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*Issue 18
July 2010*

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SPOKE(a)N(e)

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We do our best to make sure all items are accurate and complete, if you notice a mistake, let us know at spokenspokane@gmail.com. We will do our best to rectify the error.

Contributions, story ideas, letters to the editor, love, hate, baked beans and cookies to spokenspokane@gmail.com

E

I have to be honest with you. "First Friday" isn't really doing it for me anymore. For the past several weeks I've been stuck in a malaise about it and dreading it. It has seemed like such a rote exercise: view art, snap a couple of pictures, and then come home and write about it. That last part has been my biggest hang-up. I usually want to write something like "good" or "pretty". What actually gets published is generally pulled from parts unknown as I scramble to get the issue finished in time.

D

It's just not my voice. It's not how I experience art. This month, I visited one gallery. I barely visited one gallery. Reason being? Nothing was really on my radar. I'm sure that there was plenty of great art out there. There always is. I'm never disappointed by what I see. Maybe that's one of the things that I find so uninspiring about it, the complete lack of crap and the void of mediocre. I don't want the bar to be lowered. What I want is for the underdogs to have a voice.

I

Take this "First Friday" for instance. I started out by hitting a show at the Empyrean. I love that venue and have typically enjoyed the acts there. I saw an acoustic act followed by a hardcore metal act. Were any of them good? They were good. Were they great? They could be. They're working on great, but both need a little more time to hit great. For right now, they are good. I want to see more good and less great, more proletarians of the art world and less of the bourgeoisie.

T

I want to find the artists whom no one else is seeing. I want to hear more poets, musicians, and see more artwork that's just being cobbled together in bedrooms and sketchbooks. I feel as if I'm limiting myself by devoting so much energy to one night's worth of art a month. I want to spread out a little more. Let's find the people who swing at everything, and occasionally hit a home run. I'll sit through eight innings of missed hits for the thrill of seeing that one perfect swing. Yes, I used a sports analogy. Deal.

O

For the next few issues, I'm going to be working on finding news ways of seeing "First Friday", a fresh perspective. I may not do a "First Friday" for an issue and concentrate on something entirely different. The scene is bigger than this one night.

Stay tuned for what's coming up. I'm pretty excited about the possibilities.

R

Oh, and don't forget to vote, or something.

-Michael

P

So, if no First Friday...then what? What will we fill our pages with this month? I threw a few ideas at the proverbial wall, but only one metaphorically stuck (or something like that). The idea was to profile not one, but *two* local artists.

R

First we have Becca Lux. She is an entrepreneurial artist who has a style that I very much enjoy. When looking for something to get my head in a creative mode, I often find myself looking at Becca's work. Specifically, the work she does on repurposing vintage items. I'm also fortunate enough to be friends with Becca and her husband Sam (who is a huge asset to this magazine with his editing work), and love to discuss art and creativity and the local scene with them. You can find Becca's work at wanderlux.etsy.com.

O

Next is Brooke Matson. Brooke started the RiverSpeak collective to unite Spokane's creative community. I have enjoyed watching RiverSpeak grow. Finding artists who inspire you is good. Finding artists who inspire you, and are local, is even better. Here we talk about the future of RiverSpeak. I encourage you to join up if you have not already. If you are a member, please continue to share your work, ideas, and talent with the rest of the community. I appreciate the work that has been done already. I can't wait to see where it goes from here.

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SPOKE(a)N(e): Basic background stuff.

BECCA: I grew up in Minnesota. I graduated with a culinary arts degree. I was drawn to the artistry of food, and I fell in love with cake decorating. I got married and traveled all over the place doing different jobs and having adventures. Now I'm in Spokane where my husband's family lives. I do a variety of things. I make wedding cakes, I scrapbook, I sew, knit, sell vintage items and handmade goods on Etsy, and I'm starting to do vintage shows. I am really liking mixed media right now and am experimenting with that. My husband and I like redoing old furniture and repurposing items. You can see some of my work at the Funky Junk Antique Show in Sandpoint on Labor Day weekend, September 4 and 5.

SPOKE(a)N(e): What inspires you artistically?

BECCA: I'm very inspired by nature. I love the outdoors, and getting outside refreshes me and gives me new ideas. I also am inspired by bright color combinations. I like to compile journals that have quotes, magazine pictures, and any quirky ideas that I find intriguing. When I need inspiration, I look back through these journals.

SPOKE(a)N(e): What drew you to working with vintage materials?

BECCA: My parents loved going to antique stores when I was little. I remember dreading being dragged from smelly place to smelly place. The shop owners would glare at me and my siblings, hoping we wouldn't break anything. I really hated it then. And then at some point I began loving older stuff. I turned into my parents. I was suddenly pulling over at every garage sale sign, new thrift shop, or antique store. I like the quality of vintage materials. I also love the hunt for finding the perfect item. I really love giving pieces a new life and a new twist. I like to take a beat up cast off piece that's heading to Goodwill, or the dump, and give it a fresh coat of paint and recovering it with some new fabric. It's satisfying knowing it will live on for many more years.

SPOKE(a)N(e): I know you do a lot of sales through Etsy. What do you think the impact of online selling will be for the art market, especially locally, in the coming future?

BECCA: I love the online community. I think it's great because it reaches a broader audience, so you can really attract a specific demographic. I think it will enhance the local community by making another way for artists to sell their goods and gain more revenue. Buttercupcity is a great example of this. They started out selling online at home and grew so much they needed more space. They opened up a shop in downtown Spokane (in the Steamplant Square), and now they can offer their fabric locally, as well as online, and support themselves. I hope to see more of this balance between the online world and the local scene.

SPOKE(a)N(e): What has been your favorite part of the Spokane art community?

BECCA: The support I've gotten has been tremendous. The Etsy team I'm on is great, and everyone is always willing to give advice and share their expertise. Everyone tries to help promote each other. There is helpful criticism and a lot of great encouragement.

SPOKE(a)N(e): Anything you would like to say to the Spokane art community?

BECCA: I would like to see more events in the future that get everyone together more often. I am hopeful that the Spokane art community will continue to grow and thrive. I would like to see the indie craft scene grow. My dream is to have an event similar to the Renegade Craft fairs here in Spokane.



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SPOKE(a)N(e): Basic background stuff.

BROOKE: I grew up in rural Yakima, creating magazines, illustrated books, stories, and art for my little sister, who was my captive audience. It was all I did. It was the same era that computers became available for home use, and I was hooked on ours, designing covers and crossword puzzles—even a family bulletin that came out once a month. After being a dedicated artist and writer at my high school, I went on to major in English and Secondary Education and neglected my own creativity for awhile. That changed my senior year of college when I began writing poetry again with a vengeance, as well as re-exploring my visual art skills. I still have trouble finding time and space to explore my art and writing with all I do, but I'm working on that.

SPOKE(a)N(e): What inspires you artistically?

BROOKE: Nature and the spoken word are my biggest inspirations. Growing up in rural Yakima, I grew up experiencing nature intimately and appreciating every color and form of life. When I am stuck mentally or need inspiration, some time in nature works wonders—even if it's just watching the trees move in the wind. Reading poetry also works wonders for me. My goal this summer is to read a poem every morning and then write one of my own. Closer to home, the local artists, writers, and musicians of Spokane inspire me with their passion continually; I love the real sense of community among creatives here.

SPOKE(a)N(e): Where did the idea for RiverSpeak come from?

BROOKE: RiverSpeak grew out of my long-time desire (you might even say my childhood desire) to run a press. But without any equipment, and knowing [that] printing is expensive, I began to look at online as an option. Since I moved here six years ago, I've found there's so much artistic richness in Spokane that people don't know about—like a hidden art scene. I wanted to help bring that to the surface and found creative individuals who wanted the same thing. The idea of a forum—an open space to share one's creative endeavors with others—seemed the most democratic and community-oriented way to go. From the beginning, that's been our goal. International models like Tailcast gave us some ideas, but they're leaning towards commercialism. We are seeking to be a non-profit that nourishes and sustains local arts of all kinds.

SPOKE(a)N(e): Where do you see RiverSpeak going from here?

BROOKE: We are actually in the process of redesigning our Web site, RiverSpeak.net, to be more like a forum, as originally planned, with a focus on user-generated content. RiverSpeak-hosted blogs will go away completely, as many local artists already have their own blogs/sites, and will be syndicated to our site instead (no more confusing links and dashboards!). In other words, member-generated content—via syndication of existing blogs—will appear on the front page rather [than] having it hidden in multiple menus and pages. We are also hoping to partner with other online arts organizations to provide a bird's-eye view of all the artistic work, opportunities, and resources in Spokane.

SPOKE(a)N(e): What has been your favorite part of the Spokane art community?

BROOKE: The sense of community here is phenomenal; very few artists, writers, or musicians in Spokane have grandiose egos and are always willing to help each other out to improve the arts scene in our city. Unlike an art-saturated city like Portland where it's relatively easy to be a musician or artist, people here work hard to get their work out in the community and to get people involved in the arts. Over the past few years, there's been a real shift in Spokane, and I feel the arts scene is gathering real momentum, thanks to people's willingness to collaborate, network, and promote the arts. I think that will only continue to grow, and I'm proud to be part of it.

SPOKE(a)N(e): Anything you would like to say to the Spokane art community?

BROOKE: The fact that our arts scene is blossoming rapidly offers a rare opportunity to us that bigger cities can't offer, especially in terms of a real community with people eager to support each other. The potential to make an impact here is big, and we only need to work together to make it happen. It's a process that takes time, but all worthwhile things do.

T

This month I will be beginning a series of articles analyzing and discussing the different avenues of local music here in Spokane. I want to let each one of you reading this article know that I hope you will not just simply read it and move on to the next page. It comes with a challenge to each one of you: Respond. Since I do intend for this to be a "discussion" of sorts, which would work best with help from each of you. Since all of us here at SPOKaNe Magazine love to interact with our readers, this would be a GRAND opportunity for us to get to know one another better.

H

To begin this analyzing/discussing endeavor I'm going to share a local music experience I had recently. In return, all that I ask is that all of you great, wonderful and opinionated readers out there in the inter-cyber-web-net-space share back. Tell us whether or not you have had similar experiences with the local music scene. Tell us the good bad and the ugly. My dream is to start a robust and healthy dialogue about our local music scene and how it could be improved.

E

It was a typical Saturday, and early in the day I decided that it was time to step out of my comfort zone, musically speaking. I saw a band featured in another local magazine that played music which I would not consider my "preferred genre" I decided to go.

M

I headed out the door just about the time the show would be starting (according to the magazine). My thought was that I could sneak in as the opening bands were playing and I would not have to wait around.

Arriving at the venue I noticed that the sign outside listed the starting time was a half-hour later than what the magazine article had stated. Since I was arriving late for the original starting time I figured that it was no problem to wait 15 minutes for the show to start.

V

I walk in and pay my cover charge and notice that there is next to no one in the bar or the stage area. So I wait. . . 15 minutes turned into 40 minutes. Lucky for me the end of "Point Break" was playing on the TV at the bar with subtitles – thrilling.

S

We are now 45 minutes in and the music starts. It was the first opening band. In my past experiences the opening band plays a couple of songs and (especially if there are two openers) turns it over to the next band. This night it was a 45 minute set.

*After packing-up equipment the first opener walks off stage and the second opening band begins setting-up. **Begins setting up!** This includes running cords, lights, sound-check, the whole-nine-yards. After 25 minutes into set-up for the second opening band I decided to leave - only two hours after I had arrived.*

I

Generally, I am not an impatient person nor do I enjoy criticizing. I don't want to sound whiney and I understand that part of the experience of a live show is the social interaction in-between sets or while waiting for a band to start. But I do have to ask: At what point does this waiting take away from the listeners' experience? I might respond differently if I was going to a bar that just happened to have live music playing, however this show was featured in a local magazine, on the venue's outdoor sign and had a cover charge. I heard 45 minutes of opening music in a two hour span. This comes across as a party where the music takes second place at best.

C

I moved from a smaller city in western Wisconsin with a small but accessible and organized local music scene. Because I am being relatively new to the Spokane music scene, I cannot judge based on this and few other experiences that I have had. This is why I need you.

L

Readers and listeners: Have you had experiences similar to this? Completely different? Are you completely content with the music scene? Do you feel that I am being a judgmental meanie with unreal expectations? What do you think?

Email us at spokenspokane@gmail.com and let us know. We are excited to hear your thoughts!

I

Keep on listenin'

TJ List

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T

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Rates:
\$75 FULL PAGE
\$50 HALF PAGE
\$30 QUARTER PAGE

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