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*Matt Smith*

*Slide Sideways*

*Robin Trower*

*Atmosphere*

*Spokane Comic-Con*

*Issue 4  
April 2009*



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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 and we will do our best to rectify the error.*

T

Welcome to the fourth issue of SPOKE(a)N(e) Magazine. If you're one of the people in town who has talked to Sara or myself when you've seen us out and about, written about us in your publication, talked us up to others (via the real world or the internet), or has simply been sitting quietly reading each issue, thank you. We're glad to be doing it with you out there. Since we now have a few folks out there reading on a regular basis, this letter will be one filled with questions. You're highly encouraged to email me with your responses to any or all of them.

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On Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> I attended a very interesting panel discussion titled "The Changing Media Landscape in the Inland Empire." One of the things that struck me about the discussion is the open way in which it was approached. I think the nature of modern media is such that its current state of flux has made those who are already established and struggling to survive prepared to listen to the ideas of just about anyone who is willing to speak up. I think only positive things can come of this. After a certain amount of sorting through the floatsom and jetsom, of course.

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Specifically, I left with the idea of media asking the consumer what they want. So what do you want, Spokane (and surrounding area)? What do you want of, not only us, but the larger world of publications? What do you think Spokane is lacking? Are we a healthy publishing community? I think you'll be interested to know that almost everyone in the room, including the entirety of the panel, stated that we weren't even approaching healthy. The panel also concluded that the world at large is currently not in a healthy state in its media.

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But in comparison to the rest of the world, and perhaps more relevant, in comparison to the Western part of the United States, what do those other guys have that Spokane doesn't (besides population)? Are our "alternative publications" alternative enough? Are our local magazines hip enough? Do we cover enough hard news issues as a community? Do we print enough brightly colored images on glossy enough paper?

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Believe it or not, I think these are some very important questions to ask of ourselves as time goes on. I think, much like many other things in life, our relationship is a symbiotic one. The community doesn't survive without the publications (at least in a vibrant and powerful way), and the publications don't survive without the community. Why would they?

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So think about it like that, our publications as ourselves. After you've thought about it for a minute, let me know what you think. What can we, do for you?

Tyson Habein  
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Spokane has more to offer.







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*-photos provided by Matt Smith*



## **The Basics: Name, age, occupation, where you're from and what keeps you here?**

My name is Matt Smith. I am twenty-two years old, and I deliver medicine for Jones' Pharmacy. Hopefully I will be delivering upon my moped within the next few weeks. I am from Spokane, but I've always had an interest in traveling. I just moved back after a three month visit to Yosemite National Park in the High Sierras, which was surely one of the most powerful and inspiring experiences I've had in my life. I will be working at Priest Lake all summer, and in the fall, I am moving to Olympia to continue my schooling. Within the next two years, I plan on traveling as much as possible. My girlfriend, Erin, (who is also my best friend and team mate, and a far better artist than I could ever dream to be) and I are setting in motion a plan to travel extensively overseas. Our first stop is Thailand, and from there, Cambodia. We will have no set date to end our travels, and we will take each day as it comes, in the moment. I am currently working two jobs and saving as much as I can for photo equipment and traveling supplies. Spokane has been a great place for me, not only because my family, friends, and love-of-my-life live here, but because of its glorious springs and summers. Manito Park has been my personal workspace, my place of inspiration and energy for at least seven years now. It is a small piece of heaven, and a beautiful spot to write poetry, paint, photograph, or just melt away in euphoric thoughtlessness.

## **What brought you to the art you're currently working on?**

I have always been very interested in growth, love, spring, and birth (and of course, rebirth). Many artists of the past and present persist to dwell on and release their inner anguish, remorse, decay, death, sorrow, and hatred. I feel that in the art world there are these two sides, good and evil, in a way, and that the side of good is fighting a losing battle. I am often awestruck at the way society is attracted to the grim like flies to a lamp. Still I believe that art is for the individual that creates it, just like sports are for fun and should always be a game before they become a job. I am inspired in the spring, to walk and walk, and take up any photographic opportunity that presents itself, and often I will crouch down in a garden, and compose an image by using a blue sky backdrop, propping stems up, and into my viewfinder I compose, much like a painting, the flowers of choice or the bugs within them. I use a fill flash, with the sun behind the flower, to create a halo effect, and it pops the color to an almost surreal brightness and vividness. It is amazing how many hours will pass before I get the right shot, the one that finally does "the trick".

## **Where are you looking to go with your work?**

As I grow older and continue to produce art, I am told that I should really be focusing on a way to sell it, to market it towards a broader audience. I've had a struggle finding a balance between appealing to an older generation, while keeping hold of my personal style and energy. I love my imagination, and would never want to keep it restrained, but it seems to me that half of being an artist means knowing when to quit, when to stop applying paint, and to leave room for the viewer and



their own imagination to come into play. It's all about the subtleties. I feel that as I delve deeper into my personal style, through time it will rouse up a quite unexpected profession.

## **Who is your work aimed at?**

I have never had audience consumption in mind when I produce art. As an artist, it needs to be personal. Of all the times I've painted

or photographed, the real juicy stuff comes when I have no time constraints, and no guidelines. There is no box, know what I mean? With audience consumption in mind, it becomes a product, and art is not tangible. Art is a feeling, and if someone is looking for art, they will find it.

## **Who or what would you say is influencing you right now?**

Love is my biggest influence. I need hope to paint, and I find hope in love. Small glimpses of spring have begun to show, and almost instantly I am affected. I just started painting with oils and wow, there's just no words to describe my affection for the texture, the vibrancy, the smell even. Of all the mediums, oil seems the most Earthy, or I guess elemental. I am also majorly influenced by experimentation and change. Music plays a key role in my life, as it should in everyone's. It is as vital as the air we breathe, and without it we might as well not see the sunset, taste the kiss, or smell the sea. Last but not least, I thrive in solitude. I am re-learning this at the moment, and it is not a bad thing. If I could re-learn this lesson a million times over, I would: I am most productive in solitude, and there is something magical to be found in silence.

## **What do you like about the Spokane creative community? What would you like to see more of?**

I see Spokane's creative community as a bud ready to blossom. We've been cooped up for so long. What this city needs a heavy dose of diversity. We need to call out to all artists, those who never share for fear of judging eyes, and the fearless, who throw splashes of paint on a twelve foot canvas and expect applause. It will take all of us to really come together. We are growing into a great community. One thing I love about Spokane is how easy it is to find a venue and get a show. 1-2-3. With First Friday going all year, the venues are constantly changing featured artists and it sets up a healthy flow of emerging artists and the weathered masters. I would like to see more young people in the art scene. I don't think it's too far-fetched to start with street venues during the summers. Portland has a reknown, eight-city-block street gallery every Saturday with all types of artists and craftsmen/women. It is free to the public and a great way to bring the people together, and bring the arts to the people. Heck, it even helps some of those starving artists pay rent, and decorate walls with original works by a local up-and-comer. It helps build up the energy that Spokane is lacking right now, but close to being on the verge of. We are so close we can smell it.

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**The Basics: Name, age, occupation, where you're from, and if it's Spokane, what keeps you here?**

Scott Scoggin, age 25. I'm currently a freelance graphic designer and co-owner of Slide Sideways. I'm originally from Spokane, but have recently moved back, after living in Seattle for 6 years.

Jacqui Savisky, age 24. Currently I'm also a freelance graphic designer and co-owner of Slide Sideways. I'm from a little town just south of Seattle called Enumclaw.

We decided to move to Spokane because we had some opportunities here that we just couldn't pass up. We also knew we wanted to get our foot into the creative community here.

**What brought you to the items you're currently working on?**

We are constantly creating and evolving our ideas that come to mind. Sometimes something works, sometimes it doesn't, but we just keep moving forward, because usually our design process just builds from one thing to the next.

**Where are you looking to go with your work?**

Professionally, Slide Sideways has grown into a creative design company that caters to people who are looking for something unique when it comes to design. We know the industry, and we know the trends before they reach Spokane. We bring a youthful energetic approach to what we design and make. We also want Slide Sideways to be our outlet personally, by creating one of a kind screen printed posters and cool stuff that you just want to look at and keep forever. This is what we love doing, and it gets us up in the morning.

**With two people working on the items you create, what sort of role do each of you take?**

We are always researching, imagining, and exploring new ideas. We both pull marathon sessions at the computer working on projects for clients. We collaborate really well off each other and can critique each other's work so it's the best it can be. We also motivate each other to keep it going. Once an idea is set in motion one of us will draw it up. If it involves screen printing that goes to Scott's corner and if it involves sewing or crafting that goes to Jacqui. Really, everything we do is done together. Without both of us giving our completely honest opinion on what something looks like, it wouldn't be where it's at when it's done.

**Who or what would you say is influencing or inspiring your design right now?**

Our inspiration comes from many different areas. Just as much



as we are inspired by what people are doing currently we are inspired by what's been done in the past. For example, we love what Polish designers were doing with movie posters in the 60's and 70's. Music is huge for us when designing. We cross lots of platforms with where we get inspiration, whether it's music lyrics or a really well-made pair of shoes, it comes from people just being conscious of

what they are making. Look at the quality of things made in the past, people took time to make things really well. When walking downtown, look at all the old hotel signs, most of them have stayed around and look really cool. The ones that have been torn down are usually replaced with ugly plastic ones that aren't built with the same craftsmanship and detail.

**Where can we see your work (outside of Etsy)?**

Our etsy shop is [www.slidesideways.etsy.com](http://www.slidesideways.etsy.com). You can also see our work and meet us at the Fresh Abundance Community Roots Market, where there are tons of other great artists and food sellers too. The next one is April 19<sup>th</sup> 11-4. This summer we will be in the Missoula, Montana MADE fair.

**What do you like about the Spokane creative community, and what would you like to see more of?**

When we first came to Spokane, we thought that there was really not much going on in the creative area, except for traditional art. But in the last 6 months of being here, we have found that there is a lot of youth out there trying to break ground, and that's what Spokane needs. It also needs to be accepted and nurtured by the community, and we aren't sure that it totally has been. Really, Spokane needs to find some energy behind these really talented people and boost them up and keep them here. Otherwise they move away to Seattle or Portland where they can find that diversity and acceptance.

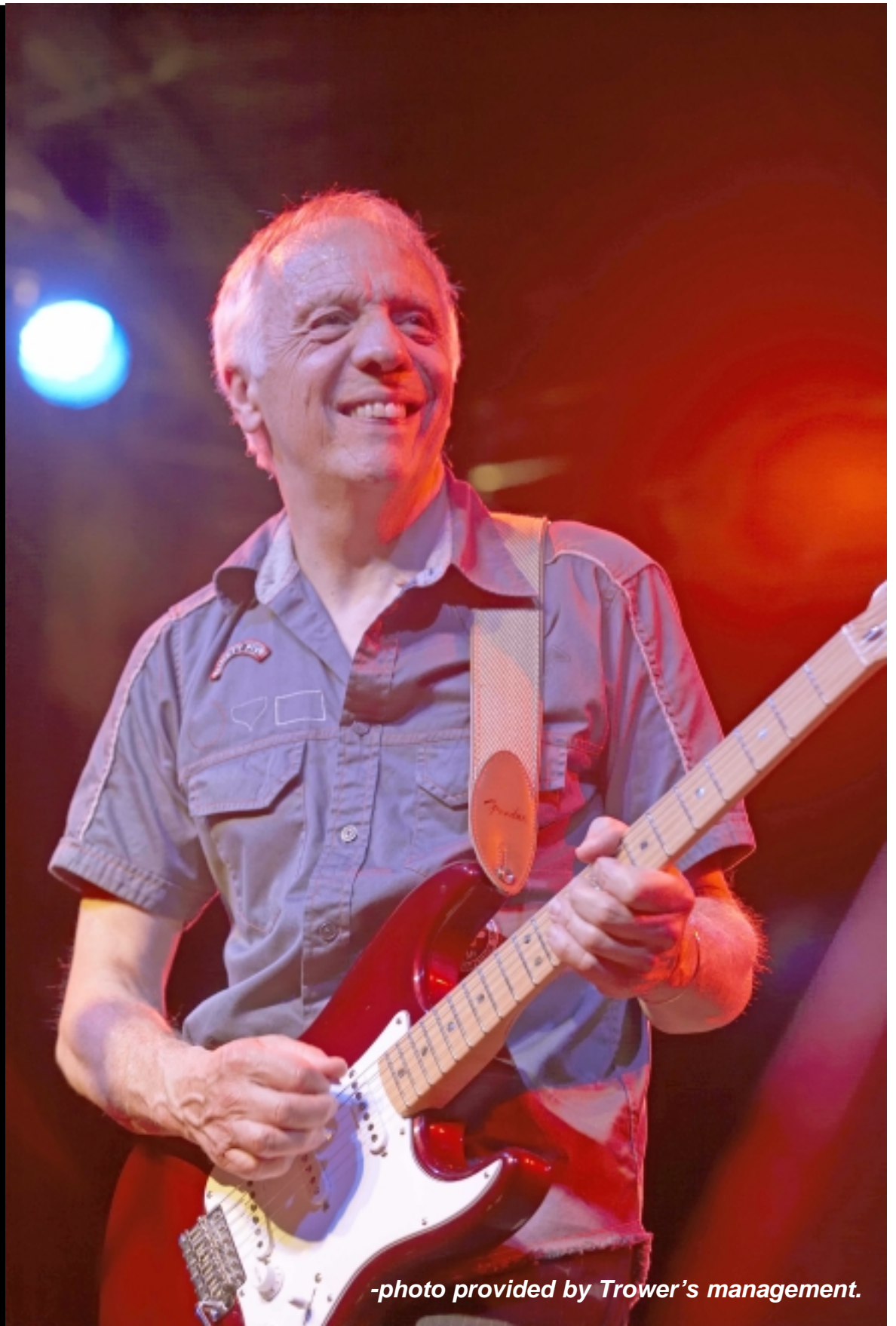
The First Friday we went to was exciting to see. There was the traditional artwork that we expected, but there was also a younger group of people creating stuff that got us excited. We see a lot of potential in the Spokane community and we are excited for what's to come.



*-photos provided by Slide Sideways*



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*-photo provided by Trower's management.*

On May 11th, Spokane concertgoers are in for a rare treat when British guitar legend Robin Trower kicks off his US tour here at the Knitting Factory. The show marks his first Spokane appearance in 9 years and is his first at an all-ages venue since the 70s. Trower last performed here in 2000 to a sellout crowd, and a sizable group stood outside in the pouring rain. Those unable to get into the show listened with ears pressed against that venue's walls.

"I really enjoy this part of the country – the Pacific Northwest," he once told me in a previous interview. "It's very beautiful here."

His 1974 platinum selling blues-rock masterpiece *Bridge of Sighs* was the talk of the recording industry when first released. Armed with a Stratocaster guitar and his imagination, the guitarist com-

bined the sonic elements of his 1973 debut solo album (*Twice Removed From Yesterday*) with the funk of James Brown and his own love of blues and soul music. The result caught the industry by surprise and was the first step towards five consecutive gold albums with collaborators like drummer Bill Lordan, producer/keyboardist Matthew Fisher, and vocalist/bassist James Dewar.

Some 25 albums later, his latest in-stores release, *Seven Moons*, is his 4th collaboration with the iconic bassist/vocalist Jack Bruce, a partnership that goes back to 1981 with the release of both *B.L.T* and *Truce*. Lordan joined the duo for the first album, while the band's original drummer, Reg Isidore, performed on their second.



a real gentleman and the consummate professional when they worked together on *BLT*. “Jack was a phenomenal bass player to work with, and when he sang, it was like one take and it was perfect. That made it really easy and fun, and there was a flow to that whole project”. According to Trower’s management and despite rumors, Bruce will not be appearing at any of the US shows. However, the two will be getting together for a European tour in July or August.

Also available, either online at [www.trowerpower.com](http://www.trowerpower.com) or at the shows during this tour, is Trower’s most current release, *RT@R008*. As a 2-CD set with eight-page booklet, *RT@R008* documents the full audio of the 2008 Royal Oak, Michigan show with bonus video footage.

Once hailed by the British press as the next Eric Clapton, Trower has seen probably more career ups and downs than most. He’s rode the rollercoaster of fame at least twice, with Procol Harum for their first five albums, and with various configurations of his own power group for 25 more. Still, Trower kept on going and with a smile on his face, and a belief in himself and his music. Others credit his youthful optimism and his family values. The guitarist himself credits the fans and acknowledges that he enjoys the opportunity to sign an autograph whenever possible. On that he told me, “It’s the least I can do, I think, because [the fans] are the ones that make it possible for you to go on doing what you do. I mean, it seems so little to give of oneself really.” His generosity extends to those around him as well.

Born March 9, 1945 in Catford, England, Robin Leonard Trower spent his early years living all over the world due to family circumstances, eventually returning to England where the family settled in Southend-On-Sea. His early musical influences include the music of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter and a variety of show tunes played in the family home, along with the US R&B singles his older brother Mick, a Merchant Seaman, would bring home.

The first record he owned was B.B. King’s “Three O’Clock Blues”. Trower says, “Hearing him changed the way I [later] thought about playing the guitar” and King’s music continues to have a profound effect on his playing to this day. Another early musical influence was that of Elvis Presley and once he’d seen a performance on television, he wanted to play the guitar. Trower’s parents bought their 14-year-old son his first.

Schoolmate Chris Copping taught his friend the rudiments of the instrument and the two formed The Raiders, a popular teenbeat band which evolved into The Paramounts, with the later addition of keyboardist Gary Brooker. Their cover of “Poison Ivy” became a minor hit in the US.

After the short-lived jam came Procol Harum and today, Trower is remembered by fans as possibly their favorite guitarist from that band. In the span of 5 albums, the artist left an impressive body of work, from the emotionally beautiful “Repent Walpurgis” on the group’s debut album (an instrumental ‘duet’ with organist Matthew Fisher) to the Hendrix-influenced “Song for a Dreamer” on Broken Barricades, which signaled his time to move on. His next band, Jude, with Frankie Miller & Clive Bunker, produced no recordings. But what the short-lived band did produce were two things: A vocalist with an incredible tenor voice

named James Dewar (who also happened to play bass) and an original Miller/Trower piece titled “I Can’t Wait Much Longer”.

“That was the one the one song we brought over from Jude,” Trower says, concerning the lead-off track to his first solo album. Along with drummer Reg Isidore (who sadly just passed away towards the end of March) and later Bill Lordan of Sly and the Family Stone, the rock trio produced a studio series of four textured soundscapes with Matthew Fisher at the helm, works which propelled them into the stadium arenas and superstardom. It was music that reached not only into the stratosphere, but into Trower’s soul. *Bridge of Sighs*, which still sells today, is from this set.

With a purer R&B sound, they released 1977’s *In City Dreams*, a musical departure they described as “Real positive and real fresh.” Trower today lists this “more major key” work as one of his favorites.

Since that time, Trower has seldom slowed down and as long as the fans come to watch, he will continue to tour. In addition to collaborating on projects by Bryan Ferry as both a musician and co-producer, he’s also released 17 studio albums, began singing his own material, released an album of all blues material, oversees his other artistic endeavors, including painting, and still finds time to be a devoted husband and family man. The music’s style may occasionally change and band personnel may come and go, but somehow a number of them return. Both his current vocalist Davey Pattison (possibly the only person who could replace the late Dewar) and drummer Pete Thompson are from Trower’s days with Atlantic in the late 80s. Joining them for the tour is bassist Glenn Letsch, a former member of Gamma with Pattison, whose list of credits as a performer and instructor are too numerous to list here.

Current Trower projects still in the works include a new studio album, *What Lies Beneath*, produced by another former band bassist/vocalist Livingston Brown, scheduled for release this July. Trower’s management tells me that it’s a departure for the guitarist as it was created without using the current band, trying out some new ideas with texture and arranging.

Tickets for the 8pm May 11th Show are \$24 and available through Tickets West outlets.

**-Text by Lloyd N. Phillips**

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The show opened with two men walking out onto stage. One sat at the small drum-kit and one picked up a guitar. They were Attracted to Gods and they played a sort of Southern-fried, hard-rocking, early Fleetwood Mac-style blues. They were nothing like what I expected for opener at a major hip-hop show in Spokane. At more than one point, they made me smile.

Attracted to Gods provided little in the way of talking between songs, preferring to move quickly from one piece to another, belting them out as if their performance that evening was their ticket to get back on the bus and continue the tour. While their playing was high quality, a bit more interaction and banter with the crowd wouldn't be out of order. That said, these guys play like they mean it. Nothing negative can be said about that.

Up second was the hip-hop artist P.O.S. Standing for Pissed Off Sean, the acronym often fit. With songs about struggles artistic, economic, and racial, P.O.S. wowed the crowd. At times, he performed high speed lyrical gymnastics, and at others, he'd slow the pace down, focusing on each individual syllable. But P.O.S. showed his less angry side as well, smiling and joking with the audience. A few times during his performance, he

pulled out an electric guitar, playing as he performed vocals. Perhaps the most entertaining moments of his set were the call

and answer portions during several of the songs. More than once he said to the audience, "See, it just feels good to do shit together." Everyone in the crowd seemed to agree, chanting P.O.S. over and over. With a wry grin, he replied, "You don't have to do that, I'm standing right here."

Atmosphere has been leading the pack of national level independent hip-hop acts for several years now. On the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup>, I discovered that the thoughtful, often introspective lyrics from Slug, and the classically layered beats from Ant aren't the only reason this is the case. Their live show packs a punch as well.

One of the things that impressed me the most with Atmosphere's stage performance was not the inclusion of additional band members, including guitar (joined by the guitarist from Attracted to Gods), keyboards and backing vocals to round out the traditional mc/dj set-up. What impressed me was that unlike many live hip-hop acts, the extra people on stage weren't for show. These individuals not only could play, they could play together. There was improvisation and live modifications to songs that seemed to surprise and please the audience. In one instance, it was decided in the midst of a song to add an final verse that wasn't meant to be heard yet. At the request of Slug from the stage to the audience, I won't be telling what song that was, or sharing any of the lines. "That was for you. Keep that as your memory. Don't go putting that shit on You-Tube," he said.

In Atmosphere's set, Slug often personalized the act, speaking directly to the audience as if we were in a small room, not one of



several hundred. At one point, he used his correction of a crowd-surfer's behavior as the lead-in to the next song.

"Where's that little attention sponge that was floating around up here? Keep your feet on the floor. Everyone else paid the same money you did, and they don't want your sweaty feet kicking them in the face. You don't get to put your fun in front of anybody else's fun. That's it, don't put your fun in front of anyone else's fun, don't get so drunk your friends have to take care of you. That's not their fucking responsibility.

I'm not trying to hate. I guess what I'm saying is, 'You should have fucking known better.'"

In another piece of personalization, Slug spent half a song writing on a sketchpad with a sharpie, which he then crumpled up the paper and threw it into the middle of the audience. I didn't see who caught it, and have no idea what was written on it, but that's something that individual will likely never forget.

I prefer to have a plus and minus format to my reviews. The only negative I can find was also one of the interesting aspects of the concert. The presence of a rock band to open the show, despite the use of the guitars in every one of the acts, felt out of place. But if there's anything Atmosphere has shown over the years, it's that they're not afraid to do the unexpected. There are some live performances leaving you wondering if it would have made more sense to put on the CD and stare at a picture

of the artist in question than to go to the show. This wasn't one of those. I doubt there was an individual in the audience who didn't think it was well worth every penny they paid, long time fan or not. Slug said, "I don't really have any excuse for why I haven't been here before, but if it's ok, I'll be coming back soon." The audience cheered. If you're a fan of live music at all, you should be cheering when they come back around.

To see and hear a sample of P.O.S.'s set, go to [www.thesomeshow.com](http://www.thesomeshow.com)

*-Text and Photos by Tyson Habein*

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*Attracted To Gods*



P.O.S.





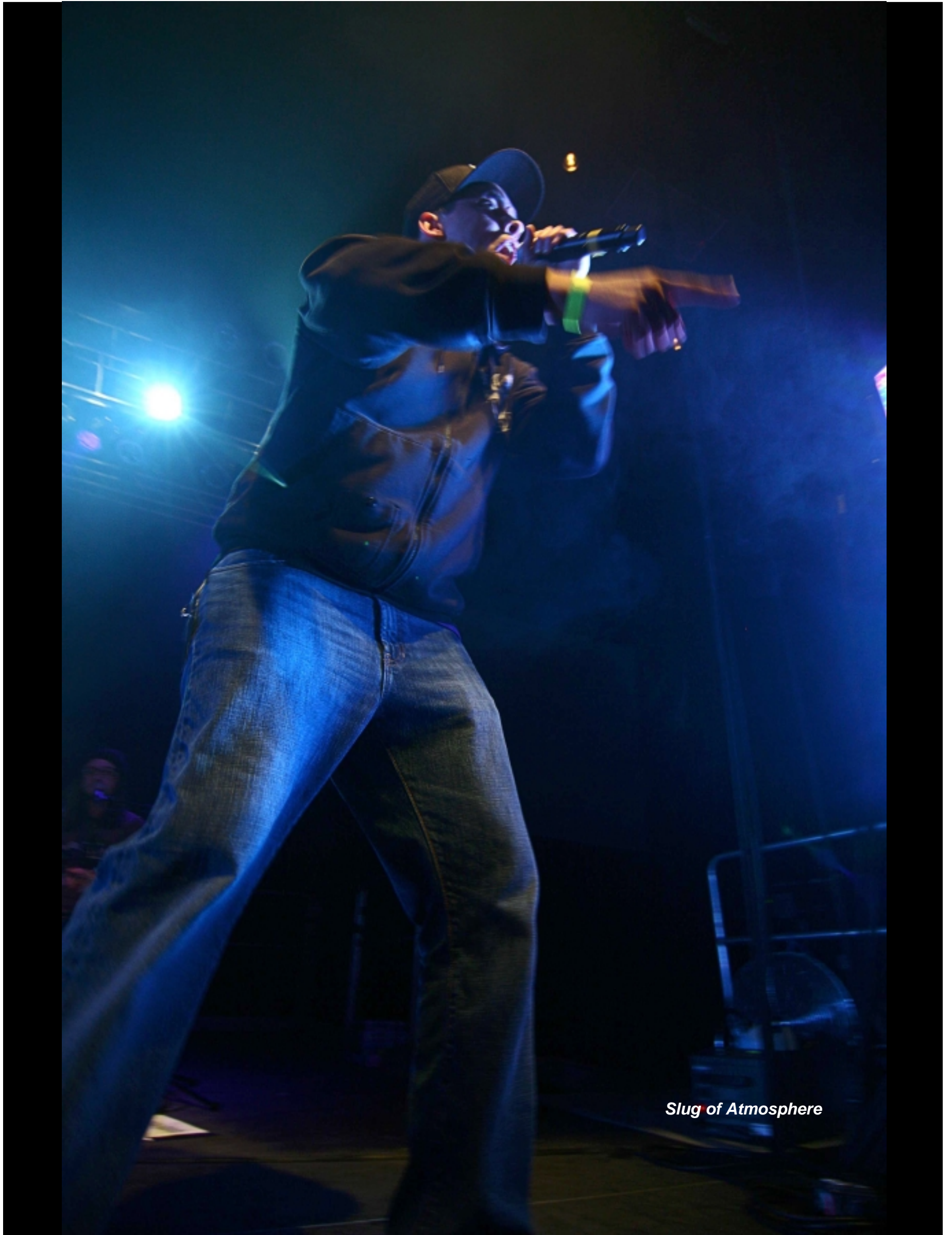
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As a fundraiser for Central Valley High School's DECA program, athousandroads Productions will present *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party* on April 17<sup>th</sup> at The Mirabeau Park Hotel on Sullivan Rd. in Spokane Valley, Washington.

Written and directed by sisters Rayla and Rachel Collins of Post Falls, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century period play of eight acts revolves around the mystery and intrigue involved in the attempted murder of one Jackson Andrew Knightly on the Jackabee manor grounds.

"Mystery dinner parties are very popular right now," Becky Riordan, chairperson for the school's senior grad night, told me. When the Central Valley drama students became unavailable for the evening, she'd spotted a poster for *Hidden* in a theater. "My friend tried to get tickets, but they were sold out for every performance," she said of the five night run earlier this year at Falls Christian Assembly in Post Falls.

The young and creative Collins sisters have plenty to look forward to in the years to come. 18-year-old Rayla says they enjoy writing screenplays and with their friend Samantha, they formed the Zoe Ende Writers for their creative writing projects. Zoe Ende is a reference to the biblical garden of life, or Eden.

"In our writings, we interlace them with Christian principles," Rayla writes in an e-mail. In roughly two years time, the group has put together a collection of poetry and is in the final writing stages of three books; *Hidden*, *Marked* and *Journey*. The script for *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party* comes from the first book in the trilogy. Another book titled *Flooded* is listed on their website as "coming soon".

As for *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party*, "It was actually the second play we'd written, but the first we'd put on," Director Rayla explains. "The whole cast has been so amazing in putting this play together in only 3 weeks time! I am so proud of them all."

In addition to co-writing and directing the play, 13-year-old Rachel stands out in her performance as Vaysha.

"As far as the creativity and how to act, there is no formal training," their father Mark Collins, who plays the role of John Jackabee, said of his daughters' 25 cast members. Of those, Central Valley seniors Luke Winslow and Evander Cobbs have signed on for the performance. Rayla adds, "A lot of the kids have just been helping each other. That's been really nice." Not to be left out of the family involvement is the girl's mother, Sherri, who's busy in the background with promotion and making sure things run smoothly.

Although there is a message of forgiveness, viewers should not expect any heavy-handed preaching or outright religious overtones. *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party* is an interactive evening of fun. After a nice Victorian dinner, guests are transported back in time to the Jackabee family manor. Provided with written clues and by interacting with the costumed and masked performers, the audience attempts to solve the mystery that unfolds around them. Guests also have an opportunity to dance with the players and may purchase optional masks for a small additional fee.

The creativity of the Collins sisters is not limited to writing and to the thespian arts. Rachel also enjoys dancing (a talent that shines in the play), modeling and playing softball. Her older sister enjoys drawing, singing, digital art and does beautiful work as a professional photographer. "She also designs all her own websites," points out Sherri, who helps out with such things as editing the photos and shipping product in her daughter's business, Rayla Kays Photography. What this writer finds to be incredible is that Rayla first picked up a camera only six years ago.

Rachel is also involved and their father helps with inspiration and advice: "My Dad is my biggest critic," Rayla writes on her website, [www.raylakaysphotography.com](http://www.raylakaysphotography.com). "He has always told me straight up and I have learned to take his advice seriously."

One truly inspiring work of Rayla's is the cast photo for *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party*. "She'd found this beautiful empty ballroom and she photographed that," her mother told us. "Each of the cast members were photographed separately against a solid wall and added later using Photoshop. It took her hours, but she did it." A color version of this incredible piece can be found at <http://hiddenmysteryparty09.webs.com/thecast.htm>, another Rayla-designed site.

The athousandroads Productions players, joined by Cobbs and Winslow, have previously performed *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party* as a fundraiser for the school's senior night graduation party. Tickets for the April 17<sup>th</sup> performance are \$50 and are tax deductible. For more information contact Becky Riordan at 921-6443.



-Text and Photos by Lloyd N. Phillips

**Top Left: Mrs. Knightly (Shayla Oliver) chats with Silvia Jackabee (Chandra Tesone) in a scene from *Hidden: The Masquerade Mystery Dinner Party*, as Jess the maid (Monica Thomas) looks on. Athousandroads Productions will present the play on April 17<sup>th</sup> at The Mirabeau Park Hotel as a fundraiser for the Central Valley High School DECA program**

**Bottom Left: Jackson Knightly (Luke Winslow) vents his anger at John Jackabee (Mark Collins) in the final scenes of *Hidden* as Lilly Madison Smith (Monica Thomas) and Vaysha Jackabee (Rachel Collins) look on.**

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*photo by Lloyd N. Phillips*

*Artist Loretta West of the Color Garden Studio answers visitors questions during her April First Friday exhibition at Avenue West Gallery in Spokane.*

*Of particular interest was her plexi glass paintings. They contain beautiful coloring and intriguing abstract shapes scraped into the paint.*

*Also of note at Avenue West was the work "Salamander Inheritance" by Dennis Smith. This scratchboard mixed media piece is full of astonishing detail.*

*Jack Lantz, another painter at the gallery is creating scenes full of light. Many of his portraits are what the best photographers strive for with natural light and often fail to reproduce. The piece, "Crosswalk Politics" was especially beautiful.*





*photo by Lloyd N. Phillips*

***(above) Art Music and More-- Once again this First Friday must-attend venue did not disappoint: painters and potters, musicians and poets, a spinning wheel demonstration and an audience of all ages, this creative energy resource offered something for all. The \$3 admission charge is a small price to pay for the entertainment here.***

***(right) Local solo musician Brandy Perry (center) joins Alchemey Within onstage before a packed audience at Art, Music and More. Check them out at [www.myspace.com/seth7384](http://www.myspace.com/seth7384) as a resource for both Spokane arts community activities and their own upcoming events and shows.***



*photo by Lloyd N. Phillips*





photo by Lloyd N. Phillips



photo by Lloyd N. Phillips

(above) A spinning wheel demonstration with Salene Sheridan at Art Music and More.

(left) "Assembled Memories," a first showing from Spokane artist Steph Sammons. In each of her assembled portraits, Ms. Sammons incorporates a section of her personal life into that of her subject. Pictured is "Britches Too Big" an assembled glimpse into the life of her father and a daughter's admiration. The First Friday artist reception was very well attended, with live music provided by guitarists John K and Hidde Hanenburg. "Assembled Memories" continues through the end of April at Sante Restaurant & Charcuterie next to Auntie's bookstore in downtown Spokane.





*photo by Tyson Habein*

*(left and bottom) Empyrean Coffee House hosted a First Friday art show and concert. The concert featured Kaylee Cole and a special guest violist, and the house was packed.*

*The artwork by Tiffany Patterson was wonderful and very different from other pieces seen this First Friday. Specifically of note were the mixed media doll series "Dangerous Dangers." Both the dolls and the paintings, were very surrealist. The work was Salvador Dali meets Alice in Wonderland.*



*photo by Tyson Habein*



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It's convention time again and the 2009 Spokane Comicon promises to be the biggest and best show yet. For one, the May 30th event will be held in the Student Union Building (Bld 17) at Spokane Falls Community College, a much larger venue with much more parking space than in previous years. "It's also easier to find," says show promoter Nathan O'Brien. The larger area also translates into more vendors, tables and guests.

In addition to a separate artist's alley, a question and answer session with the various artists and guests, and an instructional how-to area (all new to this year's event), O'Brien has added something else. "Another new thing we have is gaming. John at Merlyn's is sponsoring the tournament and the gaming club at SFCC is helping to run it."

The costume contest, always a highlight of any

comic convention, is a fun event and a chance for visitors of all ages to dress as their favorite character and compete for various prizes. "We're looking to expand on the costume contest," says O'Brien. Now in its 2nd year, prizes for the contest, scheduled for 4pm, include gift certificates donated by The Comic Book Shop and monetary prizes, as yet to be determined, for the best adult and best children's costumes. Even without entering the contest, dressing up always offers a good photo-op for both the public and the participants.

Recently, a big boost to the comicbook industry came last year when President Barack Obama announced that he was a collector. As a result, publisher Marvel Comics issued a Spiderman/Obama cover book in honor of the President and his favorite character. Already in its 5th printing, and each with a different cover, a mint copy of the inauguration day issue (with the banner on



the cover) is already fetching \$80 and copies of the original printing are scarce to come by.

O'Brien too is a collector and recalls his first comic as a really old and tattered copy of Captain America: "But to me it was priceless," he says. "Comics have always been a hobby, a passion for me."

How the 30-year-old former Langley, Washington resident came about promoting a Comicon is a rather unconventional story. Having spent eight years as a retail manager in a totally unrelated field, the closest O'Brien got to anything comic-related was while attending Edmunds Community College, where he concentrated on art. A job at Gonzaga University brought him to Spokane.

"When I first moved here from Seattle in August 2006, I went looking for comics and was talking with Craig [the owner of The Comic Book Shop]. I asked about comic conventions and when the next local one might be and was shocked to find that the second largest city in Washington didn't have a show to call their own. I was informed that there hadn't been a comic convention in Spokane in over 16 years!"

As the organized sort, O'Brien took this as a personal quest, an opportunity to bring a bit of pop and comic book culture to the Lilac City. He remembers putting together the first show: "I took it upon myself. I sent an e-mail to (Portland comic artist) Matthew Clark about the possibility of doing a show and asked if he'd like to come out, and his response was very positive. From there I did additional research. I put together a budget and just went from there and the guys at the Emerald City Comicon [in Seattle] were very helpful. In all, I put that first show together in 10 months."

"We had over 300 fans come out and support the show," O'Brien writes at his website [www.spokanecomicon.com](http://www.spokanecomicon.com). "Everyone who attended had a great time. Kids and adults left with bags of comics, collectibles, smiles on their faces and great memories." Following that first venture, he made a list of pros and cons for what would grow to become the Inland Northwest's only comic book & pop culture show. And while he had a laundry list from that first event, attendance figures for the second convention held last year tripled.

Another improvement over the previous shows is the support O'Brien has received from the comic art community in the form of help and advertising. Sasquad, a comic book club at Spokane Community College, has a running ad on their reader board outside Building One on campus. In addition to several local sponsors, comic book giants DC & Darkhorse Comics have both signed on as national sponsors. An advertisement for the show has also been placed in the 'Upcoming Shows and Cons' section of Wizard #211, a monthly price guide and comic-related information magazine; and while he's doubtful that anyone will come visit from the show, G4 television's "Attack of the Show" is now following the Spokane Comicon on O'Brien's Twitter site. He also wishes to acknowledge the help he's received from the SFCC student government in the way of help and advertising; the donating, organizing and helping out so that they too can be a part of the show.

As a way of giving back, O'Brien says, "We will have some tables worth supporting such as the Hero Initiative." Hero Initiative is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping comic book veterans by providing financial aid for emergency situations, medical care, necessities of life, and a lending hand to get them back on their feet. "All of the money they collect at their table for items sold or for their own raffle will go towards helping that organization."

"Another great cause is with the support of the 501st Legion. They are a local group of fans who dress up in real Star Wars costumes and this year the Spokane Comicon is proud to help support such a noble cause. During our show, bring in any new or used DVD or book to the Garrison Titan 501st Legion table and receive a raffle ticket for a chance to win a valuable prize (TBA) donated by Merlyn's Card and Comics. All DVD's and books collected will be donated to our brave troops overseas."

There will also be several student clubs from SFCC providing a variety of concessions. All profits from those sales will go back into their respective clubs.

While the show's list of guests and artists is too lengthy for this piece, some names include Art Thibert, one of the industry's most prolific & influential writers; Steve Lieber, a comic writer and graphic novelist best known as artist of Whiteout, recently adapted by Warner Brothers and starring Kate Beckinsale; comic book writer and lead singer of the Seattle electronica band SD6, Brandon Jerwa; and Seattle film maker and author Wayne Spitzer, originally from Spokane. Spitzer will also be screening a 20 minute independent short film. A complete schedule of activities will be published at the website.

Admission to the one day event is only \$5 and the first 100 paid admissions will each receive a gift bag of goodies, which will include 35mm film cells from Watchmen. "With the difficult economic times, I wanted to keep the admission price the same as last year, so that it would be affordable for everyone," the promoter wrote in an e-mail. Children under 10 years-of-age will be admitted free with a paid adult admission.

For a complete list of guests, artists, activities and more information go to [www.spokanecomicon.com](http://www.spokanecomicon.com) or contact [spokanecomicon@yahoo.com](mailto:spokanecomicon@yahoo.com).

**-Text and photo by Lloyd N. Phillips**

**(upper left) Spokane Comic convention promoter Nathan O'Brien displays a signed Batman/Superman comic.**



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Dear Mr. Rossdale:

No, wait, we don't have to be so formal . . .

A

Hey, Gavin. We can talk, right? You and I go way back, all the way back to 1996. Bush played *Saturday Night Live*, and I watched wondering where you'd been all my life. You remember the other guys, right? Nigel, Dave, Robin — The four of you created some of my favorite songs. Good times, man.

L

You should call them. Now. Before you release any more crappy solo albums. I love you, but honestly? *Call them.*

K

Oh, don't think I haven't given the solo stuff a chance. I heard the big single, "Love Remains the Same," on the radio, and I thought, "Well, it's a little lighter than some of your other stuff, but it's not horrible." I bought *Wanderlust* the week it came out. In fact, I bought the Institute album too, 2005's *Distort Yourself*. That was more or less a solo album, except Helmet was your backing band.

To write this, I played *Distort Yourself* for the first time since . . . Well, 2005. It's not anything special, but God, it at least it rocks out. There are shades of the Bush album, *Golden State*, even. You thank Dave Sardy in the liner notes, who did a great job producing that 2001 album, but why didn't you have him produce this one too? Scheduling conflict? Was it a money thing? The man's expensive to book, I know, but drop the cash.

?

Now, I know you sobered up, settled down and became a father. That's no excuse for growing so boring. You shouldn't encourage people to think of you only as Mr. Gwen Stefani. Because that's what you're doing, playing light rock that's a little too comfortable in crappy Richard Gere movies and *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*. Your dreaminess will only get you so far, my friend, especially now that you've cut your hair.



## :Compulsive Chronicles:

And let's talk about the hair, yeah? I have a theory about musicians and hair, and it goes much like the Samson story. When dreadlocked musicians decide to cut their hair, the music suffers. Lenny Kravitz had the kickass "Are You Gonna Go My Way" with dreads, and syrupy, dull power ballads without. Black Eyed Peas were an interesting independent hip-hop group, then one lost the dreads and they hired Fergie. And while you never had dreadlocks yourself, you had your Hungarian sheepdog, Winston. He was an adorable mess of black dreads, and I was sorry to hear when he died in 2004.

You lost the dreads, man. And then you cut your once lovely curls. I understand there are hairline issues to consider, but one must work hard to counteract the devastating effects to your music. Because while you didn't hire Fergie, you did something even worse.

You hired Katy Perry.

*Katy Perry.* No other name in the music business fills me with such burning, bubbling annoyance as hers. So how did this go? You write your songs, think *I could use some female backing vocals on these. I know, Shirley Manson.*

Okay, no problems there. A little Shirley Manson never hurt anybody, especially now that her red hair's back. (Remember, Garbage's worst album is the one where she had short, blonde hair.)

*But wait, you think, this record's lacking . . . what is it . . . Oh, desperation! We need some attention-mongering fakery on these mediocre songs. That'll help SO MUCH.*

I'm sorry. I don't mean to be rude, but Katy Perry just has that effect on me. She's not even really the problem. It's just the music itself, what surrounds your disjointed stream-of-consciousness style writing. You are a rock *singer*; your guitar skills were never your strength. Nigel Pulsford far surpassed you with what he could do, and the Bush albums were better for it. Surrounding yourself with great musicians puts less of a focus on what comes tumbling from your brain.

Because while you can write some great lines like *"I'm riddled by you / I could've been better,"* like you did in the Bush song "Monkey," you often tend to shoot for too much. You push your metaphors too far.

How am I supposed to defend lines like *"Buddha, He was busy / Jesus wasn't in,"* or *"Hamburgers so that we stay alive / but Happy Meals means something died"*? Did someone honestly listen to you sing those lines and keep a straight face?

Oh, Gavin. I want to support your music, I really do. Whenever one of your solo songs pops up on shuffle, it is with great pain that I skip forward. I still love every Bush album, even the remix one, *Deconstructed*. If I can love those songs with just as much ferocity as the teenager I once was, I can only assume that it is within that band where you find your magic.

You've been playing a lot of tennis in your downtime, and I like seeing you in the stands at Roger Federer's matches. Tennis is clearly important to you, since you thank at least five tennis-related people in the *Wanderlust* liner notes. So can we strike a deal? You, me and all the other fans out there who want to love your songs again — Can we work something out?

Until you and the guys from Bush decide to record an album again, stick to tennis. Play with your kids, do the celebrity tournaments, continue supporting Federer. Do whatever you want, just don't make any more disappointing music.

Sincerely, Your Longtime Fan



*Sara Habein once traveled 800 miles with one of her best friends, her now-husband, and her brother to see Bush play at The Fillmore in Denver, Colorado. She may or may not think that because she grabbed Gavin at that concert, she has any right to speak to him in this way.*

*For Sara's Top 10 Bush songs and evidence of her obsessive teenage ways, please visit <http://glorifiedloveletters.blogspot.com>*



# Accepting Advertisements

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