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*Issue 9
September 2009*

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SPOKE(a)N(e)

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

H

Homemade always tastes better. It's just a fact.

O

Spokane is figuring this out with its push for more community-organized, community-oriented events. These are the social equivalent of homemade goods. The Main Street Fair, Sustainable Uprising, the promising RiVerSpeAK, and even next month's big art show, Terrain, are perfect examples of the community-centered movement's beauty.

M

I think it might be needless to say we feel a kinship to this sort of thing. After all, we come from the school of "making your own gig." It is a beautiful thing to see Spokane moving in this direction. Even more beautiful is the fact that much of it is being pushed by the youth of the area, who want something more from -- and for -- their community. That's the best thing I've seen in the area in a long time. If we can get youth involved in making the community a better place to work, live, and create, then maybe we have a chance of them staying here. Maybe we have a chance of making Spokane the cultural powerhouse I know it can be. We have the talent, the photographers, musicians, painters, sculptors, chefs, multimedia artists, and general creatives. All we have to do is make it happen.

E

For too long Spokane has been content to sit back and wish we had things like this. As a community, we've been far too complacent. I think we're finally catching on that anything promoting sustainability, arts, creative culture, and community fun aren't handed to any group of people. It always has to be organized by someone. If we sit back and wait for someone else to do it, then we will be left sitting back and waiting. The only way to get something done right is to do it yourself.

Besides, homemade always tastes better.

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Photo by Grace Habein

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NYC's Finding Fiction has been on the road for over a month, playing intimate shows all across the United States. September 11th marked their first stop in Spokane, WA. Playing an hour-long set at Art, Music, and More, they rocked the small venue.

Contrary to most bands' expectation for a venue to endorse shows, Finding Fiction retains responsibility for locating venues, scheduling stops, and promoting performances. This time, however, preparations were accomplished by Dale Strom, of RAWK (which presents the RAWK Final Four battle of the bands for local artists). The band's only responsibility in Spokane, unlike the other stops on this second tour, was simply to show up and play.

After a month on the road, this was a welcome break and translated into an easily obtainable 12-hour drive in their transportation of choice, a late 1980s Dodge Ram van dubbed "Ron Burgundy." Owned by Seth Everts, Art, Music, and More provided a fantastic location for ticket-holding attendees, as well as for music aficionados outside who enjoyed the songs in the acoustically perfect amphitheatre created by the surrounding businesses.

Playing in smaller venues encourages an intimacy with the audience. Finding Fiction's favorite performance (thus far) was a show at "The Loft" in Macomb, Illinois. The location turned out to be just what the name suggests: a loft. The result of the experimental venue was a packed, standing-room only show, reminiscent of a college house party.

Well-attended shows in smaller towns stand in stark contrast to the rather lonely shows in larger cities like LA, due to an oversaturation by the music industry. Personal contact with musicians attracts attendees who may otherwise not attend a show; "knowing the band" embeds ownership to audience members and encourages a "bring a friend" mentality.

Increasing popularity for Finding Fiction materializes through the exponential growth of these first-hand connections. Social networking and blogging has allowed the band to be even more accessible, accelerating their reputation. The band's organic, natural growth is further supported by couch-surfing overnights. Meeting people across the country, like the crazy unicycle-riding, helmet-collecting, burger-joint owning woman in Omaha, gives the band an opportunity to truly experience the culture within a community.

Although they currently enjoy a slight refuge from intensive internet contact within the rolling walls of "Ron," Finding Fiction has spent the last several months online, on the phone, and on the grindstone in preparation of this tour. The logistics of planning a

nation-wide tour has become a near-Herculean feat; much of the band's successful scheduling for the tour was with the assistance of the website indieonemove.com. Additionally, each musician maintains a duality of purpose: bassist Tim runs the books, sets bookings, and plans out the band's six-month schedule. Drummer Steve doles out daily allowances (read: packets of Top Ramen), while frontman Mario maintains the group's blog. New guitarist Adrian's secondary responsibility is to simply avoid being mugged like his musical predecessors.

Traveling around the country has provided exposure to the "pulsating musical growth that resonates" throughout each community. Finding Fiction will soon be working on their third album, and perhaps this tour will have had the benefit of providing musical inspiration in unlikely places. Small indie bands don't often repeat shows in offbeat locations, and hopefully Finding Fiction will continue to be an "exception to the rule" by adding Spokane to the next tour schedule. Check out Finding Fiction on iTunes and pick up their latest album, *Idaho by the Sea*.

Text by Laureen Savage
Photos by Shane Savage
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Paper cranes hang over Main Street.

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The Main Street Fair is an event that, while sponsored by the Community Building, is a true collective effort on the part of Spokane. It brought out a large number of different organizations, musicians, artists, entertainers, and vendors. There was a bouncy castle, superhero drawings for kids, two music stages, and a great smelling BBQ set-up.

All of these things are important to the Spokane community because it is a group effort. That in of itself is enough to make me stop and take notice. Spokane has struggled in the past to generate actual momentum for its communities, to generate events that bring people out and garner wide-spread participation. This is a case of it being done right. The street was crawling with people, exploring the ideas of others and having a wonderful time doing so.

It's especially nice to see a community-focused event be truly all-ages. Often, when an all-ages event comes around "all-ages" means teens and up. In this case, the bouncy castle, children-focused musicians, jugglers, and sidewalk chalk all added up to happy children of all ages.

Though it is not the only community-style event in Spokane, hopefully we'll see even more gaining in popularity. It helps neighbors get to know one another. It helps business owners get to know their community, and it allows just about everyone to have a good time for little or no money.

-- Photos and Text by Tyson Habein





The KYRS Show "Save The Moon" stops to get a pledge from a stormtrooper. KYRS received its pledge from SPOKE(a)N(e) Magazine during the fair.

(Left) Sidewalk chalk was a big hit among kids of all ages at the fair. It's funny how a little sidewalk chalk can bring out the artist in every one of us.

(Right) Children received free superhero drawings from local artists set up in front of Merlin's Comic Shop. Here Grace Habein receives a Batman drawing, while Jack Habein waits for Spiderman, or in two-year-old speak, "Man-Man."



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Linked in with the Main Street Fair was Sustainable Uprising. Part of Sustainable September, the event provided an opportunity to “celebrate local talent, raise awareness about critical sustainability issues, and offer opportunities to get involved in our community.”

The crowds didn’t leave once darkness fell. The mood switched from that of a fair or festival into a block party as people talked about the possibility of developing a sustainable community in Spokane.

Bringing together ideas of art as an outlet for social commentary, the event featured everything from a fashion show designed around garments that had been recycled or re-used in some way, along with



Attendees discuss the event and various forms of local art as festivities went on late into the night.

(Left) Event organizers interview young fashion designer Lexy Carr and ask why she thinks this sort of event is important for the community. Carr is wearing a dress made entirely of receipt paper.

belly dancing, traditional musical performers, drum circles and poetry readings.

This was the highlight of the day for me. It brought together the ideas of both Sustainable September and the ideas of the Main Street Fair. It showcased Spokane youth, a group that always needs a larger degree of attention. More importantly than simply showcasing creative youth, it asked them to assist in the organization, making them some of the largest contributors to the event.

-Text and Photos by Tyson Habein



(Right) A fashion show model waits on the sidelines for her cue.

R I V E R S P E A K



During Sustainable Uprising, Brooke Matson works the crowd at the RiVerSpeAK table.

Ever wish Spokane had one all-inclusive guide when it comes to art, music, events and more? Somewhere creative people can promote themselves and others can easily find them?

Founded just this summer by area teacher Brooke Matson, RiVerSpeAK aims to “nourish and sustain Spokane-area participation in the arts by providing an online community forum for new and established talent.”

Frustrated by the lack of cohesiveness to Spokane’s creative culture, Matson wanted to present a more complete picture of what the city has to offer — talented people looking to make a name for themselves without having to leave town for a larger venue.

Writers, artists, photographers, musicians, designers — RiVerSpeAK would like to feature them all. Still in the early planning stages, the non-profit currently exists as a blog and Facebook page, with hopes to expand into a local interactive calendar, a source for artist profiles and the host of community events. People are encouraged to submit their work, and also to get involved with the ongoing planning of the website.

“I would like to see the artistic pockets in Spokane grow arms and reach out to one another, because I believe we all have something to learn and ways to inspire each other. In the Renaissance, there was an overall burst of creativity because people shared with each other. There was a conversation going and new ideas giving birth other new ideas, like a chain reaction,” Matson says of her hopes for the community. “I see RiverSpeak being the catalyst for new ideas and creativity in Spokane. We have a multitude of creative people, but their in their own pockets and cliques, much like kids on the first day of high school. If we share more, collaborate more, and build relationships--well, there's no telling what that kind of Renaissance could do for Spokane. The possibilities are endless.”

For more information, please visit riverspeak.wordpress.com

*Photo by Tyson Habein
Text by Sara Habein*



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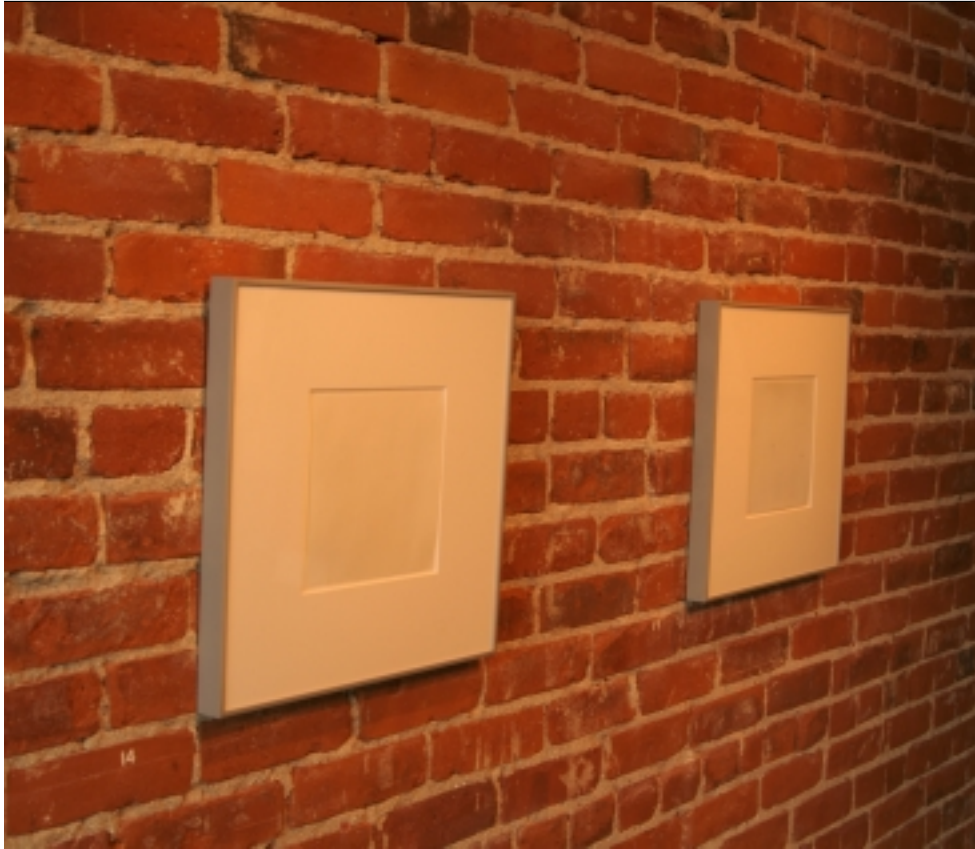
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Art by Megan Murphy at The Saranac Building

As it often does, our First Friday began at the Saranac Building. The gallery in the Saranac Building has provided us with some of our favorite items in the past few months. That said, this month's display was somewhat of a let-down.

The work of Wes Mills is minimalist, to say the least. It consists primarily of scratches and lines and small shapes on off-white paper, framed and hung on the brick walls of the venue. This work has its merits, certainly, but its small size and simplicity seemed overwhelmed by the space. The most interesting piece from this collection for me ("The Bridge I Had Hoped For") almost went unseen, as it was hanging in a back corner, adjacent to a dividing wall. Pieces arranged in clusters, rather than evenly spaced out throughout the space may have lessened the empty feeling, but I believe that even with a different display design, it was an artist-venue mismatch.



Wes Mills at The Saranac Building

Sharing the space with Mills' pieces was the work of Megan Murphy. Though Mills' medium is drawings on paper, and Murphy's digital transparencies, they share much in their minimalist aesthetic. Murphy's work, unlike Mills, is often of a larger scale. The very large digital images utilize the space of the gallery, but not to a very pleasing effect. The small lines and impressions on the transparencies are interesting in concept, but go beyond the point of mystery in their lack of detail. Rather than leaving me wondering what was behind the imagery, I was left not caring too terribly much. While interesting in scale, this work is simply too passingly ethereal to invoke much of a reaction from most people. This month's Saranac Building show as a whole was somewhat of a "ghost of what could have been."

Next door to the Saranac Building is the Community Building. There is often work in the lobby, that due to a lack of promotion, is going unseen by the First Friday public. This month displayed the work of Fred Runkel. His black and white photos of the 1999 W.T.O. protests in Seattle are a wonderful bit of photojournalism that crosses the line into the realm of fine art photography. The images are crystal clear, and the black and white prints have a great tone. Runkel's ability to find little bits of beautiful

humanity in the chaos of these events is to be admired. Along with the protest photos, anyone viewing the images should be sure to pay attention to a large print a bit further back in the lobby. It contains the image of a Mercedes Benz forced to stop for a seemingly destitute young man walking down the street, creating a wonderful juxtaposition of rich and poor.



Photography by Fred Runkel at the Community Building



Todd Sackman's photos at Sante

Up the road at Sante, they had more photography on display. Todd Sackman had a fairly large number of shots up on the walls at what has become the best restaurant art display venue in the city. Sackman's work has moments of brilliance when he steps beyond "Spokane photographer" fare. When he moves away from images that have become somewhat cliché in our region, he tends towards geometric details and abstractions of color and contrast that are very different and pleasing. I expect more artists to jump at the chance to display in this venue, as it not only provides a high-traffic area to hang work, but it also provides some wonderful light coming in through those big front windows.

At the Brick Wall Gallery, the featured photographer is Chip Phillips. Phillips work is always filled with amazing color. He has obviously worked incredibly hard at the craft of landscape photography and receives the acclaim of multiple national magazine print credits for good reason. This was a pleasing change of pace for Brick Wall. I hope to see more high quality photographers featured there in coming months.

Avenue West Gallery was busy, as they usually are during First Friday. It seemed that much of the interest revolved around the new display by Olivia Waterman and Alfred Anderson's "In Search of Pan." The display was filled with wonderful, intriguing personifications and representations of the goat-man.

Studio Capelli Salon had the work of Jamie Velandra on display. Velandra is one of the better high-end "fashion style" portrait photographers in the Spokane area. If you're in the area, her work is worth a viewing.

Next door to Studio Capelli Salon at the Empyrean Coffee House, Amber Alder's photography was an example of well-executed visions of nature that don't devolve into over-done HDR processing. She is not afraid of the natural darkness and contrast that comes with imagery and her work is better for it.

Sharing the space with Alder's photographs are the drawings of Marty Jones. His "Drawings from a Jury Deliberation Room" are frankly amazing. They capture the range of emotions as the jurors sit through a truly heart wrenching case. "Juror #5" as Jones refers to himself in the work, brought the humanity that we all forget about in a courtroom to life. Please go view these as a wonderful example of a sketched portrait's power.

Text and Photos by Tyson Habein

Chip Phillips' photos at Brick Wall Gallery



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Ah, the solo album. Never has a musical product, save maybe the concept album, inspired such conflicting views. Whether offered as a side project or in the wake of a band's demise, listeners tend to approach with caution. For every John, Paul and George, there's a Ringo, and sometimes even the most loyal fan will have trouble reconciling what they hear.

When are solo albums a bad idea? Perhaps when the band behind an artist amplifies their skills. The right mix of people can produce magic when given the opportunity — start subtracting those elements, and what's left? What Billy Corgan is still trying to call The Smashing Pumpkins exists as little more than his backing band. The voice may be the same, but man, is it boring. One afternoon, the radio played 1994's "Disarm" and the latest single back to back, and the difference in quality was staggering. Make whatever music you want, Billy, but don't try to fool us with the label.

The worst solo album I've heard, it pains me to say, comes from Christine McVie. As one third of the songwriting force in Fleetwood Mac, she produced some of my favorite songs. Her first two albums on her own, while they did have weaknesses, were still quite enjoyable. Time passed. Lots of time. She officially quit Fleetwood Mac in the late 90s and twenty years after her second solo album, she released *In the Meantime*.

It was not worth the wait. Schmaltzy and clichéd lyrics, cheesy arrangements — about the only thing that held up was her voice. I tried to like it, I really did, but after repeated listens, I couldn't identify a single song I would seek out again. Heavy with completist guilt, I exchanged the album for Hastings store credit, in the hopes that maybe someone else would feel differently. Perhaps someone more forgiving than me.

Not all solo efforts are wasted, however. Thom Yorke, Chris Cornell and Jenny Lewis have all produced fine, even great, music on their own. And let's not forget the obvious artists like Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson and Eric Clapton, who became so well known after breaking out on their own, one might be forgiven for not paying as much attention to their earlier work.

Though when it comes to some of my favorite solo work, I have to recommend Richard Ashcroft. Up until The Verve reunited and put out *Forth* last year, he spent his post-90s career creating some fantastic music. I'd even go as far to say they surpass some songs with the band, though there was a time when Verve albums rarely left my stereo.

Moving away from the ethereal layers often present in the older albums, he has just about everything that sends my musical heart aflutter — swelling arrangements, the occasional use of pedal steel, and plenty of strings. Lonesome and lovesick lyrics sung in that rolling North of England drawl get me every time.

I like that he makes big, confident music. Oftentimes I hear artists gone solo using their album to take a complete turn in style, maybe by playing out some vanity concept that no one would let them record until they became notable. With Ashcroft, the music may not be the same as The Verve, but it lives in the same area of town. Because he's good at what he does, the band behind him might be incidental.

I'm telling you right now — Go out and buy yourself *Keys to the World*. And while you're at it, pick up the first one, *Alone With Everybody*. Hell, just buy 'em all; they're brilliant. If you think Richard Ashcroft begins and ends with "Bittersweet Symphony," then not only are you failing to pay enough attention, but you're doing yourself a disservice.

The difficult thing about solo albums is that one never quite knows if they'll be any good. And if the musician comes from an extremely successful band, will their efforts always pale in comparison? Paul McCartney may be rock royalty, but don't try to tell me his last album was transcendent. Queen? One of the great all-time bands. Guitarist Brian May on his own? Forget it, the charisma's not with him. Loyal fans and journalists itching for new material to cover will always hold out hope, but quality is hard to predict.

Still, every once in awhile, an artist will come out with work that makes the music world pause, then hit repeat again and again. Every once in awhile, someone might make us say *I had no idea you had it in you*. We can only hope.



Sara Habein is not using this month's column as a thinly-veiled allusion to the Oasis break-up. Nope, not at all.

Because if this column is about anything, it's variety in subject matter.

For more self-deprecating sarcasm and some of Sara's favorite songs by artists gone solo, please visit glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com

Spokane,
ART
IS NOT
DEAD.