

THE

VOICE

MAGAZINE

Volume 16 Issue 48
December 12, 2008

At the Movies

Eye of the Century

Budget Blues

Making it all add up

Winding It Up

In conversation with
Ron Morse



Plus:

*The Interviewer, On the Hill,
From Where I Sit, and much more...*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.



ON THE HILL

Sandra Livingston



If a Tree Falls

Forget the whole Harper versus Ignatieff uproar, and the prorogued Parliament tumult. There's another political quandary that has Canadians taking sides, and it's got nothing to do with backbenchers or budgets. Instead, it's all about a tree.

A Christmas tree, to be exact: Should the festively decorated foliage at Quebec's legislature be called a Christmas tree or a holiday tree?

That was the dilemma facing Quebec Premier Jean Charest's office this week. On Tuesday, a news release announced the premier was going to light the "Christmas tree" the following day. Minutes later, an updated bulletin replaced the Christmas tree with a "holiday tree." By Wednesday afternoon it had been changed again, and the beleaguered conifer was once again a Christmas tree.

If we're going to establish a solid argument one way or the other, the question is this: do decorated trees have an exclusive association with the religious celebration of Christmas? Not the secular orgy of gift-buying that is the popular, modern-day version, but the core tenets of the event.

And if they don't, what's wrong with our public, secular institutions simply calling them holiday trees in recognition of the many celebrations Canadians mark in December, religious or otherwise? (A key part of the question being the words *secular* and *public*.)

If your first reaction is to thunder that of course the Christmas tree is an ancient symbol of the celebration of Christ's birth, you may not know that the decorated trees are, historically speaking, a fairly recent development, first appearing in Germany in the 1700s. They weren't even accepted in North America until the 1850s (hardly making them our age-old cultural icon of the event), and many notable Christians protested loudly against the trees being associated with Christmas at all.

Oliver Cromwell, who became Lord Defender of the Commonwealth in 1653, was among those determined to keep Christmas a "sacred event," and preached against such "heathen traditions" as decorated trees.

The Puritans weren't keen on associating decked out trees with Christmas either. Their second governor, William Bradford, penalized anyone who tried to include such "pagan mockery" into the Christian observance of December 25. And as recently as 1851, Pastor Henry Schwan of Ohio was threatened with violence when his parishioners objected to him putting a decorated tree in church.

Is the religious celebration of Christmas an integral part of North American society? Absolutely, and it is a wonderful time to reflect on and renew its message of peace, generosity, and goodwill. To defend that tradition has merit. But why insist that a symbol with deep connections to many other celebrations, some more ancient than Christmas, be named solely after one religious observance, especially by public institutions?

To settle the debate, maybe we should call them Woden trees, after the ancient Germanic peoples of Northern Europe who used mistletoe, holly, and Yule logs (along with fruit and candles tied to trees) to honour their god Woden and symbolize eternal life. Now *that* sounds like a party.

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

**Ron Morse, General Manager of Wind-up Records**

Wind-up Records is the largest independently owned music label in North America. In November the company signed a joint publishing deal with leading filmed entertainment studio Lionsgate.

Ron Morse is the general manager for Wind-up Entertainment LLC. Before joining Wind-up, Morse worked for Sam the Record Man, Warner Music Canada, and Sony Music Canada. He recently spoke with us from Toronto regarding Wind-up's new joint publishing agreement with Lionsgate.

About Wind-up

The Wind-up slogan is "Developing career artists." It isn't just a slogan; the company lives by it. As an example, the label's second signing over a decade ago was the Burlington, Ontario rock act Finger Eleven. If you look up "artist development" in the dictionary Finger Eleven is the first name you should see. When I first started working with the band in Canada they were just starting out and they had a small loyal fan base; however, it took quite some time for mainstream radio to embrace them. It has been a dozen years and four albums now and Wind-up has stuck with them through it all.

Their first album, *Tip*, was just certified gold this year and their most recent album, *Them Vs. You Vs. Me*, is platinum, plus the band won the 2008 Juno for Rock Album of the Year and the debut single from their album *Paralyzer* holds the record for most weeks at number one at rock radio, a very long way from the band's humble beginnings.

Because Wind-up Records is a privately held, independently owned company, there is little chance of it becoming a large faceless corporation. The company's size and organization affords it the ability to be nimble and adapt quickly with the fast changing music business landscape. Innovations such as this Lionsgate partnership will hopefully keep Wind-up on the cutting edge of change.

Why Lionsgate?

Recently I overheard somebody in the business say, "TV is the new radio." That may be [a] bit of an exaggeration but there is little doubt artists, managers, and labels are looking for novel ways to gain exposure. Television shows and movies can be a powerful medium to achieve this.

There have been many recent success stories of bands, such as The Fray, who got a big leg up through a relationship they developed with a film or TV company. Placement in the right prime-time TV show or at a crucial scene in a blockbuster movie can really help to capture the public's ear.

The deal benefits both Lionsgate and Wind-up's artists. Increasingly, film and TV companies are finding how crucial a part music plays in providing a powerful emotional underpinning for their scripts and story lines. In that respect music is a great driver for them, helping their television and movie properties to become more successful.

On the flip side, our artists now have another key stakeholder in their success. Lionsgate will actively search out appropriate placement for our artists' music in their highly successful TV and film properties. It's a win-win.

The industry's been evolving in terms of the partnerships they form with their artists. Wind-up has always been at the forefront of this. We've been in the merchandising business for a number of years now with Pronto Merch; we administer much of our artists' publishing and we take part in their touring activities. For Wind-up it's never been just about selling music, it's always been about developing our artists' careers. The Lionsgate partnership is another key element in achieving this.

AU Profiles:

AU Profiles: Tia Siewart

Christina M. Frey



In this week's profile, we meet second-year Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) student Tia Siewart. This single mother of two tells us what motivates her study habits, and how long-term planning and a whole-person coursework approach keep her on track.

She also shares her special technique for combatting those common feelings of frustration and discouragement.

"I originally started AU while I was pregnant . . . I wanted to stay home with my baby," Tia says.

Her decision to return to school was both financially and personally motivated: "Raising two kids on my own . . . with my current wage . . . was motivation enough," she says. "Plus, I wanted more for myself: I wanted to make a career for myself."

The flexibility of distance learning has opened up other opportunities. Since starting with AU, Tia has moved from the city to a remote peninsula in Newfoundland, in a quiet community of about 160 people. "It is very, very beautiful . . . [it's] nice to live just off the ocean," she says. "Being with AU, it is an option right now."

Despite living in a small community, Tia's life is still hectic with her two kids and full-time studies. "I am lucky that I eat!" she says. Her secret to managing time is organization.

For example, she lays out a whole course plan at the beginning, sorting through her course materials and creating a week-by-week schedule. She has carried this approach into other areas of her life as well. "I also make lists for all my housework," she says.

Self-motivation is one of Tia's strong points, and it helps her keep to her schedule, even if there's a time crunch. "I . . . panic if I feel that I am even two days behind!" she says. "I don't have problems keeping up with my pace."

This means that although she has weekly and long-term course goals, she can be flexible about her daily study time. "I try to do it in the daytime when [my] older child is in school," she says. "Some weeks I . . . get the weekend off, and some weeks I work every day . . . I just remain flexible."

Planning has become a way of life, but it's not only about the work, whether school or home-related. To keep from getting burned out, Tia makes sure to schedule in downtime. "I arrange each four months so that I get a week or two off at the end if possible," she says. "I get a little holiday after each four month run."

To cope with the day-to-day business of learning, Tia has worked out some creative study methods. Rather than sticking to one technique, she combines several in a whole-person approach.

"I try to incorporate a lot of the senses so that it encodes in my long-term memory," she says. For example, she marks her text, takes notes, cross-references, flags pages, and uses flashcards—"for the hands-on" part, she says.

As for the other senses, she says, "I will use the reading for visual [and] will say things out loud for the auditory."

Not surprisingly, these techniques help her retain what she's learning. "I have worked with special needs kids, Alzheimer's people, and [in] other jobs that have taught me to [use] what really works, instead of what 'should' work," she says.

Tia's background and approach to learning suggest a career in counselling, and although she hasn't settled on a career field at this point, she's currently leaning in that direction.

"I would like something with a high job demand where I can choose where to live," she says. "I would be open to living in a remote area in the future . . . [and] there is a lot of need to reach remote areas with human services jobs."

In the meantime, she's working steadily on her degree, but sometimes the road ahead seems long. "I am 33 and . . . the undergrad will take until the end of 2011," Tia says. "Then I have to further my education past that."

It's easy to get discouraged, but Tia has a good weapon: visualization, a technique she's used throughout her life. "I picture myself when I am 50," she says. "I am working at my career and I love it, and then I go home to my cozy home."

And she's careful to make it realistic, "so that I'll believe it!" she says. "I picture it all . . . my kids' pictures on my desk."

Most importantly, she visualizes how she'll feel once it's all behind her. "I just picture it all done," Tia says. "And worth it."

It's easy to get discouraged, but Tia has a good weapon: visualization, a technique she's used throughout her life.

I'VE GOT THE BUDGET BLUES

Greg Ryan



I've got the budget blues, but then it's good to have a budget to be blue about. I didn't always have a budget, because I didn't consider one necessary. The budgetary process sounds complex, irritating, and time-consuming.

There are so many demands upon my energy reserves, as a part-time student/full-time family man, that the last thing I want is another time-wasting irritant.

However, when the money runs out before the bills do it's time to re-evaluate my stand against sticking to the budget.

I know that as a student I have a limited allotment of resources to utilize in pursuing educational endeavours. My studies consume my time and money and I only have so much of each to spend.

There are other aspects of life to be weighed against my scholastic objectives and these require budgeting also. I devise a system that balances family, career, and school needs so that when my spouse's day is derailed there's a sympathetic shoulder for her to lean upon.

When life asks the children to sail against the wind and they want my guiding hand on the tiller, I'm ready to climb aboard. My mentally challenged brother often demands help in navigating his confusing, complicated life.

What will help me manage my way through this complex existence that has suddenly sprung up around me? I turn for assistance to that two-fold budget I designed when embarking on my journey as an Athabasca student.

As well as being a student, I'm a husband, father, and brother. There is a duty to family that transcends all other callings; therefore, my first investment is a Day-Timer. I carry the leather-bound notebook in my pocket and record the hours dedicated to family and friends. As well, I jot down the countless demands that surviving the day place upon me.

My second acquisition as a new Athabasca University student is the AUSU planner. I obsessively record the time spent on my university courses, whether it be reading, studying, or writing. Every scholastic commitment that comes my way is documented in the planner; it records the minutes and hours that the fulfillment of my educational pursuits requires. If I don't keep track of those precious moments, how am I to measure the extent of my obligation?

Next, I purchase a journal in which to chronicle my working day. I'm self-employed and the hours I spend on business ebb and flow, not like the Pacific tides, which have their regular rhythms, but in sporadic, frenzied bursts of activity interspersed with inertia.

I know now the time demands that family, school, and career impose upon me. Knowledge concerning my commitments is a resource; I utilize it in keeping life balanced.

But my chequebook needs balancing also.

For this purpose a financial budget is invaluable in helping me reach my goals. I have wants and I have needs and there is a marked difference between the two. There are many things I want but don't need and there are many needs that are non-negotiable. For example, I yearn to acquire the latest version of the MacBook Pro, but can't afford one, because food and shelter overshadow such a yearning. Yet, with judicious planning, a Mac on my desk can be a reality and here's how it can be done.

A computer-generated spreadsheet is a marvellous tool for taking charge of my income and achieving the alluring financial goals I've set for myself. I construct a budget spreadsheet configured to display each expense column in updated totals. I create a want column and, as able, post funds toward fulfilling the family's current dream. Wants, needs, and income might change, but as they do so does my budget.

By posting each day's expenditures on a regular basis, I'm able to determine my financial status at a glance and perhaps find that I can post a few dollars into the wants column at month's end; this is how dreams become realities.

There's another way of fulfilling my dreams and that is the ubiquitous, potentially dangerous credit card. What a deadly trap I set for myself by using instant credit to instantly satisfy my wants. Credit is useful, but when abused it's a merciless merchant, who like Shylock, will demand its pound of flesh. I find it less painful and more satisfying to plan and save until I've the funds in hand, rather than borrowed, to realize this year's dream.

I'm a passionate budget advocate, because it makes a hectic life so much easier to cope with. I budget my time and money. There's time for work, school, and play and there's funding to meet the family's needs and wants.

I'm in control again and that's the way it's going to stay.

*I'm a passionate
budget advocate,
because it makes a
hectic life so much
easier to cope with.*



THE VOICE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

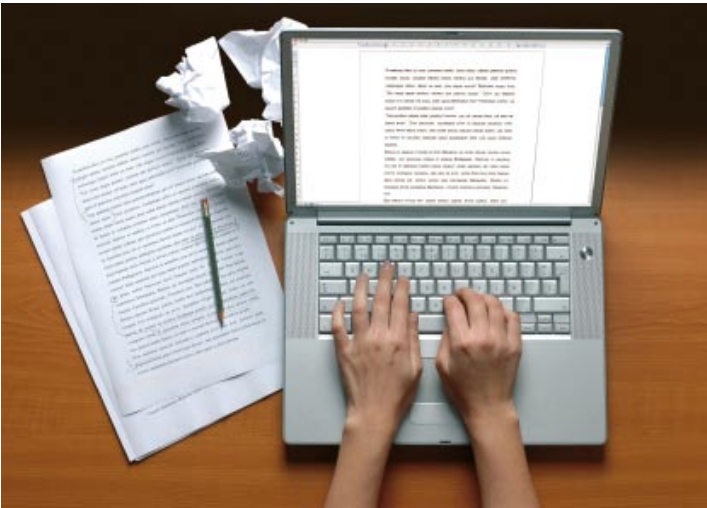
The holiday season is fast approaching, and our last regular issue for 2008 will be on Friday, December 19 (we won't publish December 26).

We'll be enjoying lots of eggnog and good cheer from December 22 through January 2, and will be back at work on January 5.

On January 9, watch for our Best of 2008 issue, with our editors' picks of the best news and views from the past year. Our first regular issue for 2009 will be published January 16.

We wish our readers all the best for the holiday season, and we're looking forward to another great year of keeping you informed and entertained!

THE 2008 VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!



Write for *The Voice* and win money for your education!

The Voice is launching its 2008 writing contest, with categories for both fiction and non-fiction.

We've got over \$1,000 in prizes to give away: one winner in each category will receive a scholarship of one Athabasca University undergraduate course.

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines carefully to ensure you are not disqualified.

It's free to enter, but the length limits are firm and all entries that go beyond these limits will be disqualified. Good luck!

Categories

Non-Fiction:

In 1,500 words or less, write about any issue affecting freedom of speech. You may write about issues in the press, in politics, or on a personal scale. You may focus on current issues of free speech, or take a historical approach. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article (with proper citations), or write a creative opinion piece.

Fiction:

This category is open to your imagination! Write a 1,500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

Rules and Regulations

- The *Voice* writing contest is open to anyone 16 years of age or older, with the following exceptions: AU, AUSU, and *Voice* staff and AUSU councillors are not eligible to enter the contest.
- Winning entries will be published in *The Voice*. *The Voice* reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current *Voice* freelance submission rates. *The Voice* may use portions of non-winning non-fiction entries in a composite about perspectives on free speech. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the *Voice* editors, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU councillors. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- *The Voice* editors will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be judges.

- Entries must be original works that have not been printed or published elsewhere (including online), and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To ensure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information. *The Voice* editors will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. *The Voice* editors will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although *The Voice* editors may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel as is, with the exception that all entries will be converted to use the same file format, margins, font size, and font style to ensure that all entries are equally readable.
- The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. *The Voice* reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the *Voice* scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a certificate for one free Athabasca University undergraduate course. Prize certificates have no cash value.
- *The Voice* reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.
- *The Voice* is not responsible for lost emails. *The Voice* editors will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Please follow up if you do not receive a reply in two business days.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city of residence to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration—beyond the contest prize—will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Winners will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if *The Voice* editors determine, at their sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- No preference will be given to regular *Voice* writers. Entries will not identify the writer as a regular *Voice* contributor when sent to the judging panel.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial, and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited.

The deadline for submissions in both categories will be December 31, 2008. The winners will be announced by February 28, 2009. The Voice reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.

Submission Guidelines

- Your submission must be an electronic file attached to an email and submitted to voice@ausu.org. Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact voice@ausu.org if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc or .docx], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt].

- If you use footnotes or endnotes, type them in at the end of the document, rather than using the endnote feature of your word processor.
- If you use a word processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact *The Voice* editors if you require assistance in formatting your submission. Users of older Macs may have to send entries in HTML format.
- Each entrant may submit one entry in each of the two categories.
- All entries must be under 1,500 words due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the word count feature in Microsoft Word. Your references and citations section will not be included in the word count.
- References should be formatted consistently according to a standardized publishing style guide, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) or the MLA press style.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics (unless the graphic is integral to the work), or unusual fonts. Entries must be text; scans of handwritten or typed documents will not be accepted.
- The email should include the following information: Your full name, AU student ID number (if applicable), email address, telephone number, mailing address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting to the fiction or non-fiction category.
- Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article but be sure to include a title.

Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Non-Fiction entries will be judged on originality, creativity, accuracy, and how well your support your assertions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability. You may write in journalistic style or essay format.
- Fiction entries will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality of your writing style.
- Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece and your technical writing skills.

Contact voice@ausu.org if you have any questions.

DID YOU KNOW?

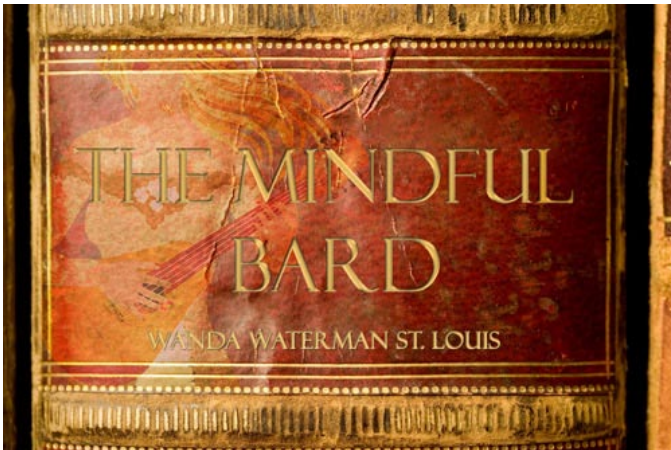


PLAR Program Highlighted in New Book

AU's Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process has been highlighted in a new book titled *Prior Learning Portfolios: A Representative Collection*, making AU the only Canadian institution to be included.

The book, published by CAEL/Kendall Hunt Publishing, includes a CD-Rom with "copies of relevant models, processes, templates, and samples from each contributing university as well as historical material outlining the development of prior learning activities over the years," as the AU website explains.

If you want to learn more about how to use PLAR to gain credit for past academic and work experience, visit AU's Centre for Learning Accreditation [here](#).



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Book: Francesco Casetti, *Eye of the Century: Film, Experience, Modernity*

Publisher: Columbia University Press, 2008

Translation by Erin Larkin with Jennifer Pranolo

Recovering a Balanced Turmoil

“The cinema is exactly this: an experience that vacillates between the possibility of an excitement beyond measure, and an adherence to measures that avoid all risk. It is the space between, in which the comings and goings serve to recover a balanced turmoil in order to arrive at what modern man needs: good emotion.”

Francesco Casetti, from *Eye of the Century*

I now feel completely justified in having allowed *O Lucky Man* to pull me out of the morass of late-adolescent misery and *Wings of Desire* to restore my sense of the numinous after a long, bleak hiatus.

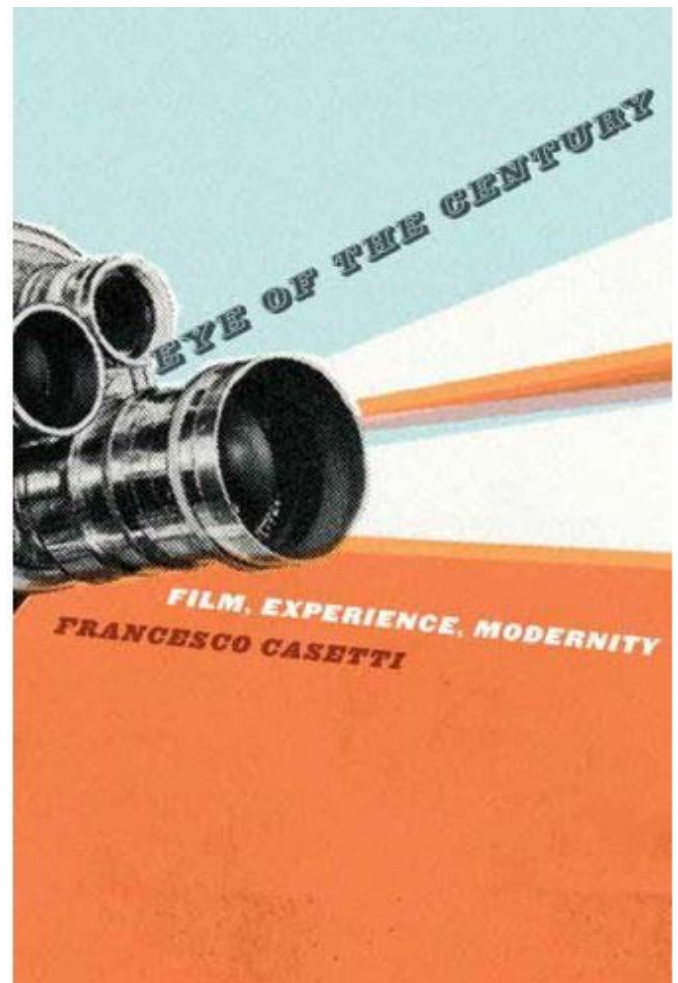
Eye of the Century is a difficult book, but the grind is often relieved by statements of such rare poetic charm that they effectively elucidate many of our emotional responses to film.

It is a book beside which to mentally revisit, with a more intimate understanding, all your favourite movies. After reading it you can't help but watch movies with the question: *What is this film telling me about Film Itself?*

For example, *King Kong* is seen as an account of reality, the raw material of film, maddened by the technological world that, unlike the primitive world, aims to capture and subdue it.

This standoff between technology and reality is one of the basic conflicts that render film so important in the modern world.

To give an idea of the significance with which Casetti imbues the movie camera, film is presented as the medium required by modern society to function, in Marshal McLuhan's words, as its “nervous system.”



More often, in the author's words, it is a fulcrum, and even more often it is an eye, as the title states—an eye suffused with astounding discernment.

The movie camera lens is an eye that continually vacillates between opposites. Casetti frequently refers to that circularity between poles which he sees at the heart of film: just as we achieve objectivity we slide into the subjective; we begin to understand the part and are propelled into the whole; we achieve individuality as we begin to feel compelled to conform; and the observer becomes the observed, who then becomes the observer.

It is not in the poles that meaning is found but rather in the space between the poles and the movement through that space. It is this polar movement that makes of film a prime agent for negotiating change in the modern world.

Recalling the machine-as-master theme of *The Matrix* as well as the *Terminator* movies, Casetti reminds us of the typically modern fear that machines will take on wills of their own and force humans to work for them. Such a concept is a disguise for that anxiety we experience when we realize that the more mechanized our world becomes the more our wills become encumbered by the demands and restrictions of technology.

But Casetti points to film as a technological medium that in its depths is steered both by human concern and by the potential to be possessed by machines in the service of the arts to pull the arts away from class divisions and create a democracy of artistic pursuit.

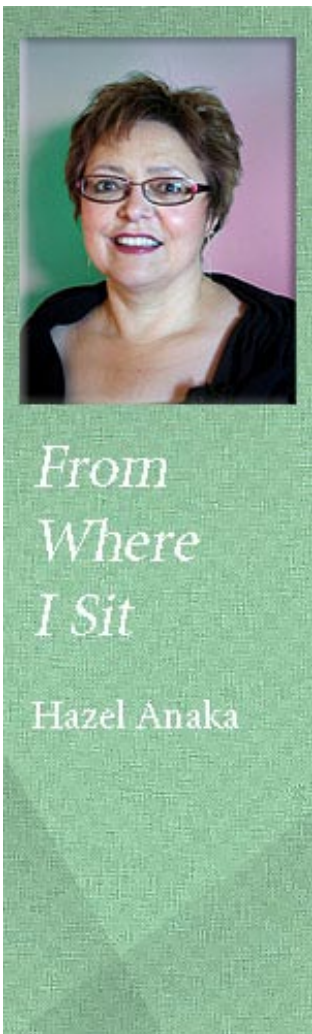
The camera lens shocks us into seeing the reality from which we are constantly, for one reason or another, averting our eyes. It makes itself acceptable by pretending not to be offering something entirely new (which would make it unpalatable), but rather to show itself as a kind of regeneration, a rebirth of the old.

Casetti doesn't neglect speculation on the future of film. Although he admits that the cinema may not continue to dominate culture as it did in the twentieth century, due to increased dependence on digital technologies, he insists that human beings will still need stories and that for this reason new media will probably not try to replace film but will choose to collaborate with it instead.

Eye of the Century manifests six of The Mindful Bard's criteria for books well worth reading: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it makes me want to be a better artist; 3) it gives me tools which help me be a better artist; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it stimulates my mind; 6) it poses and admirably responds to questions which have a direct bearing on my view of existence.

The Bard could use some help scouting out new material. If you discover any books, compact disks, or movies which came out in the last twelve months and which you think fit the Bard's criteria, please drop a line to bard@voicemagazine.org. For a list of criteria, go [here](#). If I agree with your recommendation, I'll thank you online.

***. . . human beings will
still need stories and . . .
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media will probably not
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collaborate with it
instead.***



Choices

Standoffs, stabbings, drive-by shootings. Recession, depression. Inflation, deflation. Layoffs and closures. Global warming, pollution, carcinogens. Coups and coalitions, resignations and coronations. If your head is spinning and your gut is churning, if you're worried and confused, you are not alone.

You may be like me, watching the news and reading the paper, hanging on every word, following every twist and turn, sifting through the endless analysis of everything from federal politics to the state of our investments.

Or you may be the type who channel surfs right past the news and gets your take on the state of the world at the local coffee shop. We all have our own way of coping with stress and uncertainty. Near as I can tell, no one has the answers to the crime rate, the dysfunctional parliamentary antics, the economic morass, or health and safety issues.

No one can tell me to put money in a mattress or learn to love Jack Layton. No one should tell you to walk away from the coveted 42-inch flat-screen TV if you can really, really, really afford it. We can't tell our friends or relatives, our provincial or international counterparts how to live, what to value, what to sacrifice.

What we can do is inform ourselves, re-examine our values, and come up with an action plan that will cushion the hurt and ensure the best outcome for ourselves and our family. Tonight's news said cancer will overtake heart disease as the leading global killer by 2010. Maybe, just maybe, now is the time to quit once and for all.

Save a heap of hurtin' and free up some extra cash. Win-win. Maybe this is the Christmas to pay cash for the gifts rather than lighting up the old credit cards. That will prevent the January shock factor when the bills arrive. Or maybe this is the year to give green gifts to minimize the assault on the environment.

Or is this the year for gifts from the heart—something handcrafted perhaps? Maybe this is the year to re-gift some of the oh-so-inappropriate things we've received in the past. Or, as mother would say, maybe it's time to simply spend time together because that's the most precious gift of all.

Most experts say the past week on Parliament Hill has ignited the interest of Canadians and that, my friends, is a good thing. Maybe the half of the population that sat out the last election will be more likely to get off the couch and actually think through and follow through on their choice next time—whether it's January 2009 or two years from now.

You have to know things have finally gotten exciting when Jon Stewart spoofs Canadian politics on his late-night show. So whether you decide to spend or save, smoke or not, or get engaged in the hot topics of politics, economics, and the environment is totally up to you.

Just please don't retreat into feelings of despair and helplessness because this too shall pass, from where I sit.

The Interviewer

It is the ninth decade of the twentieth century...

written and illustrated by Wanda Waterman Ft. Louis

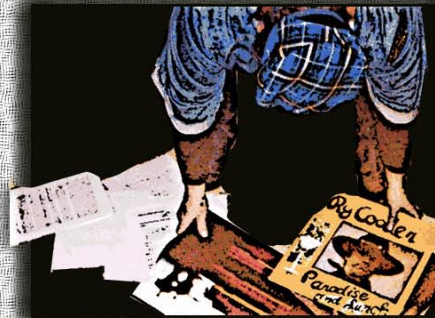
Rockhead #4: How Seeds and Taffy Stream

The cleaners eventually complain to the administration and end up with Gord, this young guy from a local group home.



Hoi, bood! I'm Gord from Glace Bay!

Gord takes great pride in his work.



Gord's job is to go in ahead of the cleaning crew and pick stuff up off the floor and place it in neat stacks on the nearest available surface.



At first Reuben doesn't know how to relate to Gord because Gord hates coffee and lectures him about smoking.

Besides, he's heard that Gord is Brad's brother.

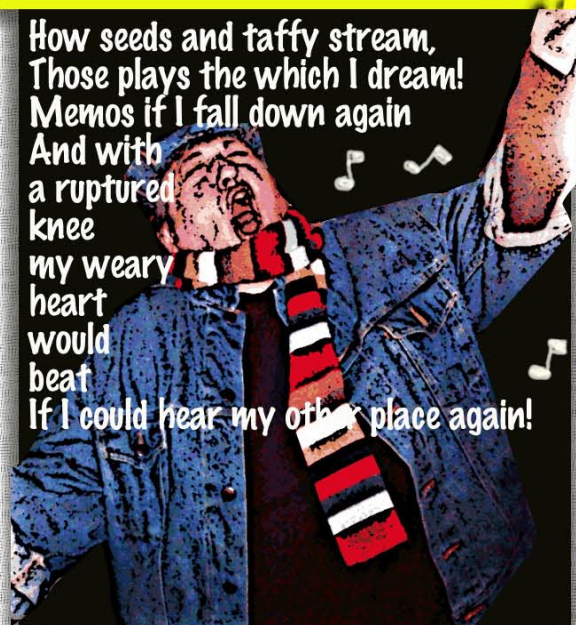


But one day Reuben plays the Blind Boys of Alabama and Gord comes right into the studio.

Reuben doesn't believe him at first but then Gord starts singing along and apparently he knows all the words albeit his version is rife with malapropisms.

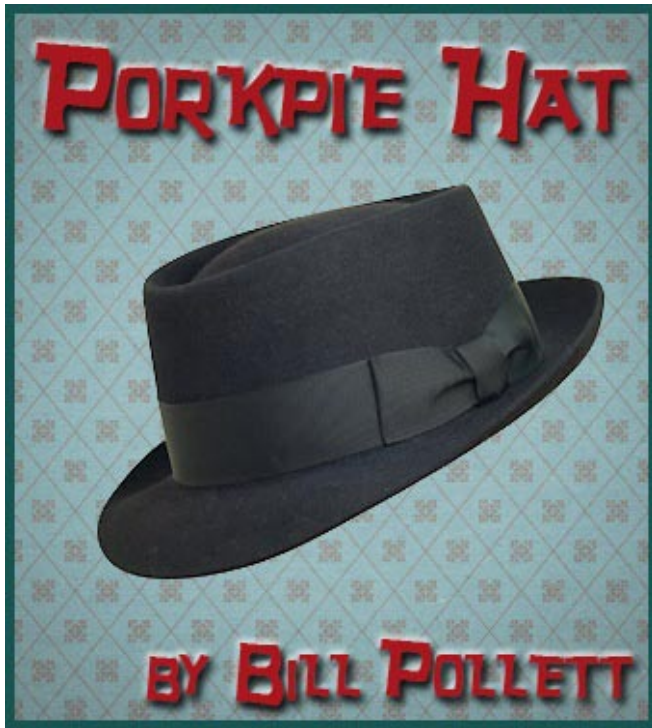
How seeds and taffy stream,
Those plays the which I dream!
Memos if I fall down again
And with a ruptured
knee
my weary
heart
would
beat
If I could hear my other place again!

I gut that record!



A good work ethic makes me a happy boy!

next: : Group Home



Some of the Things That Make You Major

Some of those things they kept from you a good long while. They distracted you with shining ornaments, bendable action figures, flickering screens, dolls with shiny blond hair that drive bright pink cars to the plastic mall.

Some of those things they called evil, exorcised them from you with complicated rituals involving rulers and acts of public humiliation.

Some of those things you hid from the world, like dirty little secrets, like underwear skid marks in the locker room. You kept them out of sight, didn't you? You hid them under your pillow, in the back of your closet, beneath loose floorboards.

Desperate for a distraction, so you could make your getaway, you pointed an accusing finger at others. You pretended you were like everybody else, who was

pretending to be like everybody else.

Some of those things you hid from yourself. You were the easiest of all to fool, never asking yourself too many questions that were difficult to answer. Like ancient remains, you buried those things under manicured lawns, detached housing. For years, your neighbours never even suspected the existence of the maniac in the attic, all those vaults and chambers and passageways hidden beneath the easy-clean surfaces.

Some of those things, they come to you now uninvited. They flutter like great, dark moths about your porch light. They slam themselves against your window on winter nights. They hide themselves in the spaces between the words of poems and songs and love letters you meant to burn. They dress themselves as angels and as demons. They communicate with you in riddles, in backwards writing, in the logic of dreams.

They are shadow, and they are light. They drop dead birds and windfall apples at your feet. They force you to the ground so you can weep in grief, or make angels in the snow. They are viruses and mermaids swimming in your blood. They are travel plans gone awry, unexpected turns of event. They call you up in the middle of the night, and ask if they can come over. They take the form of approaching storms, receding trains, of headlights in the snow. They cause you to wake up laughing and crying. They make you giddy and dizzy and scared.

Some of those things that make you major can turn you all around and upside down. They are the reason you should stick around as long as you can. Just wait and see.

AUSU This Month



2009 AUSU Handbook/Planners

The 2009 AUSU planner pre-order form is up! You'll find the order form on the AUSU [home page](#), but please note, the planner will only be sent out when it arrives in our office in December.

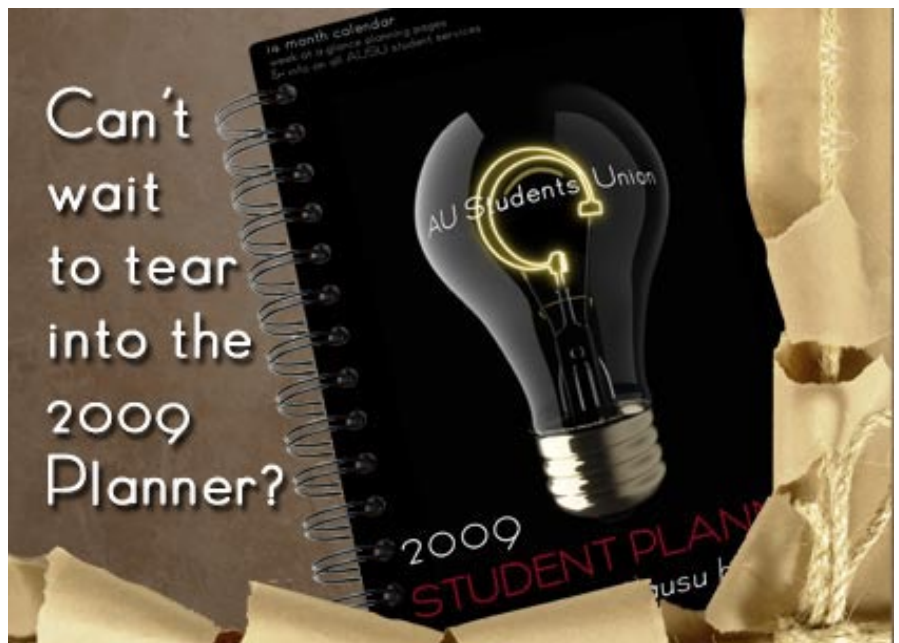
Anyone who pre-orders will be in the first batch of planners mailed out. If you order early, you should have your new planner by the time the January pages run out in the old one—and hopefully well before that!

As always, we'll be excited to know what you think of the planner, and especially want to hear of any improvements you think could be made.

Merchandise Still for Sale

We still have some locks and memory keys available for sale. Both of these were designed with ease of mailing in mind, which means they're small enough to be easily stored pretty much anywhere.

The wristband USB key is a unique way to carry around your assignments, online materials, and even emails while you're on the go. With a 1 gigabyte capacity, it can even handle a good chunk of your music collection, and the design means you no longer have to worry about losing it. *The Voice* memory key has less capacity (512 MB) but the dark, flip-top design is classy enough to accompany you anywhere.



AUSU Lock Loan Program

Still running, and still popular, the lock loan program can allow you to rest easy knowing your valuables are safe if you're taking an exam at the Calgary or Edmonton campus. The locks can be set to any combination, and are loaned to people without any deposit, but we ask that you please remember to reset them to 0-0-0 before returning them so that we can continue this program.

SmartDraw Program Continues

If you haven't yet, you might want to download a copy of SmartDraw. AUSU has purchased a licence agreement to supply the award-winning SmartDraw software to all AUSU members (current undergraduate students). To access this deal and find out more, visit the front page of our website.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.

For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email. Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

Employment Site is here!

Many of you will already have seen the link to our new employment site on the front page, and while there are not a lot of employers in evidence yet, it's a great opportunity to get your resume, skills, and talents in there.

The Personnel Department is busily working on finding employers who could use your unique abilities as a distance education student. Be sure yours are available to get the early opportunities!



Appointments

AUSU VP External, Barb Rielly, has stepped down from her position as chair of the AUSU Awards Committee, and new Councillor Bethany Porter has taken on the role. Council wishes Bethany good luck in this position, which can involve making some hard decisions.

Increasing AUSU's representation within AU, VP Finance and Administration, Sarah Kertcher, has been appointed to AU's integrated learning centre steering committee. This committee will examine the possibility of integrating all AU sites in the Edmonton Area into one building. Sarah will ensure that the committee keeps concerns of our members with respect to ease of access and exam conditions as well as AUSU's own special needs for storage and physical office space well in mind.

The MyAU steering committee sees two new AUSU representatives, President Karl Low, and VP External Barb Rielly, joining to provide their input on how MyAU could be better structured to meet your needs. If there's something that's been bugging you about the MyAU system, now is a great time to call or email our office and let them know. We'll be sure to bring your concerns forward.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Canada Post loses passport applications

It may be easier to find a guarantor for your passport application these days, but a bigger problem remains: Canada Post's inability to actually deliver the forms to the passport office.

More than 50 passport applications from Alberta and BC have gone missing en route to passport offices in Gatineau, Quebec—applications that contain confidential information and, potentially, original documents such as birth certificates.

Canada Post is now trying to track down the applications and, as the [CBC](#) reports, acknowledges that "the lost documents are a serious concern."

John Caines, a spokesman for Canada Post, told reporters, "Definitely, this is very personal information and we do apologize to anyone who might be affected by this. Anytime a package goes missing it is a concern for us."

The missing applications aren't the first to go astray, Passport Canada confirmed: a staggering 107 passport applications (including the most recent ones) have been mislaid by Canada Post in the past 15 months. All were sent via Canada Post's priority courier service.

The news comes on the heels of a recent report from Jennifer Stoddart, Canada's Privacy Commissioner, warning that Passport Canada's measures for handling personal information are inadequate.

"Given the high sensitivity of the personal information involved in processing passport applications, better privacy and security measures are needed," Stoddart said in her December report.

In Foreign News: UK interest rates could fall to 0%

As Britain's economy continues to shrink and the pound falls against the euro, there is renewed talk of dropping the nation's interest rate to 0 percent.

Britain's economy shrank by 1 percent during the period from August to November and the pace of the downturn is accelerating. According to a [Herald](#) article, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) said "there was every reason to believe" the figure would be worse for the last three months of the year.

The economic figures "make clear that the rate of output decline is accelerating," NIESR reported.

The Bank of England has already slashed interest rates by 2.5 percent over two months, but speculation continues to grow that interest rates will be lowered even further, to 0 percent.

The availability of bank credit is cited as a major cause of the economic woes and, although the government has provided billions of pounds to stimulate Britain's banking sector, it's expected that the UK will officially be in a recession by the end of the year.

EDUCATION NEWS

Ian MacDonald



Critics blast 'political appointment' at MUN

ST. JOHN'S (CUP) - N.L. Liberal Education Critic Roland Butler doesn't doubt Robert Simmonds' qualifications, but he does question the motives behind his appointment as chair of Memorial University of Newfoundland's board of regents.

Simmonds was once one half of the Simmonds-Kennedy law firm—the other half being N.L. Finance Minister Jerome Kennedy. He also advised Kennedy during his 2007 campaign.

"I guess if you're a friend of the premier or a supporter of the party, that is one of the perks of the day," said Butler.

"Political appointments are not something new to government anyways. It's been ongoing for years."

As chair, Simmonds also takes the reins of MUN's presidential search process.

The search was put on hiatus after it was revealed that Education Minister Joan Burke vetoed candidates, an act that was seen by critics as interference with Memorial's autonomy.

Burke, who announced the appointment on November 18, says Simmonds' history as an independent and outspoken lawyer will serve him well in his new role.

"He has the ability to do critical analysis, to be able to think through situations, to be able to negotiate, and to be able to bring that whole level of analysis," she said. "I think that would be an appropriate skill we would need in a chair."

Although the MUN Faculty Association agrees that Simmonds is qualified for the job, it is reserving judgment until a later date.

MUNFA President Ross Klein says the most important issue now is getting a presidential search underway without government interference. Memorial has been without a president since January 2008.

"For us, the way things are now, with the search being suspended, we view that as having a negative implication for the university," said Klein. "We would hope that when the decision is made by the board of regents and presented to the lieutenant governor in council, it would be approved and agreed to."

Burke says she too wants to get the search underway.

"I think we need to clarify our roles; we need to get a permanent president in place at Memorial University. We've got a great institution there, we need to have this issue resolved and move forward," she said.

To ensure Memorial's independence during the new search, Butler plans to put forth a bill in the House of Assembly, N.L.'s provincial legislature, this week that seeks to change the Memorial University Act, which defines MUN's relationship to the provincial government.

With the House stacked against him, he isn't confident it will pass. Currently, Danny Williams' Progressive Conservatives hold 44 of 48 seats.

"Let's face it. When it comes to the House of Assembly, our numbers are way down. There's only four of us, only three on the Liberal side, and the [NDP] has one member," he said.

If it doesn't pass, Klein will still be calling for government to take a step back from Memorial.

"Our concern, whether the Act is changed or not, we want to ensure the university has the autonomy to choose who the president is," he said.

CLICK OF THE WRIST - 'Tis the Season

The holiday season is upon us, and no matter how you celebrate there will be food and drink and making merry—and some of the worst Christmas gifts, music, and films around. Here's a look at some of the oddest holiday goodies on offer.

Magical Reindeer Gem Ornaments

There isn't any magic, but they certainly come from reindeer, and the varnish and glitter probably make them *look* like gems. If you haven't figured it out yet, you might want to read the article before shelling out five dollars for one of these "ornaments."

Worst Christmas Tree

Oh dear. There's nothing else to say, really. Apparently, this £200 tree is so sad that officials in England's County Durham have had to erect a "Caution Under Repair" sign in front of it.

Worst Holiday Albums

Highly subjective, of course, but this list by the *Chicago Tribune* includes some of the most genuinely awful Christmas songs ever recorded.

Twenty Worst Holiday Movies

Again, choosing the worst of the worst is all a matter of taste, but *Entertainment Weekly* has come up with some solid choices. Feel free to skip this one if there's a well-loved copy of *Jingle All the Way* in your DVD collection.

Wackiest Holidays

Okay, so most of these celebrations don't take place in December, but *Time's* look at some of the world's strangest celebrations makes great-aunt Mildred's fruitcake look almost inviting. I suddenly have the urge to make a bonfire out of a Viking longboat.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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