

LOCAL MUSIC AND MORE

- May 4:** The opera *Carmen* will be performed at the Tennessee Theater at 8:00pm. Tickets can be purchased at the box office.
- May 4-12:** The Arts & Culture Alliance is proud to present an exhibit showcasing the work of developing artists from the ceramics department at the University of Tennessee at the Emporium Center for Arts & Culture. Gallery hours are Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00pm and Saturday 11:00-3:00pm.
- May 5:** World Grotto will have an International Dance Party starting at 10:00pm
- May 5:** Southland Books is hosting an open house, celebrating its new location on 801 E. Broadway in Maryville. There will be face painting, storytelling, and crafts all afternoon and a live band will perform at 7pm. All are welcome!
- May 6:** *Carmen* will be performed at the Tennessee Theater. Doors open at 1:30pm. Tickets available at the box office.
- May 8:** John Legend will be performing at the Tennessee Theater at 8:00pm. Tickets are \$39.50 and \$55 and can be purchased at the box office.
- May 10:** Nova Delinquents will perform after Sundown in the City with the Brazilian Girls at Preservation Pub. Show starts at 10pm.
- May 10:** The Maryville College Dance Ensemble will perform at the MC Theater. Free for MC students and \$5 for non-students.
- May 13:** Michael Glabicki of Rusted Root with Brandy Robinson will play at Blue Cats. Doors open at 8:00pm. Tickets are available at the door.
- May 13:** The Old Harp Shape Note Sings at 6:30pm at the Laurel Theater, 16th and Laurel Ave., Knoxville, TN. For more information contact Tina at 865-982-7777.
- May 17:** Sundown in the City, presents Gin Blossoms and Vertigo in Market Square. Music Starts at 7:00pm.
- May 18-26:** The Arts & Culture Alliance is presenting an exhibit showcasing the work of developing artists from Monart School of the Arts at the Emporium Center for Arts & Culture. Gallery hours are Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00pm and Saturday 11:00-3:00pm.
- May 28:** The Old Harp Shape Note Sings at 7:00pm at Broadway United Methodist Church, on Broadway in Maryville, TN. For more information contact Nancy at 865-983-7631.
- May 31:** Sundown in the City, presents Ozomatli, Toubab Krewe in Market Square. Music Starts at 7:00pm.

For More Information:

Arts & Culture Alliance - www.knoxalliance.com
 Tennessee Theatre - www.tennesseetheatre.com

Blue Cats - www.bluecatslive.com Preservation Pub - www.preservationpub.com
 World Grotto - www.myspace.com/worldgrotto

May 2007		BRACKINS BLUES CLUB					Music Schedule for May 2007 www.brackinsbar.com	
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
	Acoustic Jam no cover	1	2 Blues Jam no cover	3 HOLLOWTREE no cover	4 Tri-County Trio \$5 cover	5 Electric Voodoo \$6 cover		
6	7	8	9 WATERMELON SLIM & THE WORKERS \$10 cover	10 The Sons of Guns no cover	11 Jobe \$6 cover	12 Jubel Kane \$6 cover		
13	14	15	16 CANDYE KANE \$8 cover	17 HOLLOWTREE no cover	18 Kelly Richie \$8 cover	19 Blue Mother Tupelo \$6 cover		
20	21	22	23 Blues Jam no cover	24	25 Smoker/ Mirrors \$5 cover	26 E.G. Kight \$10 cover		
27	28	29	30 Blues Jam no cover	31 HOLLOWTREE no cover				

May 2007

Blount's Alternative Voice

underground



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- Grounded Coffee and More
- Little River Trading Co.
- Maryville College Library
- Southland Bookstore

Cover Photo By Diane Hicks:
Translation of text:

*“The Domain of the island of Cuba is, and by rights should be free and independent”
Resolution in consumation
with the congress of the United States of America.
19 April 1898*

Cover photograph by Diane Hicks

Augustana and the Indie Rock Genre

by Rebekah Lührs

The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of Augustana is “refreshing.” The fluid melodies and variety of styles blend together to create a fresh and full of life sound in the band’s first major album, *All the Stars and Boulevards*. The band is made up of five members, Dan Layus, vocals, piano, and guitar; Jared Palomar, bass and vocals; Justin South, drums; and Chris Sachtleben, lead guitar and mandolin; and John Vincent, keys and vocals. Their first album, *All the Stars and Boulevards*, was recorded in Atlanta with Bendan O’Brien and came out in the winter of 2004. The range of musical styles flows from a more hard rock style as in “Are we Gonna Make it?” to the smooth and dramatic “Boston,” where Layus’s vocal style is gracefully complimented by his vivacious yet soothing piano accompaniment.

Augustana started in Greenville Illinois headed by Dan Layus who is the leading vocalist and guitar player. Part of the group dropped out of school and moved to Los Angeles, California to start a musical career. It hasn’t been an easy road for the group, as I heard on an interview, they have been “picking up their fans person at a time.”

I had the opportunity to see Augustana live at Blue Cats in Knoxville in April when their tour came through with Vega 4. After listening to their CD *Boulevards* for several months straight, I was eager to see how they performed live. Live, it was incredible to see the way the members of the group performed. Sure, their job is to put on a show, but they made it clear through the way they performed that this show was first and foremost about making and sharing what they have created. The lead guitar player, Sachtleben, was wild and lively with his long hair lashing back and forth to the beat. He was so consumed with the music that it became more of a ritual dance to his own strumming than a means to impress a crowd. The dedication to the music was what I admired the most about the show

When it comes down to it, if you like indie rock, you’ll love Augustana! ...but wait. *What is indie rock and how do I know if I like it?*

Indie rock is actually a genre of independent rock music that is not necessarily heard by mainstream popular audiences. Most of the groups that lie under the umbrella of Indie Rock record with independent labels that support less well-known bands. Many of these bands are referred to as “underground,” since they address social issues, and choose not to get caught up in the pop culture that seems to take the creativity out of music. An example of a popular once indie pop group is Death Cab

for Cutie. Starting off as an independent group under an independent label they went mainstream and signed with a major record label, after which many admirers saw them as sell-outs. However, independence and musical differentiation are constantly compromised for fame and money in the music industry.

Independent labels give the artists much more freedom to develop their musical talents. With large record companies there are images to keep and businesses to run and groups can compromise eclectic musical style to fit the conventional image. Indie bands such as Sigor Ros, use less common instruments that create sounds that the overall pop music culture would not find as, well, mainstream. Other indie rock groups include Bright Eyes, Modest Mouse, and The Decemberists



Photograph by Rebekah Lührs

As for Augustana, they are on the rise so keep a look out! VH-1 even said that Augustana “stands out from today’s pop music with a classic, accessible sound.”



Lead Singer Dan Layus
Photograph by Rebekah Lührs

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB!
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CULTURE SHOCK

Blades of Glory: Well, if Nancy Kerrigan says it's okay...

by Emily Winsauer

Blades of Glory, a figure-skating parody about a same-sex pairs team, is the most recent of Will Ferrell's string of ridiculously-premised and embarrassingly funny spoofs. True to the formula of its predecessors, *Anchorman* and *Talladega Nights*, *Blades of Glory* takes an outrageous concept and runs with it, going for every possible gag. The film is the story of two figure-skating rivals, Chazz Michael Michaels (Will Ferrell) and Jimmy MacElroy (Jon Heder), who are banned from their sport for life after they get into a fight on the podium after having tied for the gold medal. Three years later, both have day jobs they hate and neither expects ever to skate again. However, just before the next major international competition, a crazed fan shows Jimmy a loophole which allows the two to compete as a paired skating team. Donning an inordinate amount of sparkly spandex, Chazz and Jimmy return to the rink and turn the world of figure skating on its head with the help of Jimmy's old coach and a flamboyant choreographer.

Most of the good comedy in this movie comes from the over-the-top mockery of the world of competitive figure skating. Having watched the sport since childhood, I thoroughly enjoyed the parody of the sheer excesses of skating – outrageous costumes, perfectly coiffed hair, intense training, and even announcers that wax poetic in their commentary (one reporter compared Chazz to “a stack of classic euro-porn”). The narrated mock-montages during each competition will strike a chord with anyone who is familiar with Bob Costas's coverage of the Olympics, as will the numerous cameos from figure-skating legends, including Scott Hamilton, Brian Boitano, Nancy Kerrigan, Dorothy Hamill, and Sasha Cohen. The film parodies recent skating scandals, notoriously bad costume choices, and infamous athletes, making it all the more fun for skating fans. On the other hand, if you don't know figure skating from ice dancing, you might be a little lost. However, if you like Will Ferrell, you'll be fine and you can leave the Lutzes and

Salchows for someone else.

Not everything in the film works well: some jokes flop awkwardly, like the creepy incestuous brother-sister pairs team played by the real-life couple Will Arnett and Amy Poehler, but the film's dynamic is saved by the combative chemistry between Ferrell and Heder. Their constant brotherly bickering through the first half of the film is undeniably fun to watch and anyone with siblings will be able to relate. Heder's effeminate innocence seems much more natural (in spite of shiny lip gloss) than Ferrell's drunken oversexed bluster. Jenna Fischer of *The Office* plays Heder's love interest, the timid and earnest Katie, but the relationship lacks spark.

Compared to some of Ferrell's other comedies, *Blades of Glory* was inconsistently funny. At times, I laughed nonstop through entire scenes, but at other times I found myself wondering who thought it was a good idea to have Chazz whip out his jock strap and use it to slide down a cable onto the rink. The film was directed by the duo behind Geico's popular caveman commercials, which explains the deadpan approach to some of the elements of physical comedy. All together, *Blades of Glory* was pretty hit-or-miss, but with more hits than misses, and I'm glad I went to see it. However, if you want to see Will Ferrell's best comedy of 2007, do an internet search for “The Landlord,” a hilarious

home-movie starring Ferrell and a friend's 2-year-old. It's comic genius.

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Is The Internet Under Attack?

by Brian Phelps

On the internet there is a debate raging over the protection of net neutrality, a concept that has become increasingly important over recent years. This concept on its surface is very simple. When an individual is connected to the world wide web, he or she is able to access any website equally. If one wants to access Google, then fine. Prefer Yahoo for your search engine? Still not a problem. The internet is based on the idea that all information is equal. If I want to access the news, I can go anywhere I want. Google News, CNN, independent blogs and alternative media outlets are all viable and equally accessible options. But there is a concern that this freedom may be under attack. The website, www.savetheinternet.com, hosts a coalition of thousands of non-profit organizations, businesses and bloggers from the right and the left who are concerned about the loss of net neutrality on the web. According to these citizens, the freedom of the internet is under attack.

According to this coalition and many others who are fighting the battle for net neutrality, Verizon, AT&T, Comcast and Bell-South are seeking to introduce a new tiered internet where not all information will be treated equally. Internet service providers will be able to decide which information is prioritized and allowed to be easily accessed, while other information will be forced to a slow lane that will be difficult to access. This could have many consequences for the internet as it is understood today. In the commercial sphere, communications companies would be able to forge partnerships with other companies so that these favored companies would be the only sources available for that product. This might seem fair at first until one considers that such action would eliminate competition as the barriers to entry would be nearly impossible for upstart dot com companies wanting to overcome. Politically, public discourse would be weakened even further as online media consolidation would occur and only large corporate media information would be readily available, while all alternative forms of online media would be greatly marginalized.

The communications industry defends the need for this tiered system, however, by pointing out the fact that they have paid for the pipes that make the internet run and because of this, they should have a right to charge people for them. Further, the communications industry claims that a tiered system is necessary to eliminate ‘traffic jams’ from happening as the internet becomes congested. Lastly, and the strongest point, is that allowing net neutrality will stunt innovation towards a better internet. If communications companies are not able to make money off of their services, there will be no incentive to make those services better. By allowing Quality of Service (QoS, basically the tiered system), there will be a fast lane and a slow lane on the internet, with the alternative being only a slow lane as congestion increases.

So who is making the better argument? Is the internet under attack by communications corporations who want to earn more profits, or are these companies simply making a sensible decision about internet overload?

Opponents of net neutrality say that preventing communications companies to control the information allowed on the internet amounts to unwanted government regulation. Such thought seems nostalgic to the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Then, it was argued similarly that the government should not regulate the communications industry, and with the bill's passing, the industry was greatly deregulated. This deregulation was supposed to be good; it promised to boost the economy by \$2 trillion and create 1.5 million jobs. Yet, since this bill passed, the 1.5 million new jobs became 0.5 million jobs lost and the \$2 trillion promised boost more closely represented the fall. Further, the amount of radio stations and television stations individual companies could own was no longer limited and cable

rates were no longer regulated. As a result, media has consolidated, destroying minority voices and creating a small group of larger companies that control nearly all of the radio and television stations. It is not unforeseeable to assume that without some regulation, such problems could affect the internet as well.

Moreover, it needs to be decided who owns the internet. While the communications companies claim ownership of the pipes, billions of tax dollars were used through government subsidies to build these. Therefore, it rather seems fair to say that the pipes actually belong to the public so the argument that communication companies deserve a return on their investment in the pipes seems debunked. It's not as though they are not making a great deal of money just selling use rights to the pipes already. Further, to say that innovation will stop without these extra means of profiting begs the question of how innovation has occurred without them for the past 15 years. Better services are provided and if they are worth it, they will be bought. In the meantime, let the internet grow as it has been and don't restrict the information that can be received online because this will marginalize the normal non-profit-seeking voices who also deserve to be heard.

For further information check out: <http://www.savetheinternet.com>, <http://www.democraticmedia.org/issues/JCnetneutrality.html>, http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/08/02/net_neut_opinions/

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# Editorial: Building Communities

by *Holley Roberts*

Americans should find themselves in a state of genuine concern about the meaning and subsequent applications of the word community. Political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists and numerous other thinkers all make viable comments on the subject.

For example, Robert Putnam writes in *Bowling Alone* of the seemingly inevitable decline in community involvement. He later asserts in *Better Together* the notion that community involvement is merely changing its face rather than declining altogether. Whether or not such change is good or useful eludes the reader.

With respect to the wide variation of social and political commentary on such trends, it is necessary to establish a basic understanding of the idea of community. Clearly, the concept is not one whose definition everyone fully agrees upon. Still, most relevant frameworks reflect themes of sharing and reciprocity coupled with goals of connectedness and support.

In the spirit of the social sciences, *The Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas* defines community as "the sense of identity, purpose, and companionship that comes from belonging to a particular place, organization, or social group." This, of course, is one among countless theoretical manifestations of the word. Speaking to the goal of social change, *The Better World Handbook* characterizes community as "a process by which we open up and begin to embrace others as part of our extended family."

A basic assumption here is that strong communities possess inherent value. When people work together, share resources and look out for the well-being of others, the ideal result is positive, in that all who are involved gain a sense of belonging. So just how strong is the global community, the American community, the Blount County community? When observing structural inequalities that appear to result from experiences of isolation and instances of discrimination, it is sometimes difficult to find positive light in the question.

Suicide and crime rates among marginalized and disempowered groups in America strongly suggest that community identity is either lacking or misplaced. Even schools have become settings of unrest and questionable safety for students. Children are often misdirected at an early age and end up alienating themselves or their peers based on issues of social class, race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

To exemplify continuing problems with civil inequality, studies conducted by Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays PFLAG conclude that students hear an average of 25 anti-gay slurs every day. The organization also reports that gay and lesbian youth demonstrate a three-to-seven times higher rate of attempted suicide than other youth.

On a similar note, sensationalism in the mass media operates to sustain feelings of xenophobia toward Central American immigrants and individuals of Middle Eastern origin, especially related to the War in Iraq. Furthermore, women and racial minorities continue to earn less money than white males at the same jobs.

However, these issues only scratch the surface when considering the many threats posed to community within American society. Environmental degradation is yet another crucial ill that citizens must address. In many ways, nature is the most fundamental avenue by which individuals elicit larger connections within the human community. If a society fails to adequately care for its natural environment, it cannot hope to sustain an acceptable quality of life for its inhabitants, nor can it pretend to exist as a valuable entity within the global context.

As *The Better World Handbook* points out, people often "isolate and barricade themselves in protective, exclusive neighborhoods" in response to fears about crime and perceptions of declining social values. The writers claim that

such responses are detrimental to community development and interpersonal engagement. Thus, a vicious cycle develops wherein people choose to run from social problems rather than face them directly, a tendency which merely serves to worsen the initial situation.

Without adopting an entirely pessimistic stance on American communities, one can still be critical. Fostering a sense of community requires great effort. Individuals and small groups may feel inadequate in their abilities to contribute, but such feelings distance perfectly capable people from the reality of the task at hand. Social change is initiated at the grassroots level and moves outward. A single neighborhood is capable of creating a ripple effect by following some basic tenets of communicative action.

If American society is to develop more substantive communities, it must redefine its needs. Capitalist ideals and materialist culture hide people within the confines of their possessions and separate them from nature. Yet, meaningful connections can be reestablished and strengthened in a number of relatively simple ways.

Namely, America must focus on its youth and on the environment. These two issues are undeniably connected. Children are easily influenced in positive directions, if only their mentors encourage them to embrace diversity at every turn and to respect the natural environment upon which their future survival depends. Only through actively compassionate demonstrations of social responsibility will the noble aims of inclusiveness and respect, and thus of strong community, approach attainment.

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## May 2007

but upon closer inspection, are merely for show, like a Hollywood movie set. Many of the automobiles in Cuba are old American cars from the 1950s, which, through ingenuity and the black market, are kept running. Late model Mercedes Benz are used as taxis for tourists or Communist Party members.

Cuban nationals are permitted to enter the lobbies of hotels, but not the hotel restaurants or guest rooms. They are also not permitted in most tourist areas, such as the famous beach, Varadero. They are subjected to harassment by uniformed police, at any time, for any reason, or no reason. The media continually blasts the US as "imperialists, assassins, and infidels."

Virtually everyone is forced to engage in some type of "criminal" activity to survive. This could be diverting goods from their work place for resale on the streets, prostitution or targeting tourists for bribes. The phrases heard daily included "*hay que resolver*" roughly translated meaning "we have to deal with it" and "*a la izquierda*" or working "on the left" or black market.

A dual monetary system exists, since Castro now allows US dollars (those caught with them the day before the change are still incarcerated) in addition to the Cuban pesos for Cubans. Tourists are charged in US dollars or euros, and the Cubans in pesos. Assuming an exchange rate of roughly 25 Cuban pesos for one dollar, the monthly salary of a doctor is \$16 dollars. Our group's driver, a general surgeon, and his wife, a pediatrician, had a



***Playing for Tourists***

combined monthly income of 600 pesos (\$24). He has been forced to resort to alternative means of supporting his family, by serving as a driver for tourists.

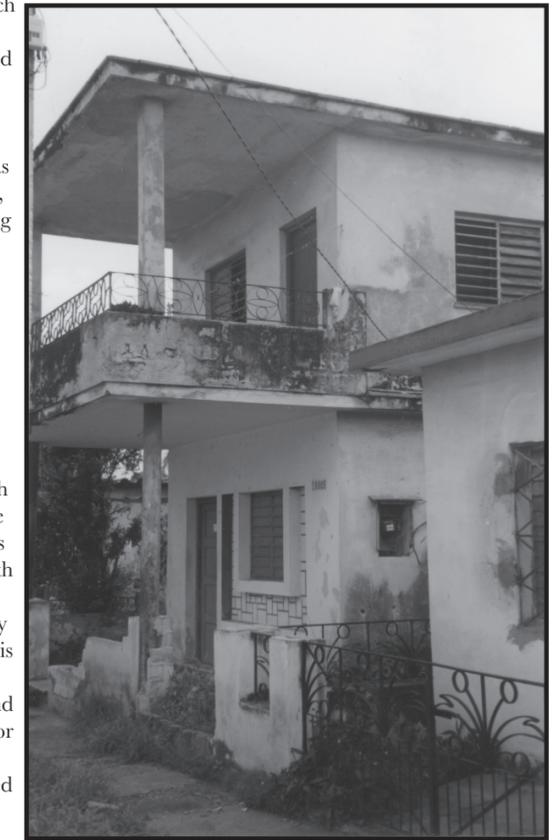
Despite the poverty and police state situation, the people of Cuba are warm, friendly, and quick to help one another. Compassion often stems from shared struggles. The people are tired of living this way and many no longer believe in the revolution. They are able to hear radio and television broadcasts

from Miami, which contrast sharply with their lives and world.

Illicit emigration continues, as it has through the years, with people risking their lives with alien smugglers, homemade rafts, falsified documents, and whatever means possible to flee the island. Preparations are underway in south Florida for a large exodus of Cubans following the death of Fidel Castro.

Some say the US Embargo is like Swiss cheese—"full of holes", and hurts only the poor people. Oil was recently discovered in Cuba, and nickel and cobalt mines are also there. Many other countries are already present in Cuba and are establishing businesses there. Whether the US Embargo will be lifted or modified once Fidel Castro dies remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the Cuban government tries to balance the need for economic loosening against the desire for firm political control.

The phrase "so near and yet so far," takes on a deep personal meaning when comparing life in Cuba to the freedoms and privileges we enjoy here.



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