

Freedom-Zine America

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“Community & Culture Matter”

Notes from the Underground Highlights from 2009

**Notes from the
Underground—March 9, 2009**
By Pi Kielty

I ce sublimated from the patches on the snow free sidewalk and pavement of the main street downtown. Half-way through the coldest January in a long, long decade, the wind on the hillside city funneled down the St. Croix River Valley, leaning the heavy branches of winter dead trees to a steady unbobbing angle, sweeping a pure Arctic explosion from the north between the tunnel of old and well-mannered stone and brick. Causing the tidal relief of breath to flume quick, cold created brittle crystals of frozen warm on a heartbeat, the exhaled air sommersaulting in a snapped tight dance. The wave of its own disappearing performance into nothing horrified me. Walking, I tugged closer the lapels of my charcoal overcoat walking toward my aim. I thanked the spirit of my goal for a warm underground to

watch my friends play their music in the burnished light of café-café. I had arrived.

The potted, opaque globe lamps above the slow turning ceiling fans tendered spinning finger shadowing eye massages. The candles in frosted glass cups mesmerized me from the table top below as I sat in front with my back to the band. The Juggernauts play on this Saturday night. D.’s dabbles of finger picked swoons on guitar or banjo, or swings on a fiddle, places one tranced between the cloud of hope and melody and the porch easy chair in late spring listening to the rain drops of Leroy’s bowless thunderlet’s on stand up bass. “Pine River Blues” overtook my solace and solitude among a small, audience I all knew. The lyra lures of The Juggernauts

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accompany me down a strange summer lane to memories I wish all my friends could live with me someday. The wine café, as I absorb sitting, atypically vended variety home trades of local special foods and spices and bottled sauces. It set itself with syrups and cheeses and a distinct variation of hometown

atmosphere, a place of unique demi-cosmopolitanism within a community once a farm land turned rural art locale. The Juggernauts, their string music odes fusing world-wide age from a rooted living land, sung the painful joy that no matter were they stem, or what they do, humans think and feel similar like their fellow sisters and brothers on this earth. We all own the same sorrow and concern, the like desires for love and amazement, the same dwelling on our fears and aloneness in a world separated in understanding by the barriers of language. But poetry says something in depth. Poetry in music exudes something far deeper. We all feel the same, at one or different times. Humanity loves a song, and to hum mindless along.

The Juggernauts played an old song, from thirty-more years past, recognizable by everyone who wants the river to answer that “she” has always been the lover. That night in the underground, the river only answered above ground with the frigid unholy gusts that carried the cold off the ice of the river below the city, the ice chilling the air even deeper freezing. I turned around to look at the window behind the band to see the fishbowl reality outside, an empty street in a surreal cold light of orange lamps. In the warmer times, more vibrant memorial chimes, when Mars ascends and Venus abends, the Canadian poet’s gentle harmless lyrics live out green grasses of both July Fourth picnics and lazing time over good folly for fun. If “her” song says she’s crazy, then we want to be there for her. D.’s recitation comes

from the reverent hymn of closed eyes and unconscious meditation—if Jesus really is that sailor, we can still walk on water with that or those we trust. As D. meditates, Leroy’s head bows and his hands cup the quarter-leg beat of time ticking, passing fast, gone yesterday too soon, just here but almost over tonight with the moon hidden eve, and coming tomorrow a day too soon and it will be gone before lived to its ellipses apogee. I gathered the navy blue collars of my evening jacket and I laughed sane inside.

The wooden lattice wine racks would appeal to me in another, older age, one of my un-tempered young days, perhaps. Even now, its blended glass and ferment colors play a panoply of red, white, pink, and deep yellow green. At my point in time, the colors fascinate more than the aroma I do not pang to taste.

In the bounce of mental dance steps, “the Underground” in which I dwell, no one need dance devilish to purge a saintly monster, or pay Appollynon’s price to live the present for the future. There is today. Happiness can be a heartbeat, if even the most pessimistic about human or mutant natures, all souls, can find one good Optimistic thing to cause the keeping of the heart rhythm.

Along the shelves lining the light pine walls, on the ledges of pine wood-sils, beneath the roofed house for my concerto companions, elk horns spindle on their memorial surfaces, resting in noble plain poses. My friends at another table order delicate dishes, some may drink wine, or

coffee, and I drink mixed fruit, sugar water, and seltzer ambrosiatic mocktails. One friend leaves with the two women he brought. I sit longer not wanting to disturb myself with the cold of leaving. I mingle with friends, visit, and I ponder. At last I say good night to my friends, pull on my charcoal overcoat, and leave the warmth for the cold. I wonder not whither I go, or why. But I leave relieved of my own far too serious opinion of me, an opinion far more harsh than any held by anyone else.

This café of wine and warm wonder in mid-winter eve, tonight played a nectarred orchard in my summer’s mind. In winter it reminded me of Frank and Nancy’s serenade of a quiet little place, in which to drop the world at the door, and stumble over those practiced clever lines to make some deeper meaning alive, dream true. In the Underground, spent brief and careful, one imagines what polite, better society does above ground drinking the cooler-aid. At least in our orchard of warm peach sun in dark night of January, language is only an obstacle. But I leave it to vineyard songs and poets to give it meaning to others.

**Notes from the
Underground—April 9, 2009
“I Was ‘Peeled’ in Den Haus,
‘Alive’”
by Pi Kielty**

Into den Haus I walked, a little nerved about a place so small with a crowd expected so large. Most people

I recognized as strangers, genial and enjoying the March evening a few hours before the Ides. Though strangers, I saw in them future friends, potential friends, considering them no longer strange to me. Like the nameless faces, until I found a few I knew, I arrived seeking a merry time, though without the merry tonics or the grainy flavor. Among the new friends, more familiar faces, in expectation, arrived. I knew these by names given long and taken long ago. We all, everyone but a one or a few, attended to see the show heavy on ore, four friends to perform it. In the Underground of our skene, a world open for all, Peeled Alive took the stage after other friends rocked the Polk County in the opening act. And in our Underground, Peeled Alive appealed to our enlightened, inner long thought searching for the quick, hard sages.

The milling crowd welcomed them, building up for the first several, enjoyable severe songs. A slam jammed in the crowd, to no surprise. It was all friendly in the red, blue and green stage lights shining on the heros of the night, the dim gleam absorbed into the color sucking black wall. The music produced a magnified speed, a warped time in an narrow space, consuming all thoughts, sights, sounds, and soul into the dark hole of the stage, in rhythm as Brene spared no

drum skins, to a pulse of our audience's million beats a minute. Woodrow wearing a four-pointed star guitar that electrified and scringed as hummingbird hand-speed poured forth a good not absurd acceleration. From Brene's skinned head and Woodrow's ponied blonde, the energy dewed, shaken off in constant rivers of focus.

All added to the Focault motion, unending in a light-fast metronical pace. On the floor, the steady bounding backed as Cpyke pound-rumbled on his bass guitar, the noise of a deep baritone shout, in tune with only absolutely everything else happening. It is speed metal, at its finest, anywhere found. The three instruments, from perfected practice, perform not like instruments—guitar, drum and hot-wired bass. They, the guys, ARE the instruments.

Symbolic poetry, in 64Ksand times ten to the tenth, is complete and would suffice for itself. Concrete poetry, like a sightful Jackson Pollack painting, inevitably requires the image to complement the paint of the tone. Words constitute the bread of the meal, the delicious filler to water on a grateful table. And poetry, in any form, demands a poet. A band needs a lead, poet, a bard," and Bard, my fellow sojourner, screams in the midst of metallic modern quartet his poetic words. His rage is pozi-

it is truth, as Peeled Alive believes the truth true. They don't rage to destroy, but they rage in physical plumes of power, pozi-, not posers. The rage rages against lies, labels, and libels of our age in civilization. The rage on words, even when not understood in clear, nonetheless spew the clarity, deconstruct the ills and abuses on all of us—We have had enough of hate and violence, ignorance and judging. "Kiss your ass good-bye, Motherfuckers," yells Bard. The fear of our age is real, but turned around, the lyric means "Enough of this!! Stand up for what is right!!!!" Do we deserve to survive as a supra-society if our culture breeds us not to stand up for ourselves? Rock and Rage. Raise together our glasses, one of orange juice for me, and tip it back in brother-homme. "SOCIAL, MOTHERFUCKERS!!!!" We live among friends here. Exclude and shun no one in exchange for meeting a future friend. Roll it downhill ast its own quickening speed. Language opens doors. Speed metal makes us soar. Speed kills the slow, yet it resurrects us so everyone can finish the race in the higher time. Leave no one behind.

I thought I was done there, but wait! Wait! For the diamond crazies shining, Bard had forewarned me, your optimist chronicler. It summed up the

life of the night for me in the Underground. The song “Echo-“ed at the dizzy 300 Super-double plus record table speed. The happy purple floyd on overdrive, Cyd on prozac, tight and tuned on a vacuum wonder, drawing me inward. Mixed and mixed, in whirls of joy, it sang to me, I think. It does not toll. For my clear evening, Peeled Alive played me a aural $E=mc^2$ (I’m such a square). My Pi unlimited, on a good trip jolly gimp, watching Peeled Alive play my new favorite song, at a quarter past midnight morning on the Ide.

What is Culture and Why Does It Matter?

How can one define something that defies definition? To answer, “what is culture?,” it just might be easier to first define what it is NOT. Before that, I would like to say one thing constructive about culture: It just happens despite everything. Culture is NOT manufactured. It cannot be owned, for it is not like private property. Hence, culture cannot be sold, nor can it be mass marketed if it is “real” culture. Like really good homemade chocolate chip cookies made by dear old Mom or Grandma, culture has the “secret ingredient” that store-bought o-highs and elfens don’t have. (If you don’t know the secret ingredient, then stop reading right now!).

Culture has a lot of parallels with art, as indeed “art” is part of culture, but not its sum. Does an artist sell a picture, a song, a poem, or a short-film in order to be famous or just to feed themselves and pay the rent? They may in fact sell a worse replica of that spirit that first inspired the idea, but no Guggenheim nor Louvre

can buy the soul of she or he who created it. An artist may sell the fruit of toil, sweet, and tears of creation, but only in a deal with a mustachioed Mephisto-patron of slaves and tyranny does the artist sell the blood and placenta of creation for fame and fortune’s vinegar, spoiled wine.

Art is art if we like it. And on the other hand, culture is like art—it is what we see. What makes a ceramic chicken in a roost into a thorned crucifixion death-mask? It depends on if you look at it upside down (really, it does). Art does not define all that is culture, but it gives the sweet juice to the fruit of liberty from the tree of Life.

Culture lives, and it is what we see. It grows like a bud on a rose thorn stem, which is more colorful and vibrant than any picture—painted or photographed—can make it. And culture can be a delicious bratwurst with mustard, chopped fresh onions, and sauerkraut at the local park watching the town’s semi-pro, poorly paid baseball team. Artistry in June can take the sculpture of a former high school pitcher throwing a shut-out a block over from main street in the oak-surroundings of a field of real, not phony, dreams. There is culture in a skater on a pipe pulling off a double posey without breaking a leg. Culture, like ripe tomatoes, is pulled off a vine that runs into the dirt from which it emerged, growing from the seed, the tendering, the watering in hot, dry July to make a sandwich for lunch at home. Like a garden, culture grows where it is, on the land and it is better just for that reason. It has more flavor than we realize. Imagine an apple not of our tree, but picked a long time ago from a plexaly far, far away from home. Further imagine that apple, green, too green, almost wickedly perfect green. Dread the day it tastes soylent. For that is how culture somehow owned and not ours would taste.

Culture: picnics, the “Chickasaurus” welded by the farmer from old tools, the one-time garage band that plays in the tavern down the street, the graffiti chalk on the sidewalk downtown—These things just happen and are ordered by themselves, not any god of media or Medea. And still, I for you, dear reader, cannot define culture, despite examples, except to adamantly proclaim what it is NOT: It is not a product of others or elsewhere. Culture happens when people “keep life alive by living it,” Evgraf.

One warning to all about the Kommissars of Mass Culture, dear friends. As caveats relating to the semper Tryannus, those with Caesars lurking in their souls, we must always remind ourselves about culture: It should always make us stronger as a people, as the community where we live; it should never have use to divide us. Culture is for everyone to give and take, and to accept it or reject it. WE ARE FREE PEOPLE in minds and spirits, and in other ways as well. Culture can give us all the reasons to live better and happier. Tend the tree of Life, for with its fruit of Liberty and the juice’s delicious tastefulness, our future as humans with humanity is guaranteed.

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