



electriccity

C R E A T I V E



BOUNDLESS
Issue 2
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AUGUST 2010

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BOUNDLESS

Author Jess Walter once said, “Hating the place you’re from is another form of self-loathing. You can either make the city you live in better, or you can find another place to live.”

He was talking about Spokane, which has its fair share of complainers, but the moment I heard him say it, I thought of Great Falls. Whenever I hear someone complain about our city, saying that there’s “nothing here” or “nothing to do,” I find I get terribly cranky. To say that there’s *nothing* is not only short-sighted, but it’s also defeatist. Complaining serves no purpose unless you are willing to *do something about it*.

I agree that Great Falls can improve. We could use an alternative weekly like Missoula’s *Independent*. Hell, dream big — a weekly like Seattle’s *Stranger*. We have *The Lively Times*, which is monthly, and because it covers the entire state, it does not go very in-depth. The *Tribune* publishes the *Hot Ticket* and *Fusion*, but *Fusion* is often a retread of previously run newspaper stories. The way I see it, the more people and publications we have promoting what our area has to offer, the better. Great Falls has no shortage of creative people; *Montana* itself certainly has no shortage.

Put it this way: The more omnipresent we become, the less likely we are to be dismissed.

Whether it’s music, shopping, restaurants or nightlife, if there’s something you want and aren’t seeing, speak up. Make an effort. Organize something, or contact people who can. At the same time, seek out what we already have. By supporting your locals, you are supporting our entire way of life. You are supporting a cause that says Great Falls has things other places do not. How many times have you heard your out-of-state friends longing for Howard’s Pizza or Planet Earth or Morning Light?

Our city has plenty going for it, but we can always do better.

Electric City Creative aims to highlight all that we have, and we hope to start a conversation about what we can do next. Stand tall, Stand proud, my friends. Let’s go forth and conquer.

Sara Habein

(This issue brought to you by: marionberry pie, Session lager, The Stone Roses, a \$9 USB drive, and a cool-temperated basement.)

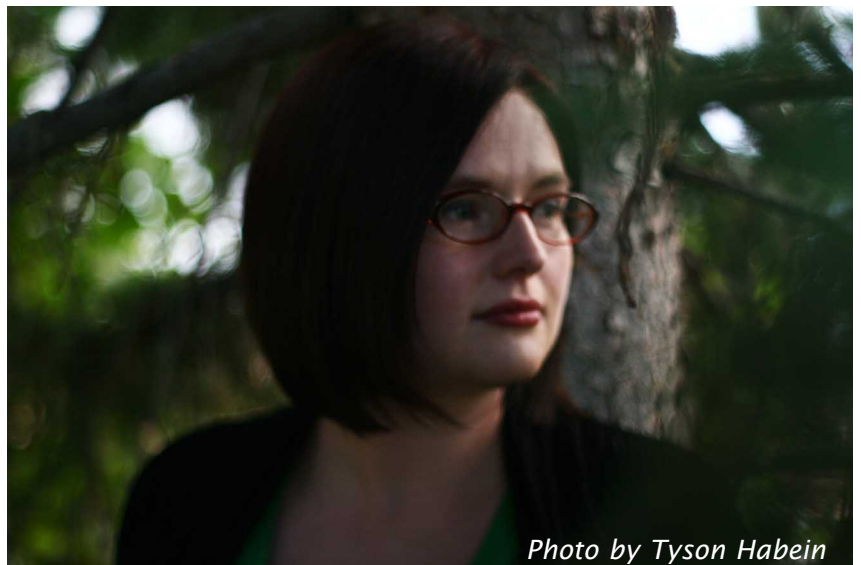



Photo by Tyson Habein

“ENJOY THE JOURNEY”

Helena artist Thomas Chvilicek takes a painted leap of faith





Thomas Chvilicek is not your standard “Montana artist,” if there is such a thing. Certainly, he paints things like fish and a few other traditional subjects of the West, but he comes at it from an entirely different angle. His results are different as well. If you’re looking for “Western art” in the strictest sense of the term, then go elsewhere. But if looking for a painting that has a graphic, almost tribal quality to it, something that has a mood and spirit in it older than the paint on the canvas, something that asks you to stop and think about from where the art comes historically and personally, then you should look at Chvilicek’s work. It’s not the traditional Montana fare, and that has me excited.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I reside in Helena but grew up on the Hi Line on a family farm north of Hingham. I graduated from Montana State University with a degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice and have worked in the field of Corrections for approximately 20 years. I am currently a State Probation and Parole Officer for the State of Montana where I supervise adults.

I see the influence of traditional stained glass on your work. In your statement on your website, you mention Picasso as well. But I also see something of traditional Native art in your work. Would you say that you’re influenced by Native and tribal art forms? And if so, what draws you to this sort of art?

My uncle introduced me to Picasso at the age of 8, and I have been hooked ever since. I also discovered a similar art form in the Catholic church. I would look through the misolettes during mass instead of paying attention to what I was supposed to be focusing on.

(continued)

As for the Native American influence, you are dead on. In high school I played basketball (a proud Hingham Ranger) and the team would travel to the reservation for games. Prior to the game, the National Anthem was played as well as a song performed for the Native Americans. I was mesmerized by the brilliant color the various tribes used in all their clothing and I was equally impressed with the tradition of the tribes. It has stuck with me to this day. I follow a few Native artists and am partial to Kevin Red Star and Jesse Henderson.

Your painting seems to be filled with a lot of emotion that I find I usually miss in very linear artwork. What can you tell me about the mood and emotion of pieces like “Kicking Against the Goad,” “Bound,” or “Listen?”

“Kicking Against The Goad” and “Bound” speak about my life experiences of failure to remain obedient to God. I have an extensive history of this! I have made a lot of things in life a whole lot more complicated for myself and those who love me by not being obedient. There is also some humor in both of those paintings. Of course it is humor that comes long after suffering a consequence and the good Lord telling me “I told you so.”

“Listen” was done following my involvement with a local mental health organization. It became apparent pretty quickly that many of the patients just wanted me to sit there and listen to them and not say a word.

Can you tell us a little bit about the process you go through when you start to create a painting?

This is the question that is going to get me in trouble with my employer! For reasons I have yet to figure out or clearly understand, the creative process loves to start in staff meetings, at training conferences, or at my desk. Very few of my paintings start in the studio. I will doodle the idea out on a piece of paper, always in pencil, and then work on it until I think it’s ready to be transferred onto canvas. There are times, however, when I sit in silence at my drafting table (if my 12 year old son is away from the house or sleeping), and the process takes over and hours later, the painting is done.

What sort of goals do you have for your artwork?

Where do I want to go with my painting? I want to enjoy the journey as far as the good



Lord takes me. It has been a process to get where I am at today. For many years, I wasn't comfortable with myself, which affected my ability to paint and to share it with people. I am now comfortable with who I am and the direction I want the art to go.

Initially it was all about getting the first contract for gallery representation, then it was getting into a few shows in Florida, and next it was getting representation when we moved back to Montana. It is a fluid deal and I am satisfied with each door that has opened. My wife started the process in 2005

when she suggested I get a hobby or there could be problems on the home front. I remember driving to St. Augustine, Florida that next day to buy art supplies and begging God to make this thing work out. A leap of faith, but one of the best jumps I have ever taken. So, today, where I want all of this to go is in the right direction and not for me specifically. I give all the glory to God and feel that my art has little to do with me and more to do with allowing others to enjoying something that is created by a small town farm kid who got lucky enough to get to do it. He creates it, I get to slop the paint! Goals? Do the right thing by people and give them something beautiful to look at, and hopefully once in awhile they might buy what they see.



What do you like about being an artist in Montana? What else would you like to see?

Hey, I just love being an artist, period, but in Montana you have a painting just waiting to happen. The state is gorgeous, the best place to be. We are growing and embracing art more and more here. We have a way to go, but all in due time. There is a great deal of freedom here and a relaxed nature about the state, something that just doesn't exist in other places I have lived. I would love to see more abstract work, more cutting edge art that makes you think, gives you a different feel. I love landscape artists; they have a talent that amazes me, but I also want to see something like what I do hanging on the wall across the gallery. I admire galleries that stick their neck out and gamble on the uncommon art, and there are some out there that do.

Where can we find more of your artwork?

My work can be viewed at www.tomchvilicek.com. I will be having a show at the Sola Cafe in Bozeman, Montana, starting October 1, 2010 and running through November. 🖼️

“THE PLAY’S THE THING”

Montana Shakespeare in the Parks celebrate their 38th season



Since 1973, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks has toured Montana, northern Wyoming, eastern Idaho, and western North Dakota with their free, professional productions of the Bard's great plays. Based out of Montana State University, the touring theatre program are bringing "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Julius Caesar" to sixty communities this year. Hitting towns large and small, with repeat performances in their home city of Bozeman, they continue to be an important fixture of summer.

August 9-10, the troupe set up their stage on the University of Great Falls lawn. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" had the actors playing up the comedy in one of Shakespeare's most produced plays, even incorporating the evening's rain into the action. Rich in fantasy, the play explores the "real" world of Athens and the magical fairy world of the forest. Relationships between the characters are tested through spells and everyone awakes in the morning, unsure if what has happened was a dream. With exotic costumes and colorful set pieces, artistic director Joel Jahnke looked to create a textured, mysterious world. "I have been strongly influenced by both Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* and Tim Burton's new version of *Alice*," he says.

In contrast, *Julius Caesar* explores themes of allegiance, betrayal and power. Filled with murderous plots and politics, it serves as a cautionary tale for the amorally ambitious. "I think the engine that drives the main players of this story is competition," says director and MSIP veteran Will Dickerson, "and there are a lot of by-products of this competition both good and bad: pride, jealousy, courage, ambition, fanaticism and loyalty to name a few." Set in 44 B.C. Rome, the production encouraged the audience to act as Romans, inviting them to chant "Caesar!" and to cheer during the opening wrestling scene.

(continued)



Both evenings had audience members staking out their seats with both lawn chairs and blankets over an hour before curtain, bringing along picnic fare and umbrellas. Some concessions were also available, a relatively new addition to the event. Each show received a standing ovation, even as the rain began again on the second evening.

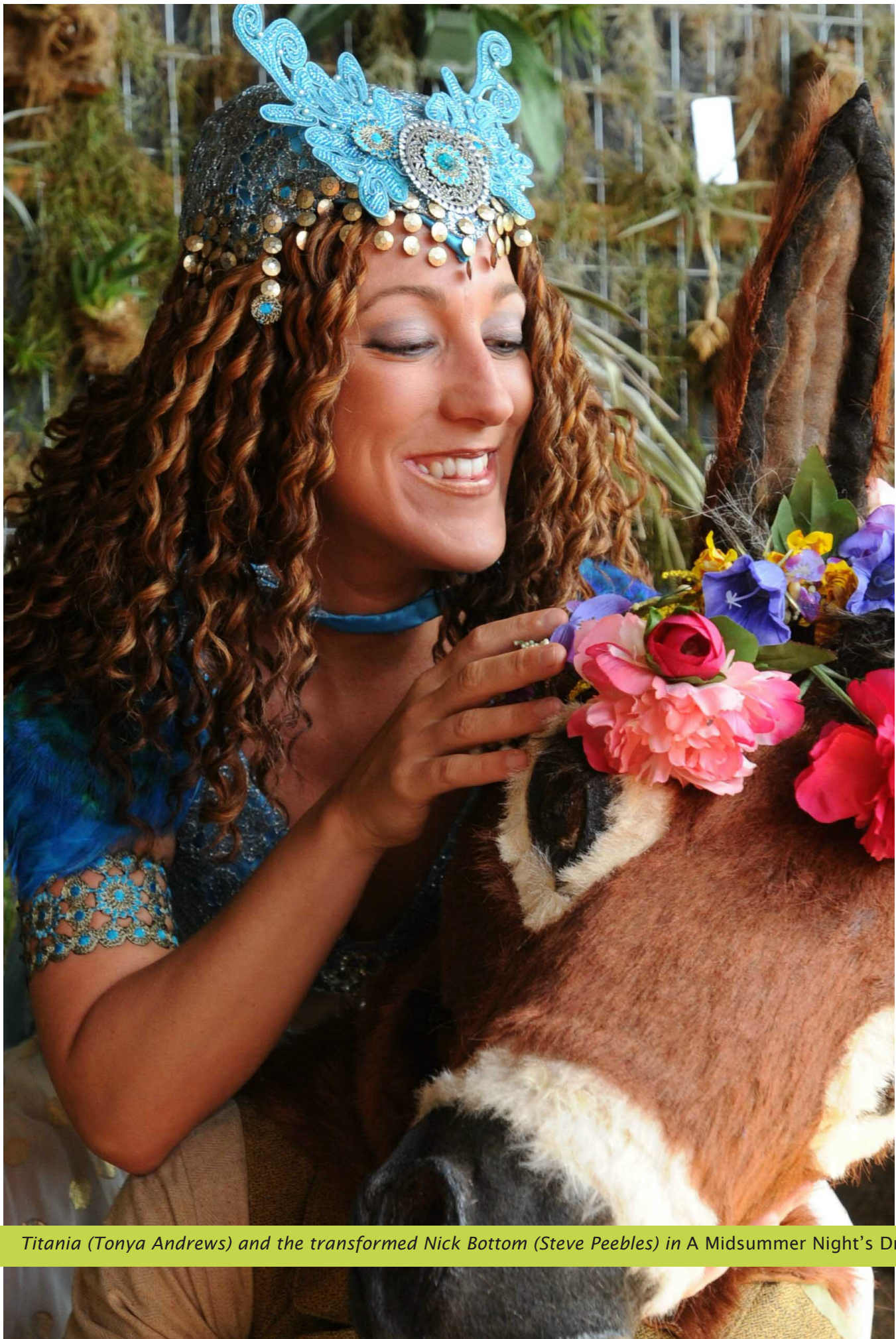
With over 20 performances left, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks continue their tour until September 12. For more information, visit www.montana.edu/Shakespeare. 🏞️

Previous page:

Puck (Christopher Peltier) and Oberon (Mark Kuntz) hatch their magic plan in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Above:

Brutus (Steve Peebles) and Marc Antony (Mark Kuntz) face off in the 2010 MSIP production of *Julius Caesar*.



Titania (Tonya Andrews) and the transformed Nick Bottom (Steve Peebles) in A Midsummer Night's Dream

SCENES FROM

The Montana State Fair and Alive @5 with Red Elvises





Photos by Tyson Habein and Sara Habein

HISTORY

Zion Schoolhouse and the Livestock Pavillion





HAIRCUTS

ENERGY

Styx perform at the Montana ExpoPark





ENCORE

“HELLO, WE ARE...





RED ELVISES!"





**"YOUR NEW
FAVORITE BAND!"**

A NIGHT (NOT) AT THE MOVIES



Sheree Nelson / Studio 706

Perhaps it was the weather, but this month's First Friday seemed more sparsely attended compared to July. The primary gallery guests appeared to be friends of the artists and the gallery owners. However, since we did not see every gallery, this of course may not have been the case everywhere. Originally, Davidson Companies planned to screen *A Night At the Museum* after the galleries closed at nine, but with power outages rampant, I do believe it was canceled. However, despite the heavy wind and rain, we discovered plenty of new and interesting art.

Outside of the downtown area, the **Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center** (4201 Giant Springs Road) displayed both Native American and Tibetan art, as well as a sand mandala constructed by Buddhist monk **Ngawang Chojor**. The prior evening, the center hosted a dinner and discussion with Chojor (via translator), which featured traditional Indo-Tibetan food. The mandala — quite intricate and beautiful — took several days to create before its dissolution that Saturday. The weekend's activities highlighted the way in which Tibetan and Native American cultures overlap, and I hope to see more events like this hosted in our city.

Elsewhere off the core, we visited **Studio 706** (706 7th Ave. South) for the first time. Hosting pop art acrylics and jewelry by **Sheree Nelson**, the small converted house was packed with people. As a fan of old lettering and neon, I appreciated her incorporation of notable Great Falls signs and buildings in some of her work. Living in a location where Western-style art is more prevalent, it was refreshing to see a different take on our city.

On Central Avenue, I love that the 300 block is making a concerted effort towards being a gallery and studio hub. The **Thisted Building Gallery** (320 ½ Central Ave.) offers up a beautiful upstairs spaces for working artists, and this month, painter **James Bason** (Suite No. 4) opened with his newest work, "Cloudy Belt Blue."



His oil paintings have an ethereal, dreamlike quality to them, and his collections of antique fans and projectors are also something worth seeing. Throughout the evening, he had old instructional art movies project onto a screen, and I definitely suggest going next time he opens up his studio.

Nearly next door, the relatively new **Wrangler Galleries** (316 ½ Central Ave.) used their expansive space to display a collection of Western-style art and sculpture. Though I'm not normally drawn to this style, I really liked the bright use of color and the use of old maps in some paintings. Unfortunately, we neglected to get the name of the artist, and I apologize for the oversight.

Across the street at **Winston Publishing's** new office (317 Central Ave.), **Cliff Rossberg** exhibited his oil paintings primarily focused with North American animals. I enjoyed his portrayal of river otters, and fans of nature-centric art and photography will likely appreciate his work. *Signature Montana*, one of Winston's publications, also featured his work in their last issue. This sort of overlap and promotion is something I find absolutely necessary to enriching the Great Falls arts community. The more opportunity artists have to showcase their work, the better chance they'll have at selling that work.





Cliff Rossberg / Winston Publishing

Regrettably, we were unable to take in **Paris Gibson Square's** (1400 1st Ave. North) film screening. Twelve films from the **Northwest Film & Video Festival** highlighted the work of upcoming filmmakers from Montana, Washington and Oregon. Everything I read about the films sounded interesting, and it's fantastic when organizations from out of state choose to include our city in their distribution and touring schedule. I'd welcome hearing thoughts from anyone who was able to attend.

Futhermore, it should be noted that each month, we will visit art openings to the best of our abilities. Like anyone else, there are only so many places we can cover within one evening. If there is ever any place readers feel was wrongly neglected, tell us about it at electriccitycreative@gmail.com.

Next month's First Friday theme is 'Back to School.' See you September 3rd. 



ROCK N ROLL PILGRIMAGE


Anyone who grew up in Great Falls can tell you — If you want to see your favorite musicians live, you're going to have to leave town. Forget favorite. If you want to see anyone you like more than just one single, you're hitting the highway. I understand that Missoula and Bozeman are going to get more attention as university towns, and I understand that Billings will book bigger acts based on their population. However, Great Falls is often ignored by touring musicians who play something other than pop-country. Even then, our city only seems to bring in acts while on their rise to popularity or are a decade-plus past it. It's sad that the bulk of our concert listings in the *Hot Ticket* are not only in other cities, but quite often out of state with Spokane, The Gorge and Seattle listed.

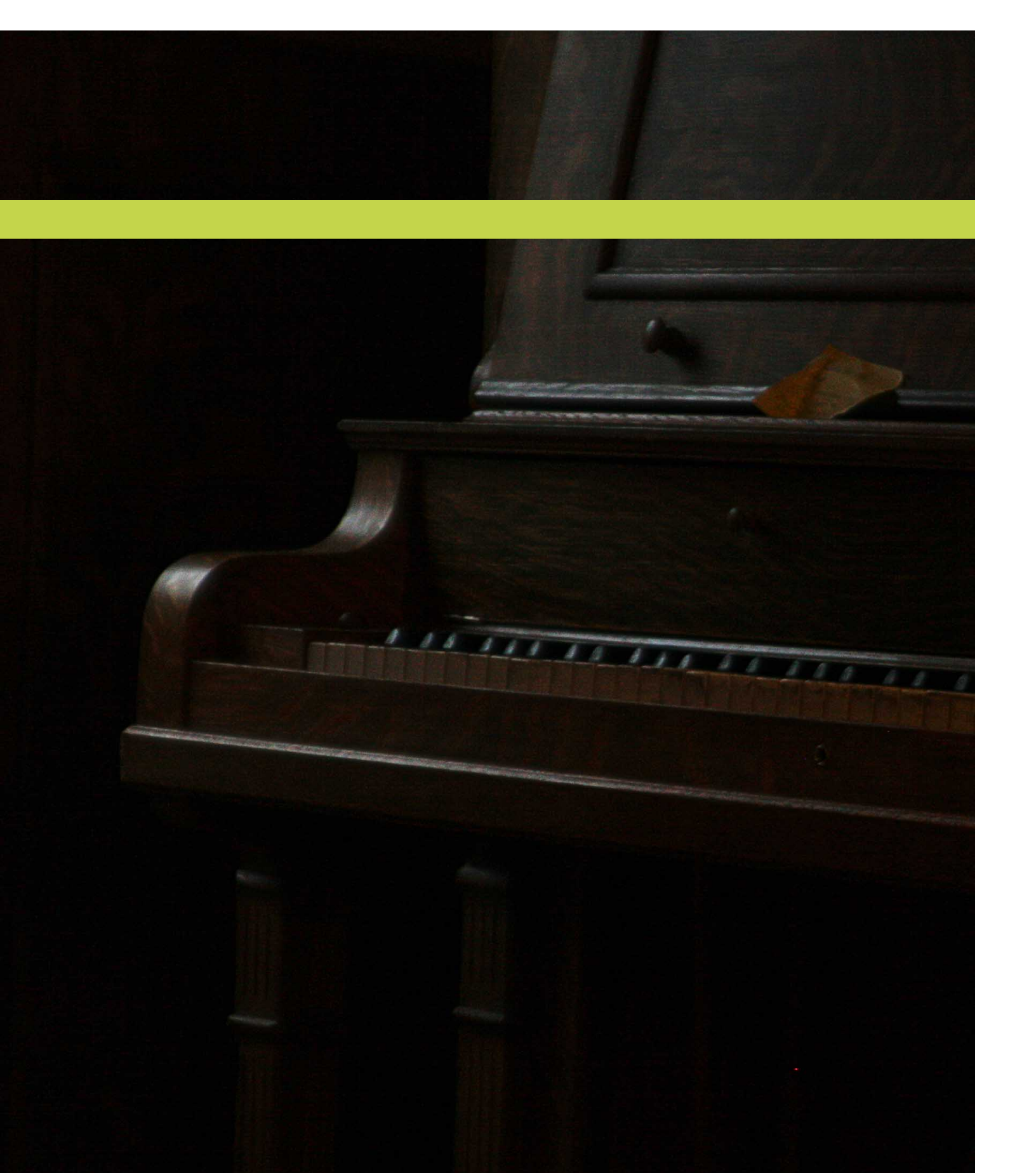
Why is this? Around the time of the fair, a spokesperson from the ExpoPark was interviewed in the *Tribune* regarding their bookings. Essentially, she said, it boiled down to money. They did not have the money to book larger acts when they might not sell enough tickets. How do they know? What acts have they pursued and ultimately failed to book? What sort of public polling have they done to compile a 'Wish List' of desired bands? The ExpoPark is a decent mid-sized venue with a good sound system. With effort, I don't think it's naive to expect progress.

Elsewhere, places like The Hideaway Lounge and Club 406 are booking out-of-town acts. While the Hideaway concentrates on country, I certainly appreciate their effort to become another viable venue in our city. Their outdoor stage can accommodate a reasonably large audience, and they sell well.

I haven't been in town long enough to know what the relatively new Club 406 has booked or what their plans are yet. To be honest, I'm still getting over the loss of Murph's Bowling Alley in that space, but that's the nostalgia talking. Done right, Club 406 could be a good small-ish venue for touring bands, similar to Spokane's The Blvd. (now called the Seaside). Is it fair to compare our city of 60,000 with a city of over 200,000? Not entirely, but consider our comparable size to Missoula. We can do better.

On a smaller scale, I'd also like to know who is currently booking the all-ages scene. Ten years ago, Poser Punk and other groups reliably scheduled shows at Center Stage, the Rec Center and the Elks Club, promoting themselves at montanapunk.com. In the age of Facebook, it shouldn't be too hard for someone to scrape together contacts.

Promoters, let me know who you are. I want to talk about you, and I want to help you do your job. You too, bands. Great Falls isn't a lost cause. Let's tell the world. 



LINER NOTES *Written by Sara Habein*

To see and hear some of my favorite live versions of songs, please visit glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com

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