. I'm more creative here; I'm more energetic here. I come home to do all my writing... at the end of the day, I would rather contribute to the Scranton area than to Los Angeles."

***Bonneville is currently in theatres. Check your local listings for theaters and times.***



Photos By Zak Zavada



**zak zavada**

Photography  
www.prunejuice.net  
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A stylized graphic featuring a microphone on the left and a silhouette of a person speaking into a microphone on the right. The background is dark with some light-colored, abstract shapes.

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*THE BACK BACK...*

# *HAPPY NEW YEAR?*



*By Conor McGuigan*



I like change. I enjoy a good shake-up. I celebrate any time the "old-guard" is removed. I'm told it goes with my being a Sagittarius. Once, an intern at the University of Pittsburgh Student Medical Center tried to tell me it was ADD. Whatever the cause of it, it leads to my absolute joy with, my complete admiration for, and my worship of spring. I know I am not alone in this; everyone, to some degree, acts a little differently when winter finally takes its long awaited leave, and that is why it is only natural that the start of the New Year should fall on the Vernal Equinox, which this year fell on March 20th. The first day of spring, or near it, happens to be New Year's Day for many cultures around the world. If you look back through history, there have been even more who celebrated the start of the year around the dawn of spring. It makes sense. Your body instinctively feels it. Plants start growing; animals begin shedding; and most important of all, you put away your winter clothes.

The first day you can open the windows of your house or roll down the window of your car, your body tingles at the burst of mild fresh air. If you look around the courthouse on an afternoon when the weather first breaks, you will be witness to an unspoken, but collectively understood, New Year's celebration. Lunches being eaten outside, music playing from open car windows, the display of short sleeves, people stopping to talk at length on corners, and the general pleasant disposition of the public are all signs that this time of year instinctively becomes a party.

So what happened? Why are we forced to pretend that the first of January is a time of rebirth and starting anew?

The reason: The rescheduling of New Year's Day goes all the way back to ancient Rome, when Julius Caesar decided to update the ten month calendar with a new solar based calendar that conveniently enough was named the Julian Calendar. The god Janus had two heads, so January became

# PANKED!



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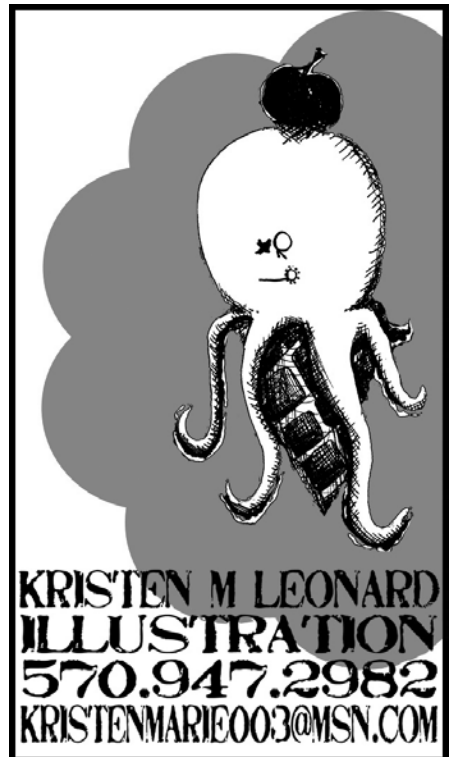
the first month, with Janus' faces symbolizing a look back at the old year and looking ahead to the new one. Not everyone in the empire wanted to go along with this more accurate, yet illogical, calendar. Spring was still the setting for New Year's Day in many places throughout Europe. Fast forward to the 1500's, when Pope Gregory XIII decided to update the Julian calendar, because it was discovered it had been adding a few too many hours to the year and the cause of a gradual drift of days, so that over time holidays were in the wrong spots. The Gregorian calendar, also conveniently named, was put into effect on February 24, 1582.

Instead of calling "New Year's Day," which would have been too pagan, the papacy connected the circumcision of Jesus with it, but much like Caesar's time, not everyone was into the idea, especially if they weren't part of the church. So, pockets of societies, including England (Damn if they're going to do what the Pope tells them!), still went on treating spring as the start of the year. Now, because England had their tradition of a springtime celebration, their colonies in the New World also celebrated at that same time. Go forward in time again and you have colonists in good old Pennsylvania marking the start of their year in March. That is until 1752 when England joined most of the rest of Europe in starting on January first. Damn! We were so close.

What if the colonists had decided to bite their thumb at jolly old England by refusing to go along with the sudden change of dates? Our year would be very different. Picture a downtown Scranton celebrating First Night on a pleasant spring evening. Instead of families wishing the countdown would come so they could briskly get back in their mini-vans and head to their warm homes, you would have families waiting for the countdown to casually get

into their mini-vans to head back to their warmer homes, or perhaps instead of the employees at Northern Light snarling over making their millionth hot chocolate, they could be found snarling over brewing more iced tea.

Of course, if you think about it, Scranton already has a springtime celebration, where people bond together over a holiday. The St. Patrick's Day Parade in this area is epic. It has gotten to the point where, although it is still a closely followed theme, the "St. Patrick's Day" part is drops from the conversation. "Parade Day" suffices for any reference to this most cherished of days. Perhaps this is a subliminal edit. Our bodies really just want a party when the weather is turning. Maybe over time, as it has happened before, the start of the New Year will return to its original place, and until that happens and when spring comes around, I'll continue to give passers-by a "Happy New Year!"



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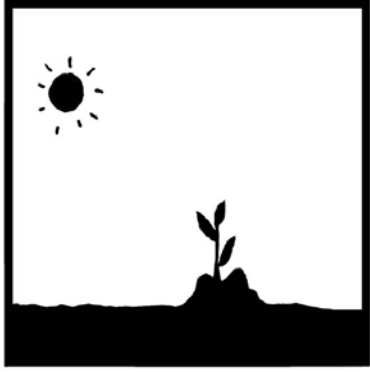
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- Mae West

photo courtesy of Lawrence Sykes



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