

SPLURGE!

Volume 1, Issue 2 • Oct. 25th, 2008 • \$0

Helping The Middle-Class
Come To Terms With
Themselves Since 2008



New This Week:

- Shopping still widely reputed to cause brain paralyzing apathy, amidst fears that it may be linked to Syphilis!

- We're still in a recession!

OR NOT?

- Heath Ledger's 100 foot Memorial Statue has been restricted from public use when young preteens began flinging themselves off in surprising numbers!

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In This Issue of 'Splurge':
More Articles! • More Monologues!
More Subversion!



SPLURGE!

Volume 1, Issue 2 • Oct. 25th, 2008 • \$0

Welcome to Splurge 2. It's been a little while.

Splurge 2 continues where Splurge 1 left off; exposing the externalities of corporate consumer culture using satire, parody, and black humor. Everything you've come to love about splurge since it's inception into the published world. This issue contains a variety of expression and thought, and it is my hope not only to continue the mandate and intent of this zine, but also to broaden the scope of vision for you, the reader, to see into the world that the contributors live and express themselves in. We all feel the urge to splurge. And some of us wonder why. Do you?

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disclaimer: Splurge is a work of satire and parody. Get over it.

Welcome To Pure Skin



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"Beauty Starts Here."

Al-Qaeda Promises Friendlier Fire

OMAR MOUALLEM - STAFF WRITER

In an effort to improve public relations, Al-Qaeda is taking steps to squash their image as blood thirsty evil doers. The announcement was made Monday on bin Laden's flashy My Space page. "In the name of Allah, the most gracious, most merciful, I announce fun... for everybody! Beginning this month, my Jihadist brothers will be embarking on a happier, less maniacal campaign to release us of our negative image. I have ordered my wives to bake 15 dozen sponge cakes and 50 pounds of baklava to inaugurate the first annual Al-Qaeda Bake Sale and Picnic."

Al-Qaeda members and their wives are allowed to bring up to 18 children to the event. Aside from food, there is promise of games and crafts. Attendees can expect a very special appearance by Fatima Al-Zahrani, winner of the first ever Miss Jihadist pageant.

The majority of terrorists are in favor of the rapidly spreading benevolence. In a newly released martyr video, an unnamed suicide bomber - and recent recipient of 72 virgins - followed his prayer and oath with a juggling act.

But not all of Al-Qaeda's members are pleased. Mustafa Ahmed Al-Hisawi, a 9/11 financier, spoke angrily of the efforts for a positive image. "Picnics? Spongecake? Where is the fun in that? This is blasphemous. What my brothers have forgotten is the sweet ecstasy of a hostage crisis, the thrill of hijacking, and orgasmic death rattle of an infidel."

While some may call it softening, or a propaganda tool to recruit toddlers, Al-Zawahiri re-assures us that it is all done in the name of Allah. "Be comforted, oh Great One, that all will be invested in the total destruction of



America and its allies."

Homeland Security Puts Wu-Tang Back On Terror List

OMAR MOUALLEM - STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON, DC - Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced today that the Wu-Tang Clan has been placed back on the list of terrorist organizations. Wu-Tang leader RZA, a.k.a. Bobby Digital, is known to the FBI as Robert Diggs. Since the Wu's assembly in 1992, RZA has been arming members globally with so-called 'phat beats'.

Chertoff says the Wu has been a national security threat since the 1993 release of "Protect Ya Neck", thought to be a beheading reference. But between 2001 and 2005 they were not a priority because it was believed the clan was inactive. "After they dropped The Iron Flag, their name was off the radar for a long time," says Chert-

off. "But when Mr. Diggs released The Wu-Tang Manual, our antennas went up." The manual is a manifesto of the organization that covers everything from their martial arts skills, to drug use, to the art of chess. Chertoff, milking his metaphor, added, "frequencies changed".

Authorities believe that by killing RZA, they could disband the entire clan. They warn that the death or capture of any other member could only strengthen the clan's support, as was the case with the Ol' Dirty Bastard. After his 2004 death, authorities witnessed a "renaissance" of public support.

But New York City Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly says the death



of RZA could be catastrophic to national security. "Pardon my French, but the Wu-Tang Clan is nothing to f--k with," said Kelly. "These guys are from my city, I know how they roll. I remember RZA when his name was spelled with all lower cases. If he goes, members will dissipate and create smaller, but equally dangerous, offshoots of their own clans."

Out with the Old, and in with the New

KYLE MCCREA - STAFF WRITER

If you've noticed a new art form appearing along the walls of Edmonton's architectural masterpieces over the last 7 months, you're not alone. The city is currently experiencing a cultural arousal unlike anything seen since the construction of the giant baseball bat on 118th Avenue, and there doesn't appear to be any sign of slowing. The movement, which is being dubbed 'Community Standards Bylaw 14600', appears to be an extension of the Abstract Expressionism period, first gaining notoriety amid New York in the 1940's.

The artistic initiative - coming at a cost to tax payers of \$925,000 - was introduced last April in an attempt by the city to not only cover up the apparently unpopular, and outdated art form of Graffiti, but also encourage local business and property owners to unleash their creative juices around town. In a controversial move, officials have also implemented a \$250 fine to anyone showing resistance towards the trend, and while many feel that the move is greatly unjust, others are applauding it as a means of extending Edmonton's reputation as The Cultural Capital of 2007. The new movement is fairly easy to spot, with works usually appearing in the form of a large, off-colour, semi-transparent and hurried rectangular marks on exterior walls around town. Many original works can be found throughout Old Strathcona and the Whyte Avenue district, where enthusiasm is apparently thriving.

Upon being introduced as part of Edmonton's "Capital City Clean Up-Wiping out Graffiti!", Bylaw 14600, like any movement, has been met with a certain amount of resistance. Some property owners simply appear to be



'Local Edmonton art critics analyze a new piece in Old Strathcona'

confused by the art form all together, opting for soapy water and a scrubber over the widely used paint tin and brush. This lack of understanding first became evident after local papers reported on the heartfelt story of local resident, Phyllis Bjornson, who spent years trying everything from airplane paint remover to hydrochloric acid on the outside of her garage, before being targeted by the city as one of the first to be threatened with a fine. Despite certain problems, many officials such as City of Edmonton Graffiti Project Manager Sharon Chapman are optimistic that over time, owners will "take pride in their properties" by repainting small, rectangular portions of them when necessary; citing that the initiative was brought on in "direct response to public concerns".

There is little question that Edmontonians were beginning to feel an

overwhelming concern within their communities after the obvious deceleration in "World's Largest" sports equipment being erected. According to the city's Let's Wipe Out Graffiti! pamphlet, "Together we can make Edmonton Shine!", and there is little question that just that is happening. Last week I was fortunate enough to pass a remarkable piece on the south side of Edmonton- a moving, emotional use of Springtime Peach juxtaposed against the building's Soft Beige wall. Simply breathtaking.

Although still quite new, it is exciting to think that if the unsightly art of Graffiti can be found in museums and galleries throughout the world, then surely Bylaw 14600 will make its mark on the art world alongside the likes of Cubism, modernism, and Surrealism.





Toxic Culture:

An insight into the effects of modern consumer culture and how corporations, governments, and industry are at the heart of it all.

by Devin McCawley



TOXIC CULTURE

Culture is the product of human interaction. When that interaction is removed, and replaced by a culture of commodity, where the interaction of buying and selling products is extended to our interpersonal relationships, we no longer interact as people, but rather see others merely as products to be consumed, and discarded. And therefore, any externality, is no longer our responsibility, but some unseen third party. This is the current worldview for most of us. If a situation does not result in our benefit, it is an external source that is responsible for the negative outcome. If something is seemingly wrong or incorrect concerning the world around us, we seek to blame or transfer our own personal responsibility for each other and the world onto an external third party that must be the direct cause of our woes. This is the end result of capitalism, the removal of value and worth on life, love, relationships, and our interconnectivity to the world and culture around us. If you look at education in the last 50 years, what has been removed and rescinded from public education. The Humanities. What is now focussed on in our schooling instead is science, math, and communication. The language of interaction and learning is honed to a fine point, where the only language of interaction taught, is the language of business. If a person is raised with this language as their only means of communicating and relating to others, the end result is fixed. The fixed result is that we are all business, forced or streamed into economic paradigms and structures. If you're limited to all doors but one that says business, which one are you going to take? Capitalism is a cancer that has metastasized throughout our culture and permeated every aspect of our life. In light of this spread, we must look to our roots for the cause of

this permeation, and by analyzing its effects on our culture (the collective), we can analyze its effect on us specifically (the individual). In this way, once understood, the cancer can be removed at the source.

It was great optimism that the west entered into the second half of the twentieth century. The second Great War was over, the economy was on full upswing in every area, and there seemed to be no end in sight. The previous half of the century was fraught with turmoil, and destruction, but out of the malaise of confusion and fear there appeared to have grown a bolstered sense of hope for a bright future, and a better more prosperous tomorrow. There was however another war being conducted at the same time, but this was a war unseen, where it's weapons were not guns or mortars, but subliminal, institutional, and long ranging in it's scope and intent. It was the war on the individual. The individual had a certain amount of control in his life at this time, and this control over ones self, and the individuals effect on ones family and community, threatened to rescind the control of the corporate power structure that had risen to power during the Second World War, in both North America and Europe. The

answer was simple. To maintain dominance, the family in its current form, needed to be broken, and replaced with something controllable, and economically productive. Enter the Nuclear Family. At one time, the family's needs were easily supplied by the basics of necessity, ie: food, shelter, and support. The patriarchal male of the household felt complete; satisfied in his role as provider. But with the advent of post World War 2 consumer culture, the increasing fiscal needs of the family added pressures to the provider of the family. Errant products became as important as the basic necessities that had for longest time been easily fulfilled. New appliances for the home, and an

meet the johnsons.

They're just your average, hardworking, respectable citizens.
And the whole neighborhood loves them.



endless bombardment of new consumer products for the whole family brought on by the petrochemical boom of the 1940s, were deemed as absolutely necessary for modern family. Cracks began to show. Men started leaving their wives, and their families, in search of a better life. While divorce was still socially taboo, it was in this time that divorces began to appear in larger numbers than had ever been seen in a previous generation. This was a direct result of the breakdown of the family structure, and although it's causes were widespread, certain technologies helped to bring this breakdown along. The technologies however, were not completely external to the family. They could be found inside the families very home. With the invention of the television, the corporate structure now had its worldview plugged into every home, bypassing the usual filters such as parental values and went directly to the source of their target audience: The women and children of the household. Thus undermining the patriarchal structure of the traditional family. While he was at work, the wife and children were being fed an alternate worldview, one that he could not hope to fight. Though the inclusion of mass media into the household was slow at first, once it caught on, it became an incredibly profitable venture. Media conglomerates (such as ABC, CBS, and NBC in the U.S., or CTV and CBC in Canada) we're at the helm of determining programming, but it was not the business of these networks. What was the business of these networks? Advertising. It was not simply about entertainment; the programming was secondary to the commercials. The monopolizing of mass media put the power of affecting a large number of people, into the hands of the few. These networks could dictate what was being sold to the masses, and suddenly, out of this invention, came the

creation of the modern consumer. As the number of televisions, and families with televisions, increased, so did the effect of gentrifying our worldview towards the aims of corporate control. The television itself has evolved over time, becoming bigger, thinner, and containing more and more programming. Despite this evolution however, the television still essentially does what it was always meant to do. The television was not the sole tool used to escalate the broadening breakdown of the traditional family structure. Shift in education, public and post secondary, from the relevance and study of the humanities to the sciences and mathematics enabled the current economic leaders to enable people from a young age, to be prepared and trained for the workforce of the future. Children are prepared for the workforce that they are going to be a part of dozens of years in the future. What is important from a capitalistic perspective: is ensuring they are properly trained, not only for the jobs they will be doing, but that they will be satisfied with the job they've attained. If a child had interest in the humanities, the positions they would seek, would not be well rewarded in comparison to other positions. Such positions include being an artist, a musician, an actor, or a writer to name a few. What do these positions have in common? They have been devalued as important in consumerist culture, except where the products they create become valued by a large group of consumers. There were also economic changes in this era, that led to the breakdown of the family. Industrial manufacturing based work shifted over time into the exchange of information and the provision of goods and services. This shift began with the advent of cheaper and more extensive automation, leading to less skilled, and ultimately cheaper labour. The increasing connection to the global economy forced a

change in direction for how workers in North America and Europe would be trained, and how they would be regulated. This shift was integral to the devaluing of human interconnectivity. If you felt empathetically for someone underneath you in an office situation, you would have a difficult time firing them from said position and hiring an appropriate, cheaper replacement. Also, the invention of the extraction process of hydrocarbon chemicals from petroleum, led to a boom in consumer products otherwise unheard-of. These included additives to our food, the invention of plastic, and an array of products both consumer and industrial, including fragrances, herbicides, home "friendly" cleaning products, and detergents. The externalities of these products are widespread, and the effect on our current environments, and its deterioration today, are a direct result of this scientific development. All of these influences acted to effect society in a way better suited to the corporate and hegemonic control of the populous, and the externalities of these influences can be seen in great detail today.

With the breaking of the family, corporatism and consumerism sought to replace the feeling of togetherness and community within the family. How did they do this? By creating desire in the products they invented. Further on into the the second half of the twentieth century, the advent of the transistor, and the spread of popular (and now semi-portable) forms of media distribution intensified the demand for consumer products: a demand which came from the consumers themselves. The introduction of the television sitcom program replaced drama and more family oriented programming, and as a result, more people watched, more televisions were sold, color televisions were introduced and the phenomena

TOXIC CULTURE

became widespread. Every house now had a television, and due to the breakdown the family unit (i.e. divorce, and separation), children with single mothers or two working parents, became latchkey children and for the first time the direct involvement of parenting became less important. Children were being babysat by corporate sponsorship when they came home to an empty house. By the time the mother or father came home from work, how many hours has this child been sitting in front of the television? Two, three, four? How many hours is this a week? Or a year? How can a single parent hope to fight against that sort of constant influx? When a child raised in this manner becomes an adult, how much of their worldview has been cemented from the corporate culture through public education and the media, rather than the teachings and influence of their parents? Inventions of convenience, such as the microwave, the T.V. dinner, and the toaster oven, helped break down the family tradition of shared meal times. These conveniences were not the sole influence of family disintegration, but an array of products introduced at this time helped shift the focus of shared family time into convenient anytime consumption. This was another large contribution to the further degradation of the family unit. These phenomena both play an integral role in separating the new younger generation from any connections they had to the older ones, forcing them to look to media, and corporate consumerism for guidance. What did consumerism offer in place of this connection? A panacea of promises, to fulfill your every desire. All you needed was money. Educationally, during the 1960s, and onwards till the present, the funding of education system has been systematically removed from schools (this is especially true in the U.S.), and in post secondary education

money was pumped into the sciences, and mathematics, but not into the humanities. Schools went into disrepair, music programs were cut, drama programs were also cut or amalgamated, and libraries were stocked with curriculum requirements as opposed to external studies and the exploration of knowledge. Economically in the 1970s, with the rise of inflation and the introduction of the OPEC oil embargo, the rapid economic growth of post World War II Europe and North America reversed and the boom that everyone had become accustomed to was now a bust on the rapid decline. Where once people felt safe and comfortable in their living situations, now threatened and in fear of losing what they have, they became more conservative, fearful of loss and increasingly mistrusting of those less fortunate around them. Societies problems were the result of external third parties, the poor were poor because of their own poor planning, and blamed for their drain on society. Mass media and government, backed by corporate interests, perpetuated this claim, utilizing fear to institute obedience. People no longer dared question their worldview, because the perceived consequence of doing so was now alienation from the group. The rich are idealized, and the poor are demonized. To be middle class, is to be among the chosen. Do you see now what happens when you give up your family values for a class affiliation? You will do whatever necessary to be a part of said class, including selling out those very people closest to you, your fellow man; replacing authentic relationships with relationships based on economic class.

Then and Now. In the 1980s, there was an explosion of technological development and innovation. The personal computer became a reality in 1984 with the

Macintosh Apple Classic II, along with the Windows Operating System, and the doubling of computer development every 18 months. From then till now has shown the development of computer technology from what Bill Gates laughingly claimed that 64K was all you will ever need, to today's iPods, with hard drives containing 120gbs of music and information. The proliferation of information technologies, such as the Internet, in this period, has led to the further permeation of corporate and consumerist worldviews upon our outlook and interaction with people, relationships, and the world around us. We now live in a hyper reality of endless entertainment and mindlessness, where we have been decapitated from our real selves, and from our personal responsibility to others, and even our own families. We have been broken down to our base instincts and desires, and operate on a superficial level with those around us, in our constant effort to fulfill said desires. The pumping of funds into education throughout the 70s and onward in the post-secondary level, led to the technological booms of the 80s and 90s, and the narrowing of curriculums to sciences and mathematics meant there was a steady stream of students to fill those spaces of math and sciences in the working world. It is the amalgamation of study and business. If you get them early, you've got them for life. Also, in post secondary educations, we have seen a radical jump in the costs of such study, which has led to a further development of elitism and class obedience among the educated versus the uneducated masses. This programming of how we view knowledge and study has led us to become unwitting proponents of the corporate societal structure, whether or not we consciously agree or disagree with it. Economically, we are now a point and click culture. We no lon-

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ger care where things are made, or the working conditions in which these products were produced. All we care is that it's cheap, and it's available. In our current careers, we are no longer at the base of manufacturing, and as such we no longer have any say in the quality of material included in our consumer products, be them electronic or dietary. Once you give up control over where your iPod is made, you also give up control of where your food is grown. The FDA has recently approved cloned meat for human consumption, and labels are not required to mark it as such. The effects of chemicals within every consumer product we can possibly

ingest, has never, and was never tested for its long-term effects on the human body and the human mind. This type of widespread complacency and apathy is the direct result of what can be perceived as the largest and most widespread institutional, industrial, and systematic reprogramming that any human civilization or society has ever seen. Its reach has become global, and you can see the impacts in every aspect of your daily life; if you choose to observe them.

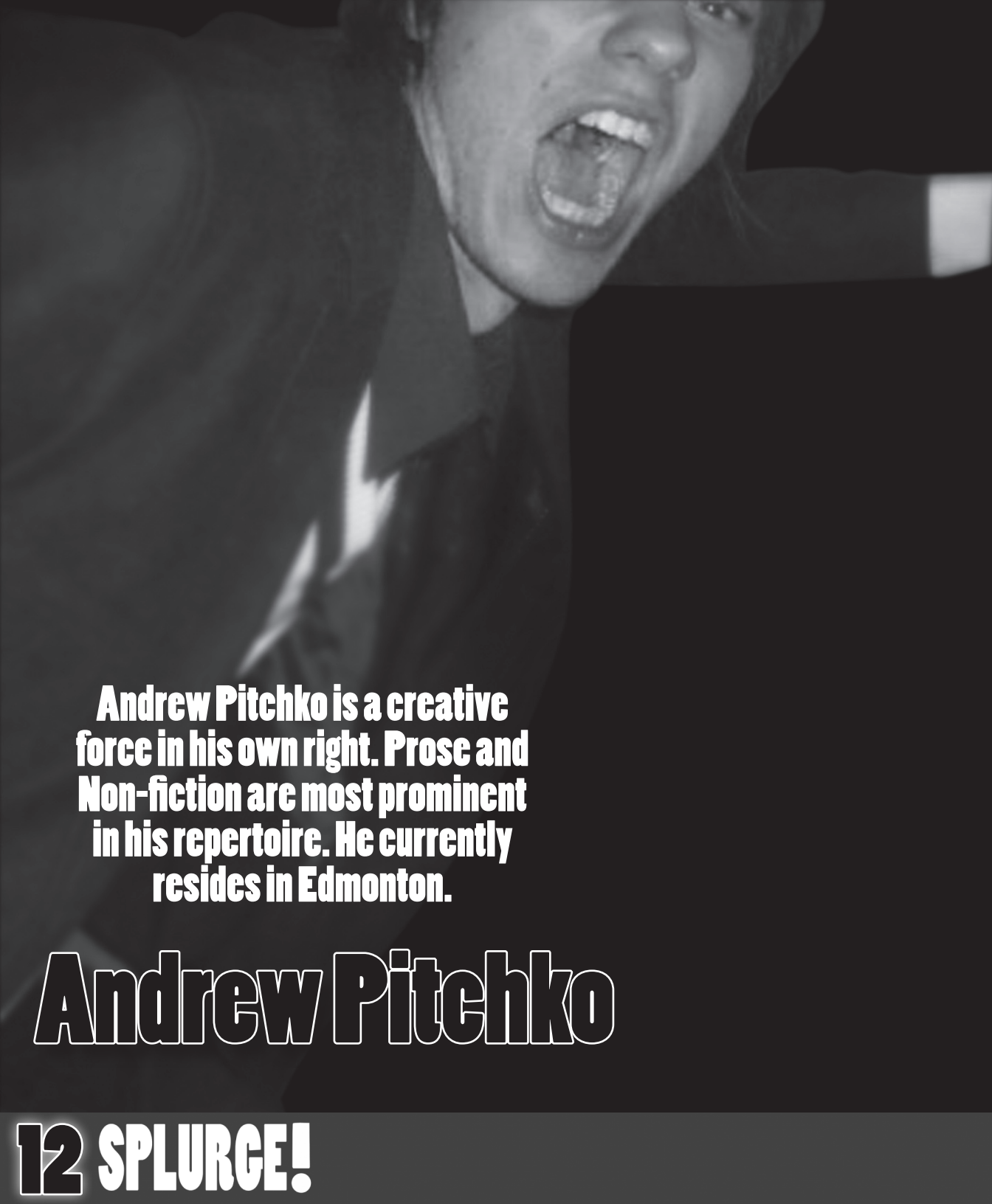
Today, and Tomorrow. The possibilities for the future in terms of how we interact with the world, and with those around us, are

open. How and where we go from the present is always a matter of choice. It is important however, that one understands fully the influences of the past, and the pressures of the present day to interpret what this choice means to them. It is not my aim to provide a panacea of promises for change, and the possibility of a perfectly functioning world; to make claims such as these would place me in the same sphere of suggestion as the ones I have outline in this piece. The collective, humanity, is not a perfect functioning whole, just as neither are you, or I. People contain multitudes of experience and perspective, and to expect that someone you meet today will be

exactly alike when you encounter them tomorrow is nothing short of a fantasy. In this way, the world, and the collective of individuals of which we are all a part, is constantly changing as well. My opinion and my perspective on the past is limited to interpretation through my experiences and knowledge, and I implore you not to take my opinion or perspective at face value, or to limit yourself to one worldview. We are tomorrow's change, whatever that change may be, and as such, this moment could very well be your first breath. Whether or not it is, is of course, up to you.

HOUSEHOLD ODOR OUT OF CONTROL?





Andrew Pitchko is a creative force in his own right. Prose and Non-fiction are most prominent in his repertoire. He currently resides in Edmonton.

Andrew Pitchko

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Buzzwords of the Near Future

So here we are my friends. The looming shadow of depression is on the horizon. Those childhood images that we grew up on. The thought that we are somehow safe; drilled into our heads. The feeling of comfort. These will all become relics of our younger years. Our nostalgic feelings of safety. The shit is about to hit the fan. The house, the car and the fridge full of food. All of these comforts are not set in stone. The feeling of job security? It's a once in a lifetime thing my friend. The taste of gruel: do you find it appealing? How about the foreign feeling of unemployment? Does that idea comfort you? Soon we will all have to abandon the pursuit of leisure for the pursuit of survival. Does that tickle your fancy? Are you ready? The wheels of doom have started to turn. Soon enough our dreams will wither away in the face of reality.

The buzzwords of the near future: Safety. Thrift. Caution.

Welcome to the brave new world.





*Author Of
Existence*

by Adam Wallace



AUTHOR OF EXISTENCE

When we open the cover to a book and begin to read, we are not merely absorbing images of printed text. Through the medium of text our minds are transported into another universe, which a given author has been gracious enough to allow us entry into. These universes may be filled with a vast array of forms radically different from ours or nearly identical. Such forms may include anything conceivable to the human imagination, from radical political ideologies to magical creatures. Each of these universes, produced by writers, have their own historical components, with which their present state is explained by. The writer is responsible for the introduction of their universe and the creation of it's basic components. Beyond the introduction, how much control does the author have over the beings in her universe?

This may seem like an enigmatic question. Surely since the author is the creator of the universe of her work, she ought to have total control over the way it is expressed. Such a simple answer is entirely insufficient to the inquisitive mind. What we do know for certain is that the author underwent a process of writing down some things on many sheets of paper. These writings are the physical expression of thoughts contained in the authors mind. Within mind of the author there are two categories of thought processes occurring simultaneously. The two aforementioned processes are that of the conscious, which the author is easily aware of, and the unconscious, which she does not have direct access too and is unaware of. Such unconscious processes may either agree with those contained in the consciousness or they may be radically opposed. The unconsciousness may reveal itself

through the conscious mind in the form of behavior, urges or fantasies that disturb the conscious mind in their opposition to its state of ethics and other beliefs. We often have dreams, in which many strange, obscene and wonderful things occur, which leave us in daze. This is much in the way that the characters of a novel, once presented to the pen, may unsettle or surprise even the writer that scribed them.

Once the individual characters (as well as the masses) in a plot that have been introduced they take on a form, which is a guide for their future actions. The more intricate the character in a given plot is, the wider their range of possible cognitions and actions. The character becomes more and more intricate as their experiences and knowledge are revealed. As the writer is describing these intricately developed characters, they begin to reveal themselves in such a way that it as if they exist independently of the author. The reader too can easily imagine what such a character would do when presented with a situation. A reader may also experience great emotional attachment to a particular character, as if they were encountered in a dream, or waking life for that matter.

What is truly the difference between the waking and the dreaming? Our own physical senses, which are held in such high esteem by empiricists can easily cheat us. After all, our complete perception of reality is manufactured in the mind, the very same place which our dreams and literary works are produced.

During our waking hours, our mind is interfaced with an impressive array of sensory neurons, which send electrical signals to the brain via interneurons. These elec-

trical signals are produced by the varying degrees and qualities of stimulation to the body's sensory neurons. Once these signals reach our brains they are assembled by our mind in such a way as to produce a complete representation of our surroundings.

When we fall asleep (or are in sensory deprivation), our mind puts our sensory neuron interface on stand-by. When the rapid eye movement phase of sleep is reached, our mind begins to assemble a representation of surroundings, entirely based on its own creation. The patterns and areas of brain activity, such as speech, spatial recognition and motor activity, are identical to those produced when the brain is interfaced with its sensory apparatus.

That being said, what's to say that these characters presented in our dreams and by authors are not just as real as those encountered by electrical signals sent to our brains from sensory neurons. The dreamer is the conscious representation of the god in his dream universe. The one who is within his dream is a representation of the conscious god of that dream universe. Everything within that universe is a part of his mind, and thereby alterable by him. This is often entirely unapparent to the dreamer. When this becomes apparent to the dreamer, he is faced with a great dilemma. Does he allow these beings of his unconsciousness to present themselves and behave as they will or does he toy with them?

The author is also presented with a similar dilemma, does she write her characters as they present themselves from her unconscious mind or does she conform them to the desires of her conscious mind. It seems

as though the second approach, namely molding the character into a form of the consciousness, would be rather unproductive. Writing is after all, largely a process of self-realization. If the forms of the unconscious are unable to represent themselves freely, then nothing has been revealed to the writer about herself. It might demonstrate that she has good grammar, spelling, and logic processes, however it seems that this would, indeed, be unsatisfying. I think this is what is called "writers block."

Is it reasonable to postulate that this process, which the writer encounters, is much the same as that which the god of our universe (if such a thing exists) encounters? If we are all part of an author or a dreamers unconsciousness, it would then be in his best interest to allow us to do as we please. By intervening in any way the god would be stifling his own process of self-realization. Hegel said much the same about the history of mankind, in that it is the progressive self-realization of what he called the world spirit. He also believed in the importance of not criticizing past political principles, since they were produced out of the conditions that existed at the time. This means that these doctrines that are now outdated were likely fitting for their times. Hegel recognized that history was a progression of such principles and

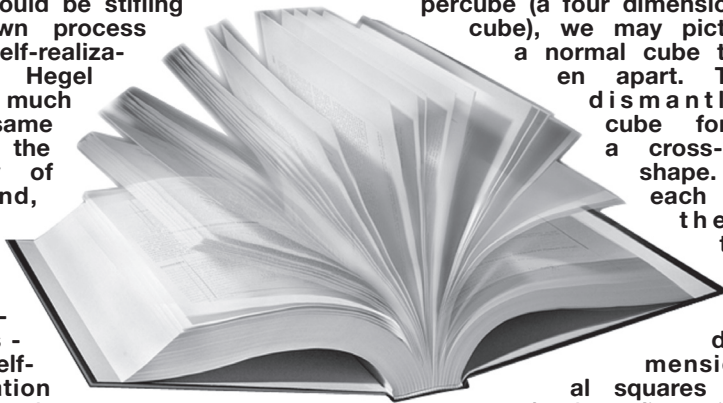
turning to the past would only stifle the self-realization of the world spirit (or, in our terms, the author). Adhering strictly to an ancient doctrine is crippling to the development of the world spirit, according to Hegel.

Perhaps the god of our universe is simply an author who is interested in self-realization through a literary masterpiece. He allows our characters and our universe to emerge from his unconsciousness, while imposing some basis physical laws. By writing our plot, the god learns more of itself as the tale continues. This way contemplating the project of a god is a similar approach that is used in picturing a an object with four spatial dimensions, such as a hypercube. Namely, it is impossible for our minds to perceive an object with four spatial dimensions, in its true nature, but we may imagine it by analogy. In the case of the hypercube (a four dimensional cube), we may picture a normal cube taken apart. This dismantled cube forms a cross-like shape. For each of these two dimensional squares we make three dimensional ones, resulting in a kind of three dimensional cross. Similarly, by examining our creative process we may also understand, in a very limited way, the creative process by which a god might have given us existence.

If we are characters produced by the unconscious aspect

of a god mind, then we have a large role to play in the development of ourselves. The god which is interested in self-realization would rely heavily on us to produce his plot, as the author relies on her unconscious to reveal its universe. Perhaps in the beginning of our story there was much interference on her part, such as the author who writes herself into a book as a sort of all powerful deity. That's no fun, since this character seems to magically know everything already and has no need to adventure about discovering new knowledge and wisdom. The only way for such a character to appear in a plot, in a way that would not completely ruin it would be in a temporary form....such as oh...I don't know...a prophet.

The unfortunate thing about these prophetic characters is they seem to gather rather large followings which divide and try to kill each other. Naturally, if the conscious component of the god of our universe were to write himself into our plot and try and give us some advice, he would probably say some pretty damn weird and astonishing things! People might be so astonished by these things that they go on to form religions based on the things which this strange representative of their conscious counterpart said. Then what if he were to appear again, a couple of times, trying to convey the same set of advice? Well you know humans, forever playing the telephone game, which ends in savagely invading the lands of people who heard otherwise and vice versa... for thousands of years. So it seems that perhaps our good author has learned that it would be best for us to take the wheel for a while. I'm sure it was an honest mistake, seems that every author gets writers block once and a while and produces a forced plot that ends badly.

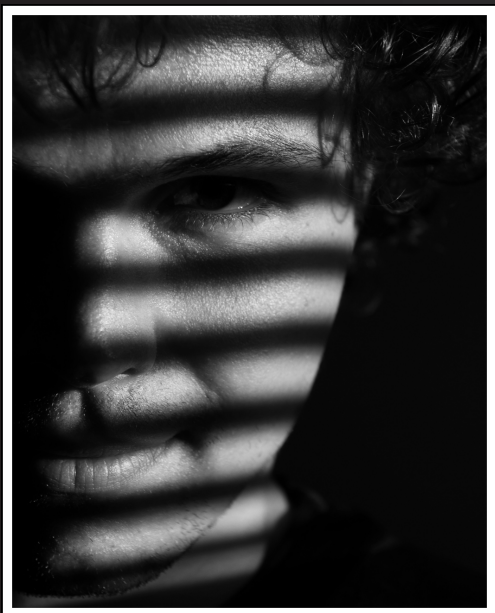


**Mike Kuby hails from Edmonton,
Alberta. This is an excerpt of his
photographic works.**

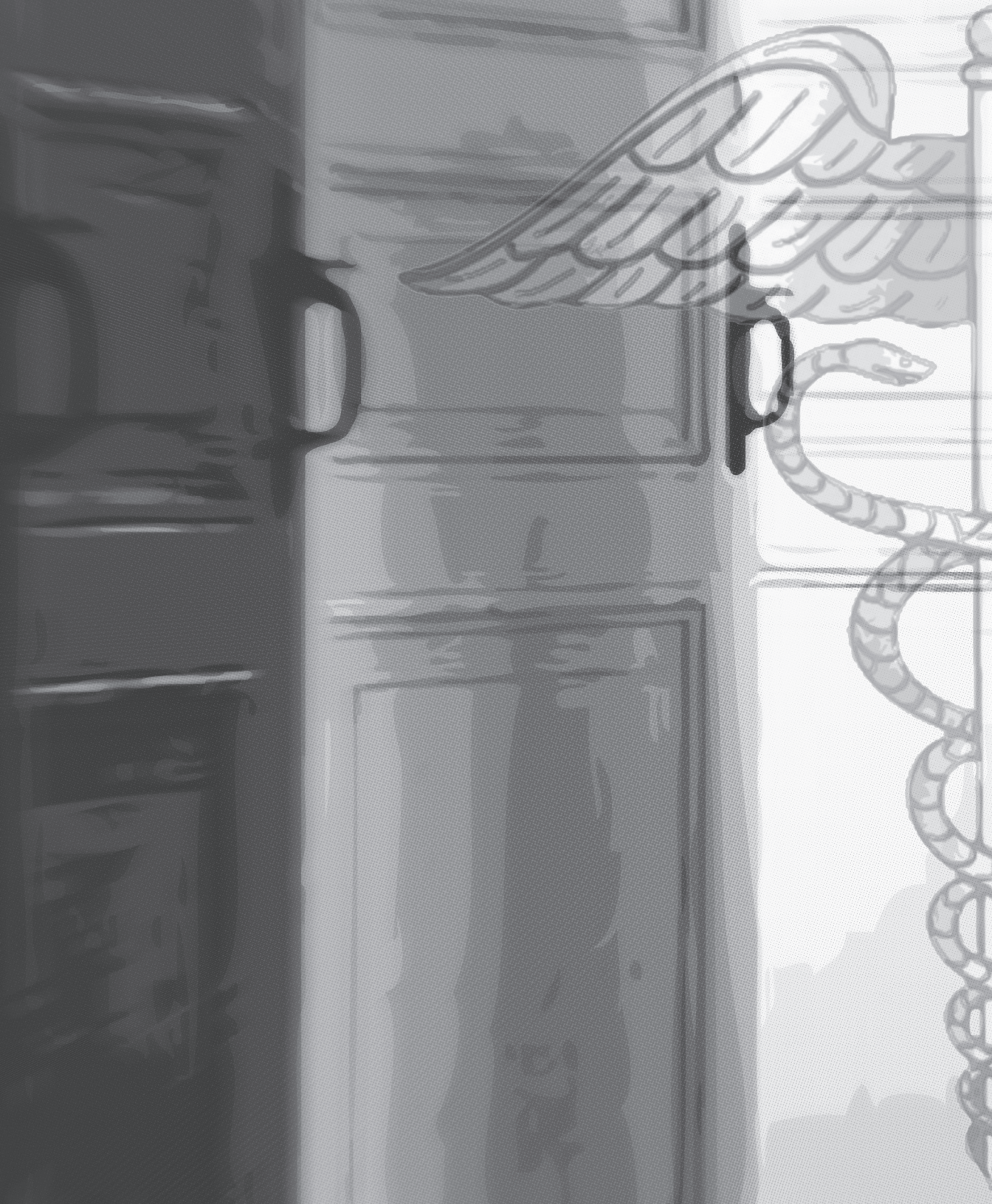


Mike Kuby

18 SPLURGE!



SPLURGE! 19





*More Trouble
Every Day.*

by Mark McCawley



MORE TROUBLE EVERY DAY

For as long as I can remember, I've always been prone to sickness... not that I'm sickly, or anything like that...I'm about as healthy as the next guy, which doesn't mean too much these days...what with HIV infection, flesh-eating streptococcus bacteria, immuno-deficiency disorders by the score, new virulent strains of drug-resistant diseases like tuberculosis which everyone thought'd been eradicated forever...I mean, it's enough to make anyone a little bit paranoid...

Well, like I was saying, I'm just as healthy as the next guy...Y'know, the usual: colds, influenza, general malaise, what-ever...so I'm certainly no stranger to waiting rooms in doctors' offices...Still, for all the precious time I've spent waiting...and all their training, tests and high-priced technical gadgetry...I seldom find satisfaction, and even more than that, I tend to leave their offices feeling no better than when I came in...I don't know whether I overheard it somewhere, or read it in a magazine some-place...something about how in China doctors were only paid once the patient recovered...If we had a similar system in North America, I'm sure that 90% of the doctors would go bankrupt...

The way I figure it, doctors are nothing more than glorified body mechanics with delusions of godliness, no more, no less...and just as trustworthy or personable as the grease-ball who gives your car a brake-job when all you wanted, or needed, was an oil change and a new air filter...I've

long since considered most of my health problems to be environmental in origin...I mean, is it normal to spend the majority of your day stuck inside a sealed office building breathing the same recycled carbon monoxide, anhydrous ammonia, asbestos, formaldehyde? Or to sit in grid-locked traffic sucking in bits of burnt petroleum and countless other noxious fumes? It doesn't surprise me at all when I see people stop dead in their tracks...pull out their Ventolin bronchodilator and puff, just to catch their breath...

Anyway, that's what I'm thinking about as I'm waiting for an elevator on the main floor of the office tower in which my doctor practices...it's a few minutes before one o'clock and most of the office workers are returning from lunch, forming an immense semicircle around the two elevator doors...One elevator is still on its way up, while the other seems stuck on the fourteenth floor, about half way down...it's probably some asshole holding the doors open and finishing some conversation begun on a higher floor...As the light finally flashes off on fourteen and drops down to thirteen, there is an almost audible sigh...(If I learned anything from all those old, rickety Nuns who taught at the various Catholic schools I attended, it's that patience is preferable to a whack from the yardsticks they all seemed to carry and swing with impunity...and that bitterness is the result of unresolved complaints)...

Anyway, when the bell rings and the elevator doors open, I'm first inside...I quickly pressed the button of the floor

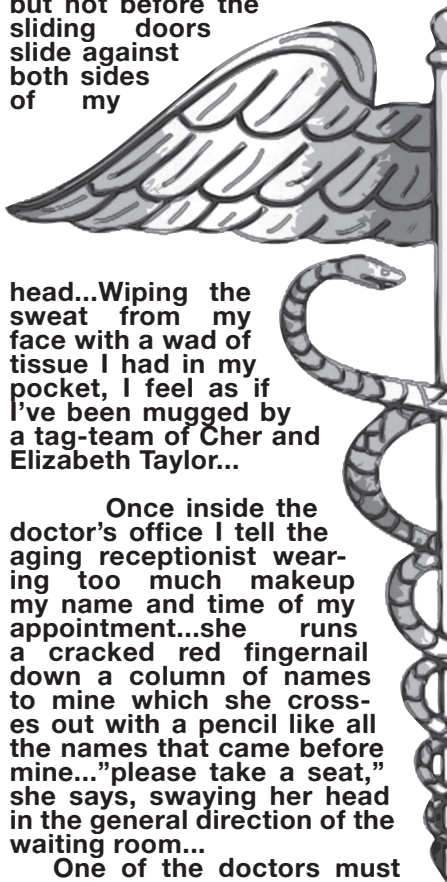
I want, then I'm quite literally pinned against the chrome rail at the back of the elevator by the stampede of passengers getting on...On the way up, we stop at each and every floor on the way up...and I'm sandwiched between two middle-aged women who must've used entire cans of hairspray on their heads, and bathed in vats of perfume...

My nose is running, my eyes are watering... I finally manage to squeeze out of the elevator and onto my floor, but not before the sliding doors slide against both sides of my

head...Wiping the sweat from my face with a wad of tissue I had in my pocket, I feel as if I've been mugged by a tag-team of Cher and Elizabeth Taylor...

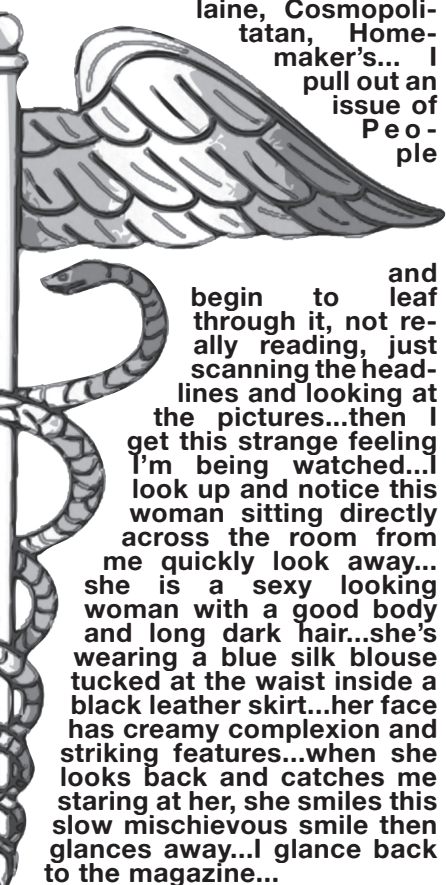
Once inside the doctor's office I tell the aging receptionist wearing too much makeup my name and time of my appointment...she runs a cracked red fingernail down a column of names to mine which she crosses out with a pencil like all the names that came before mine..."please take a seat," she says, swaying her head in the general direction of the waiting room...

One of the doctors must



be falling behind because the waiting room is plumb full of people who look as if they've been waiting for quite some time...somebody's name is called and this frail little granny hobbles past me, down the corridor behind the receptionist to one of the examination rooms...I walk up to her vacated chair and sit down with my back to a large window spanning the length of the waiting area...I finger through a stack of old and tattered magazines...mostly women's magazines...y'know, Chata-

laine, Cosmopolitan, Home-maker's... I pull out an issue of People



begin to leaf through it, not really reading, just scanning the headlines and looking at the pictures...then I get this strange feeling I'm being watched...I look up and notice this woman sitting directly across the room from me quickly look away... she is a sexy looking woman with a good body and long dark hair...she's wearing a blue silk blouse tucked at the waist inside a black leather skirt...her face has creamy complexion and striking features...when she looks back and catches me staring at her, she smiles this slow mischievous smile then glances away...I glance back to the magazine...

When I look up from the magazine again, she's staring at me so intensely I feel uncomfortable...sort of a cross between anxiety and anticipation...she runs her pink tongue between her slightly parted lips like one of those cheap 8mm porno actresses from the early seventies...then purses her lips together into something resembling a pout...or perhaps even a subtle kiss...I can feel my cock hardening...

I pick out another magazine from the pile, and drop the one I'd read on top...I leaf through several pages, then look up...I don't know if she's sliding in her chair, or if she's tugging on her skirt...but I watch as she subtly pulls the hem of her skirt up and over her crossed legs...I glance around the room but no one else seems to notice...I shift in my seat...

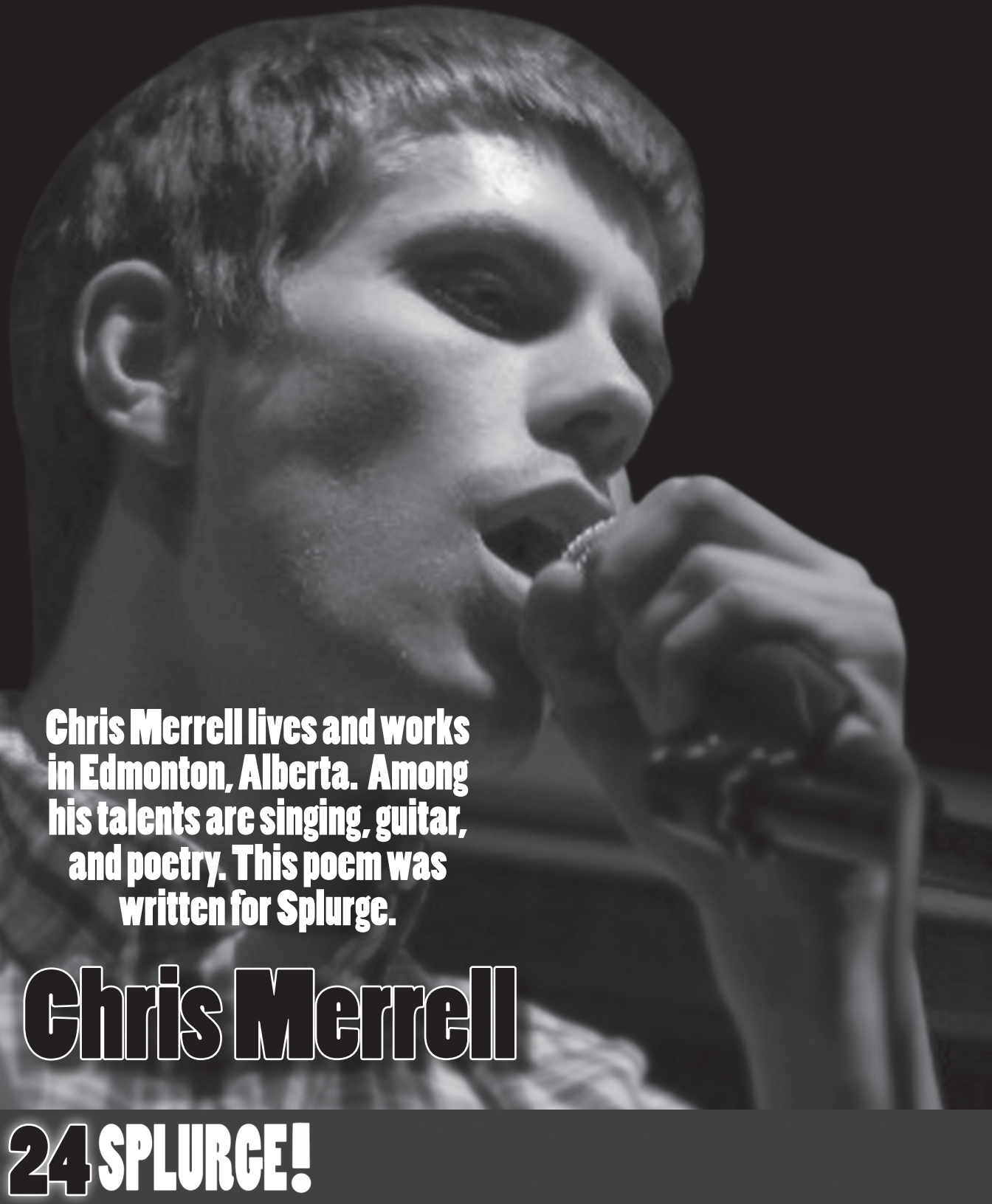
When I look back again, the hem of her skirt has risen again...revealing another centimeter or so of her upper leg...I feel that familiar tingling and bloating of a raging erection I'm trying to conceal with the magazine I'm holding...all I need is to have my name called and have to parade my bulge to everyone else in the office...I try to distract myself by thinking about something non-sexual...but everything I come up with has some sort of phallic connection...damn my hormones, I think...

I didn't look up at her again until the receptionist called my name...I set the magazine down on the stack, but as I got up from my seat I see that her legs are no longer crossed ...And directly in my

line of vision, and only visible to me was this long, thick un-cut prick between her...I mean, his legs...I sort of hobble into one of the examination rooms, suffering a bad case of "blue balls" from too sustained an erection, but I'm thankful to just get out of that waiting room...I still can't connect that face to the penis I saw...I figure I'm just seeing things or something...sure, probably just the lighting tricking my eyeballs...

The doctor gives me his usual once over...a prescription for antibiotics and an anti-inflammatory, a lecture on the dangers of smoking, then sends me on my way...I pass by the receptionist resisting the urge to peek into the waiting room to see if she, I mean, he is still sitting there...I hobble up the corridor, toward the elevator and wait nervously for the elevator to reach my floor... the bell rings and the elevator doors slide open...I step inside and turn to press the first floor button, but all the buttons above number 14 have already been pressed and are lit up... One floor at a time, and several minutes later, I finally reach the twenty-fourth floor, the top floor, then begin my descent... as the elevator approaches the fourteenth floor, it slows and then stops, the doors slide open...and who walks inside but the she-male from the waiting room...I'm not sure what to do, then the doors slide shut... it feels like I'm falling...I see that same mischievous smile...

But, hey, y'know what they say? Variety's the spice of life...any change is as good as a rest...



Chris Merrell lives and works in Edmonton, Alberta. Among his talents are singing, guitar, and poetry. This poem was written for Splurge.

Chris Merrell

24 SPLURGE!

Dine and Sweat in Divinity

Those who serve to lash, Drink from crystal glass, watch the time pass,
who break the back, who bare the grind, Don't have the time

Your back's become a sore sight, when it's turned to me
I grow so tired of your voice, when it's in your machine

"I hope you had a good time, you're so witty":
Our looks could get us so far in this city;
This way, all things will be OK
our next time together Sunday
Let's hope my hairs don't go grey

"My back muscles filled my pockets tonight"
It was the same evening your mother died
I never saw the tears you cried
On the velour rug I remembered to buy

I hope for your own good dear Zeke,
Your usual measely pursuits will lead
To the invention of a time machine
So that you can retrieve
Some time for me





To The Dogs:
an excerpt

by Thea Bowering



To THE DOGS (EXCERPT)

It is a feeling of relief, almost of pleasure, at knowing yourself at last genuinely down and out. You have talked so often of going to the dogs—and well, here are the dogs, and you have reached them, and you can stand it. — George Orwell; *Down and Out in Paris and London*

**Someone take these dreams away,
That point me to another day. — Joy Division “Dead Souls”**

I'd been working at The *Blackhoof* for nearly two years when Billy crossed the bar that night to me to tell me about the sadness that he could see in me. Since I was a little girl men had been coming up to me to tell me I look sad, or that I should smile; usually it's just when I'm thinking about something fairly hard. In fact, I'm usually quite happy until they come over to tell me otherwise.

As for the other thing, when people tell you they can see something in you, I've found it usually just means they want to take something from you. I knew that, but all the same I kept wondering if Billy really could see something in me that others couldn't. Why is it that even when people know it, they'll go on letting themselves be conned? Like they're watching a magic show.

One time when I was a kid, I was at a birthday party where the parents had hired this magician. All through his act I kept guessing how he did the tricks and then explaining them out loud to everyone. I could see him getting angrier and angrier, but I couldn't seem to stop. At the end, he made all the kids balloon animals, except me. But it wasn't really my fault. I thought the whole point was to try to figure out the trick. I think men and women are the same way with each other. You know, and they know, it's a

trick; but you're just supposed to go along with the show, even if you can tell them how it's done. Not let everybody know you've figured it out, like I do. I think that's why men usually leave me in the end.

But Billy was beautiful. So this time I went along. Not beautiful in a way everyone would think though. Billy was tall and the thinnest man I had ever known. When he walked fast with his hands in his pockets he looked like a Giacometti sculpture. Irreducible. From the side his nose looked kind of smashed in, like a boxer's, but from the front it was long and elegant. Almost Byzantine. All his features were fine, and he had thin skin and a full mouth. I've always been a sucker for feminine looking men, maybe because they seem more sensitive, like they might be good to you. When he stood close, looking down into my face, with his long bangs, Billy was like a hero in an Irish Film about one of their civil wars. Maybe this was because most of the time he wore an old faded army jacket and pants. Though, when he took me to a film about Michael Collins, Billy said that the early Irish army had no uniforms, and even had to smuggle guns, because they were working-class volunteers. He would like to have been a war hero I think.

Billy was a cook at the bar on the corner of the

same street I worked on. He called himself a chef, but also he painted. There was a hunger about Billy. One you might associate with artist types. Maybe that's true. I suppose that was what attracted me most. Though I didn't realize at first that was what it was. I flattered myself that it was genuine desire, desire and nerve, that he would have to gumption to pursue me the way he did at the beginning. By the end I realized Billy was just endlessly hungry the way a dog is. I'd later compare Billy to various animals. I would tell people: Billy's like a slug—moving nowhere fast but leaving an impressive, gleaming trail of shit behind him. But as incorrect as it may seem—since Billy was poor and had a hard time early on—really, comparing him to a dog is more of a compliment than it seems. We forgive animals for their desire in a way we don't with humans. A dog sitting staring at his owner eating ice-cream isn't disgusting the way a man in a bar staring at a woman is. An animal isn't self-conscious, so it can't be made ugly by the embarrassment of its want. Billy was like this. He would stare at me for hours at the bar, watching my every turn for a bottle, every pour, or watch me move across the floor with the tray. An animal's focus. He never tried to hide it. His hunger was unapologetic. It was this thing about Billy that people liked.

And I guess this something came out of his hard life. And so people were always forgiving him for the things he did.

The thing is, most people just like the feeling of someone paying attention. And Billy made you feel that way. Right up until you realized he wasn't. Once in bed he told me that most of the time the way I breathe is quick and shallow, that I breathed less than most people. I thought you had to feel a part of someone to notice something like that. Or at least share the same understanding of something. But I guess artists notice all kinds of small things about people and it doesn't mean they love you, per say.

I took it that Billy was the only one I knew who had noticed I wasn't brave, and this was a great relief to me. At school everyone just kept expecting the best of you, even though the rumour was that half the English Department was on anti-depressants. We were all living on top of a lie here, living on top of a patch of oil you could see from space. 50% higher cancer, asthma, MS, and you name it, than anywhere else in the country. This was a place of right now, at any cost. Our government didn't bother contributing to a heritage fund. They'd rather lower the taxes. And what for, so people could buy bigger trucks and come into my bar and drink their hundred dollar bills away on rye and cokes.

So this is how I breathed. I hadn't noticed. But Billy was very interested in the body and how it dealt with such things. It may have been the one thing he could meet head on. After they discovered the cysts in my breast, Billy used

to grab it and squeeze it hard when we were pumping away in the dark. But then, if it comes up in conversation, you find everyone in this town has some kind of chest pain or growth in them; but no one ever leaves, and people still keep throwing their TV sets into the river that runs through town, where we all have to drink from.

But I suppose you could say Billy's interest was more clinical than courageous. After I left him the first time I would still hear stories from Billy's kitchen, from our porters who the bartenders sent over for the free meal they got in exchange for serving Billy complimentary pints for most of the afternoon, when his kitchen was slow.

One time, "Slurms", one of our porters, ran back with a pizza, all excited, and told us that Billy had lost a tooth. It had started to come loose and he was backed up with orders in the kitchen, so he had dug it out with a drinking straw and put it in a glass of coke and set it on a shelf above the sink to see how long it would take to dissolve. That's what I mean by clinical. When I heard that story I could forgive Billy a little for everything that had happened, and would happen.

So I could see all this in Billy right away, and I knew where it came from too. Billy had two stories he told you: the first was about how he had ridden his bicycle all through Ireland five years ago, and how he was going to go back one day; and the other was how at sixteen he had come home to find his mother dead from an overdose of pain medication. He had ridden with her in the ambulance anyway. The police questioned his in-

volvement and later he went to live with his uncle who was in the military. His father hadn't as of yet decided he was a family man, which he did years later with his second marriage. After his mother died, Billy lived with those kids and his father's wife for a while, until there was a falling out over some money owed. Billy's father had been in the military also, then was a beatnik for a while, and ended up being a therapist of some kind. He and Billy seldom talked. When they did it was always about the money or how Billy should seek professional help. His father said he could refer him to a few good therapists.

There were the stories Billy told me about his life, and the one I could see and put together the more I got to know him. And when I met Billy I was sorely in need of a good story. I'd been going to grad school and was beginning to get more and more concerned about what all my education was leading to. I suppose I had learned a lot, and now I owed the bank and the government around 40,000 dollars for it. I kept working at the bar because I could earn more doing that than working as a teacher.

I tried going to mixed parties; by mixed I mean faculty and graduate students. But these were always boring because nobody could really talk to anybody else as it would jeopardize their professionalization. Nobody talked about literature; mainly the professors complained about their salaries; and anyway I was wondering what it mattered reading novels about the class struggle in Victorian England. That's when I started getting deeper into the world at the bar, and got more involved with Billy.

To The Dogs (EXCERPT)

I liked to go back into the kitchen of *The Rainy Gazebo*. It was a funny name because it almost never rained here, and there was nothing pastoral-feeling about the part of town we worked in. But I was happier sitting back there watching Billy make food or clean up than almost anywhere else. Sometimes Jim would swing back with fancy drinks for us that he'd made up at the bar. It would be silly to compare it to an artist's studio. But it had that private world feeling to it. Sometimes I felt a kind of satisfied model's boredom swinging my legs, sketching in Billy's book, and waiting around for him to finish cleaning his cutlery, and the cutting surfaces, and the floor.

Mostly I liked to sit on the steel counter and watch Billy make gourmet pizzas. The way he would pat one down, making its surface really flat. I could always tell when I ate there if Billy was working, and if he had made the pizza or shepherd's pie, by how pressed down and smooth the surface was. I had read an essay about the sculptor Rodin where it said his clay figures, usually women, always looked messy because he couldn't distinguish between flesh and art. To control one, he had to show his dominance over the other, so he needed to show how his hand had molded it. Because of this, none of his figures stand out from any of the others, or take the space around them as their own. They look pushed down, half-finished. Not like they're emerging from the clay but like they're being forced back into it; that if the hand had continued they would have disappeared altogether.

I thought of Bil-

ly's pizzas this way, but more as the opposite. I always thought of his flat food surfaces like canvas. Billy was a painter not a sculptor, but he hadn't done a painting in over five years and it was like he was always trying to find a way back to his art, and away from his life, by working it into his job. Though I'm sure this didn't occur to him.

Sometimes I think Billy fancied he could become a real chef and be artistic that way. But Management always rejected his menu ideas. Said they were "country style" and that wasn't what they were going for. They didn't know what they were talking about, Billy said, and once he got furious and took the money for that night's dinner special and went to the mega-supermarket across the street and bought twenty small chickens and made twenty chicken curry pot pies. When Management found out they made him throw it all out. That was fine with me. I got to eat curry chicken pot-pie at work for a week. It tasted good and that's all that mattered, Billy thought. But as I was chewing and his eyes gleamed with indignation I thought of all the nice restaurants I'd eaten at around the world, and about the clever ways people redo simple or rustic dishes by adding a delicate cage of burnt sugar, a long stemmed berry, or a stick of lemon grass—what's called "vertical interest." I had a friend in culinary school who once got a failing grade because her apple pie didn't have enough "vertical interest," which seems like the wrong thing to ask of an apple pie. But in this case, I thought Management was right, Billy's art was not in his cooking.

Still, there was a

way in which this routine work made Billy seem more complex. And I came to think of this complexity as existing in the two sides of Billy's hands. In bed Billy had the particular habit of stroking my face with the back of his hand. Cheeks, forehead, chin, neck. I don't think anyone else had ever done this, except maybe my father when I was a child. It seemed like an extreme gesture of tenderness to me. But he would also stroke my whole body this way and it gave me the funny sensation of being touched the way a blind person would touch you to see what you looked like. When it occurred to me one day that Billy never actually touched me with the front of his hand I asked him about it, and he said it was because he couldn't feel anything the normal way anymore. He'd been working in kitchens for so many years and had burned himself so many times that his fingertips and palms had lost all their nerve endings.

That sounded kind of romantic to me. Until I realized that he didn't care whether he got burned or not, and for years had been grabbing pans out of the oven with just his bare hands. This was something I couldn't understand, and it made me feel far away from Billy and Jim and the rest of them. So it was right then that I got the first inkling that the world I'd been playing around in all this time, that I had attached myself to, had its own logic that I couldn't follow; and though it was a world that found me as curious as I did it, in the end it was quite possible that it didn't care about me one bit.

URBAN GRAFFITI

Canada's only transgressive, discursive, post-realist litzine.

But don't take our word for it. Check out what Broken Pencil (Canada's magazine for zine culture and the independant arts) has said within the folds of their pages over the last 13 years:

**"Every damn word comes at you with a meat cleaver. Oh man this stuff is sick. Don't get lost down a dark alley with Urban Graffiti. It'll beat the shit out of you."
- BP1**

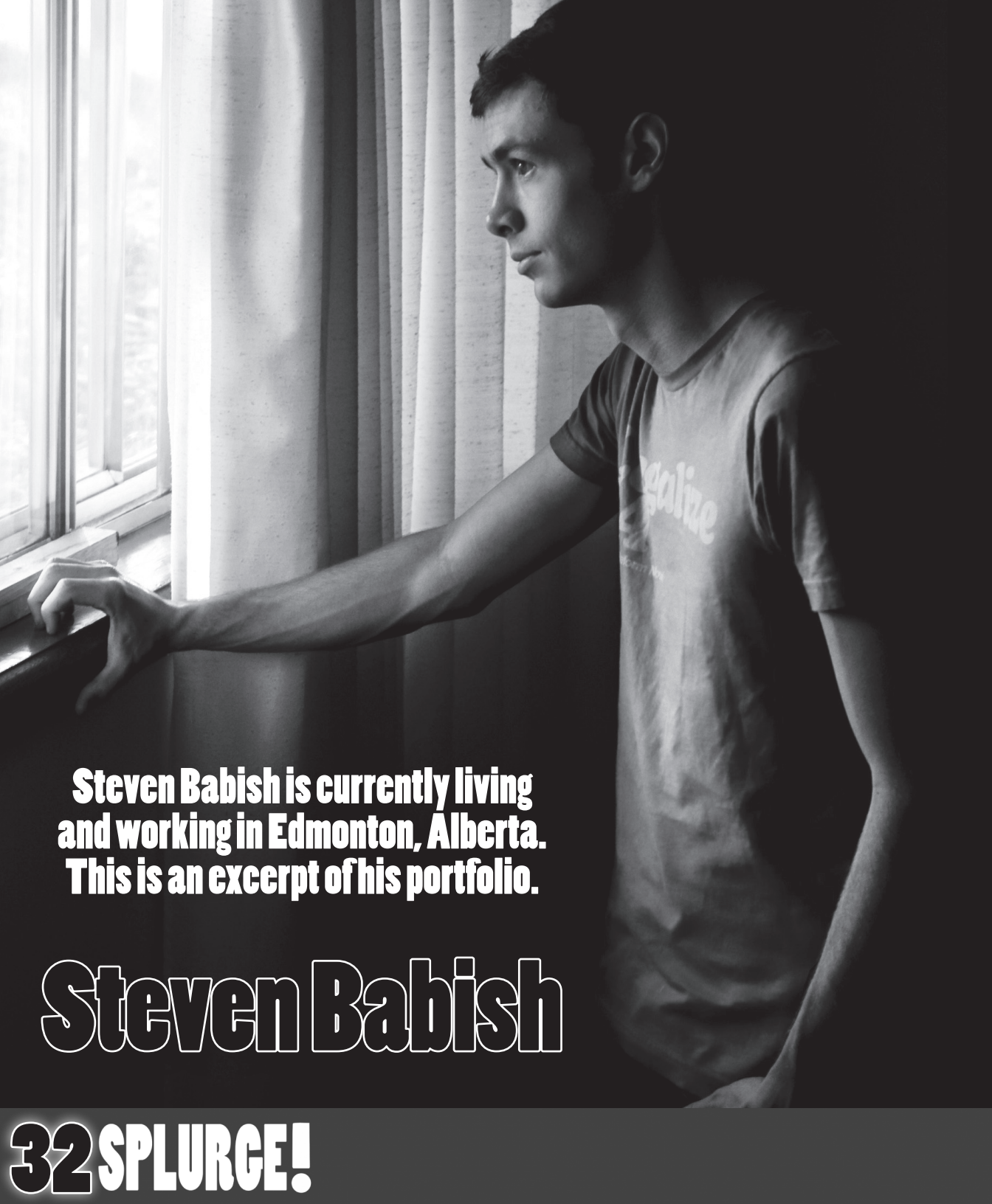
"Reading 'Urban Graffiti' is like getting slapped in the face - after you've already been slapped in the face 50 times." - BP4

"The antidote to all the precious, crapola lit mags out there, UG is home to the ugly, the depressing, the sexy, the funny and the fucked up." - BP12

"I kept trying to think of good things to say about Urban Graffiti, I really did." BP22

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**Steven Babish is currently living
and working in Edmonton, Alberta.
This is an excerpt of his portfolio.**

Steven Babish

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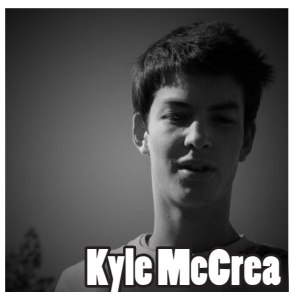
SPLURGE! 33

THE CONTRIBUTORS



Omar Mouallem, aka A.O.K, is an Edmonton emcee who got his start in the rural town of High Prairie, Alberta, and sharpened his skills in the Vancouver hip-hop scene. The Edmonton-based concept artist works around his interests in politics, women, love, religion, science, and hip-hop itself. His debut retail album *If You Don't Buy This CD the Terrorists Win* dropped in June 2008. Aside from music, Omar works as a writer and journalist. He has

worked for Exclaim, Vue Weekly, Sun Media and other presses. He has also worked as a filmmaker and film editor. He enjoys cinema, live hip-hop, peanut brittle, David Cross, semantics, writing in third person, cats and stomach aches that can be cured by defecating.



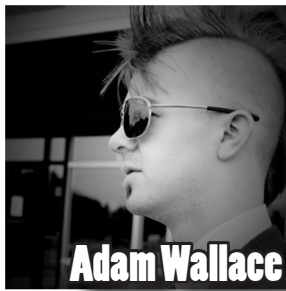
Kyle McCrea scours the shadowy streets, blind alleys, and the low-life decadence of Old Strathcona as an agent provocateur. When not writing his seminal, provocative, and satirical articles

for 'Splurge', he has more private interests. Where is he living now? Who knows.



Pitchko is a modern day herald of village news, whether or not the village wants to hear it. To this end, he keeps his teeth very very white so at any

moment he may spring into action. He also appeared in the inaugural issue of 'Splurge'.



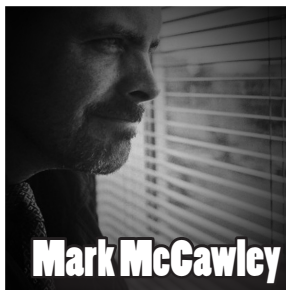
Adam Wallace is a Psychology and Philosophy double major, an un-self-proclaimed maestro of the meta-physical meanderings of the mind, and a born again hair fascist.

"Fuck you if you don't like my hair."



Mike Kuby delivers your mail by day, and documents the latest in fireworks exploding in train tunnels by night. He's a new submitter to 'Splurge', but

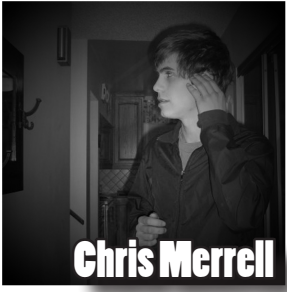
we won't hold that against him. In fact: we're glad to have him along for the ride.



Mark McCawley is a fiction writer, editor, poet, philosopher, and foole. He has authored nine chapbooks, most recently, *Just Another Asshole* (Greensleeve Editions, 1995), *Collateral Damage* (www.coraclepress.com, 2008), and *Sick Lazy Fuck* (Black

Bile Press, 2008). He is the founder of Greensleeve Editions and the editor of *Urban Graffiti*, a litzone of transgressive, post-realist writing.

SPLURGE!



Chris Merrell

Chris Merrell is a jack of all trades, and a master of a few of them. Unpaid, he writes, sings, and plots his revenge on the future. Paid, he works at a bar, a

clothing store, and a restaurant. Gotta make a living like the rest of us. He also appeared in the inaugural issue of 'Splurge'.



Steven Babish

Steven Babish was born into a world seeing the skyline beautifully on fire, all twisted with metal stretching upwards, and everything washed in a thin orange haze. His parents must've been

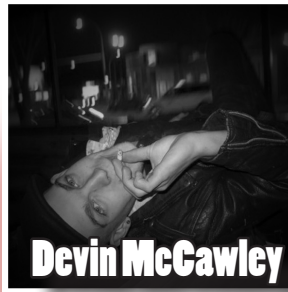
hippies. He believes that the most important thing is to spread confusion, not to eliminate it. Damn straight.



Thea Bowering

Thea Bowering works in Edmonton as a bartender, teacher, and writer. She is currently working on a collection of short fiction. Her most recent work appears in *The*

Capilano Review's special issue on the poet Sharon Thesen.



Devin McCawley

Devin McCawley is the Editor of 'Splurge', co-publisher of Greensleeve Editions, and a photographer. He is currently realizing his true destiny. The future holds only ques-

tions: the present holding all the answers. And as such, he spend most of his time being far too confused.

ONE LAST THOUGHT:

Now that the show is over, and we have jointly exercised our constitutional rights, we would like to leave you with one very important thought: Some time in the future, you may have the opportunity to serve as a juror in a so-called obscenity case, copyright infringement case, or other cases linked to the exercising of artistic parody. It would be wise to remember that the same corporate lawyers who would stop you from reading 'Splurge' may be back next year to complain about a book, or even a TV program. If you can be told what you can see or read, then it follows that you can be told what to say or think. Defend your constitutionally-protected rights. No one else will do it for you. Thank you.

SPLURGE!

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**feel the
urge ...**

**...to
spurge!**



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