Collision
I specifically remember our first meeting this semester. I was sitting on the 35th floor at 8:25 p.m., waiting for the four or five people I expected to come. At 8:35, however, the room was full—so full, people were standing outside the door just to listen to the meeting. I became suddenly and extremely nervous. I knew being Editor-in-Chief meant that I was expected to do or say something that would make Collision seem organized and polished and wonderful. I knew that all these people had come simply because they wanted to and the idea was daunting.

I am still in disbelief—twenty people stuck with Collision. Twenty people have been at every meeting, have discussed, sometimes for hours, every single submission, have helped put together 25 "works of art," and have listened and re-listened to countless CDs. Twenty people have not slept for Collision, have skipped meals for Collision, have missed classes for Collision, and have given up many more nights than I would have expected of anyone for Collision. I am proud of both my editorial and layout staff because, frankly, they surpassed all my expectations.

I extend special thanks to Hali Felt for essentially being my co-Editor-in-Chief, to Dr. Stewart for continuing to trust and support us, to Karen Billingsley for bearing with us, to Chris Chirdon for helping us, without fail, every time we asked, and to Jennifer Lee for being a lovely advisor and undoubtedly our biggest fan.

Lastly, I would like to thank our authors. They are candid and funny and evocative and passionate and subtle and beautiful. I admire their talent immensely and appreciate their initiative, for Collision, in the end, owes all to them.

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The Winners

1st
Beautiful Earth
By Maya Richman

2nd
Digger
By Greg Kamerdze

3rd
Blackout
By Rachel A. Ruffing
A claustrophobic bar with a generic name - The Dirty Clam, The Old Parrot, something nautically themed and unremarkable – flanked by darkened storefronts, the only place open to the oppressively hot Ft. Lauderdale night. A place where people go to drink and not much else. A small oasis for the locals, tucked away from the roaring four-lane. Car after gleaming car went by, heading down the long asphalt dream on the way to somewhere else.

A thirteen hour bus ride brought me there, the outskirts of a foreign city, the twilight no-place place between city and suburb, drawn in parking lots and highway markers. I had a few hours to look around, my only neighbors row upon row of CLOSED signs, the lurking shadows of palm trees, and The Old Parrot.¹

I was on a clam chowder kick at the time. I sat down and ordered a rum and Coke with a New England clam chowder chaser. I was the only one alone in the bar: in one corner a group of spring breakers and their girlfriends played darts; another corner was people just off work from the local BBQ shack; and down the bar from me sat two grizzled, chain-smoking guys, the kind who are a fixture at every watering hole established enough to have “regulars.”

It was late night/early morning, that time when one day hangs suspended in limbo before turning over into the next. Everyone was dug in for the night, contentedly drinking themselves into tomorrow. I went with the flow, ordering more rum and Cokes and craning my neck to watch the America’s Cup on ESPN2. I have no idea how the America’s Cup works, how points are scored, etc. – I was trying to avoid drawing attention to myself.

I wish I could say I’ll never forget the woman who walked in – I wish I could tell you she was hypersaturated Technicolor in a black-and-white world; that she radiated, tattooing herself on my brain: the delicate curve of her neck; the way her hair didn’t reflect the dim lighting so much as collect and amplify it; how she smiled with her whole body, lithe and with a dangerous intensity.

The truth is, I didn’t even notice her. The door opened and someone walked in; I turned to look, then went back to watching the increasingly hard-to-follow America’s Cup. My rum and Coke was empty, so I ordered another. I felt her sit down next to me – not a deliberate choice, I thought, just her sliding into the chair closest to the door. I may have turned and smiled politely, but suggesting that seems awfully charismatic. More truthfully: My eyes held the TV screen like a life preserver that was keeping me from drifting out into dark, unknown waters.

So we sat. I have a vague feeling she knew some of the regulars, chatted with them while I drank.¹ I don’t remember what was happening with the America’s Cup … (did a basketball game come on?)

There are many kinds of moments. Some you remember with flashbulb clarity, as vibrant snapshots of a time, place, and feeling. Emotional Rembrandts, perfectly executed, unsullied by the dust of time.

Others are double-, triple-, quadruple-exposed. Nothing is ever the way it “really” happened, but lost under a layered fog of interpretation, a scene projected on the swirling, twisting smoke of memory.

I’ll never be sure if what happened¹ then was real or entirely in my head, but I’ll never forget how it felt on my right ankle: a slow, tenuous touch, the tips of a woman’s toes gliding quietly up my leg, barely touching my skin. What possibility feels like. What connection might be. A second², maybe less, but with reverberating significance – the clumsy sensuality of a left-handed caress. A question mark hanging in the air.

¹ Or whatever.
² Red, or blonde. Or brunette.
³ The main character in Philip K. Dick’s A Scanner Darkly wears something called a “blur suit.” The blur suit projects to the outside world the likeness of every person stored in its database, changing many times a second. It turns the wearer into a blur, a non-person who is everyone.
⁴ Easy excuse for what’s to come: I was more drunk than I realized. But honestly, I wasn’t that drunk. Excuses come to an end somewhere.
⁵ …the object of such intense scrutiny, a Warren Commission-style, 26 volumes and counting in my head kind of thing, analysis as the marginalia of experience, full of false starts and mental scribblings, rehashings and Matrix-like bullet-time scrutiny – slow it down here, pause, rotate the scene, examine the “facts” …
⁶ Of course I’ll forget. I’ve already forgotten so much. See 7.
⁷ Or knee. My journal says knee, but I remember it as being the ankle. (How is that possible? Was I wearing sandals at the time? What really happened here?) Picture it in your head...
⁸ Calculate the nanoseconds necessary for sensation to travel up my leg to my brain, for my brain to recognize human touch (I just want someone to talk to/ And a little of that Human Touch /Just a little of that Human Touch” – Bruce Springsteen) and react…

Later, of course, Springsteen sings, “Girl, ain’t no kindness in the face of strangers/

Ain’t gonna find no miracles here.”
I froze. I can't say what message was being sent through those toes, up my leg, around my heart and into my head. How simple a gesture is this: woman to man, yes, but, more fundamentally, human to human. It was as simple as "I am trying to get your attention. There is a person sitting next to you."

And I couldn't do anything. I spent the rest of the night sitting there trying to convince myself it hadn't happened, then trying to figure out what to do if it had, what to say, how to say it, how to be sure, how to avoid any kind of vulnerability because of course my own want of a connection was so powerful that it overwhelmed me, turned self-destructive; the way living with a certain kind of weight becomes second nature, loneliness is its own comfort, and when it's removed, the strongest feeling is of vertigo, spiraling loss...

How cold are we — am I — that I could not then simply turn and acknowledge that small, plaintive beacon from another solitary ship traveling in the cold, dark night, could not admit what I'm most afraid of — that her need (real or imagined) was a mirror of my own that night, and that ultimately we are all still seeking, pleading with one another, waiting, looking, waiting and hoping that there is someone out there to respond?"11

"And if you want to know why (do we always want to know why?), you have to wonder, late at night, in bed staring at the ceiling, if it doesn't all go back to 5th grade and Theresa W ——, who did virtually the same thing to me under one of those cheap plywood desks, and while I could look her (it's the same her every time, isn't it?) in the eye at that time, my reaction was exactly the same: I froze. (And don't think there isn't a subtle damnation in that choice of phrase either. Coldness.)

Theresa W ——, a horrible flame-out, my first real crush and a Challenger level disaster (but played out with agonizing slowness compared to those relatively painless few seconds) directly attributable to my inability to relate to women, a suffering point my mother (God bless her, but Jesus Holy Christ, how can you not see the psychic fallout coming from this one?) my mother would explain — to Miss W... and a half-dozen over her closest friends — thusly, "Jesse isn't really ready for a relationship ship with a girl right now." Which then leads us down any number of dark paths:

1) Mom was right. Mothers usually are. I'll understand this in 20 years. And might even have a girlfriend to explain it to.
2) She was right and/or wrong. Either way, she pretty much poisoned the well from which eligible girlfriends (and, hello, future grandchildren?) could be drawn, at least for the foreseeable future. A lot of things travel slowly in a small town, but word that Jesse Hicks is emotionally retarded is not one of them.

2a. AND then this premise — with little to no empirical basis, as I'd had maybe one girlfriend before that — was universally accepted! Is this some sort of horribly Greek self-fulfilling prophecy kind of thing? I couldn't be ready for a relationship because I knew she didn't think I was and even so, every girl within earshot (this would be, in chronological order of crushingness and with severity of said crush in parenthesis — Sarah J (8, though wavering after repeated kicks to the curb and the sneaking suspicion that copying my homework held more interest for Miss J than did anything else I could offer); Molly K (also an 8, after I realized Sarah J was not who I was looking for at all and who, with a choir of angels looking down, I finally recognized as my personal Courtney Love); Sarah B (8 until you think about it and then she becomes a 10 because wasn't Sarah B where it first began anyway (not counting T.W.), the first heartbreakingly oblivious domino to fall, the first step down a long path of castles-in-the-sky romances?) and of course Cody F (a ten whose perpetual unavailability led to a momentary transference onto Kristen T (ouch!)); Laura Z (a ten, yet with her own complex emotional orbit (as though there's another kind) which, when intersecting with my own seemed to result in (again) a trajectory closer to another blown NASA project than the true flight of Cupid's arrow (I'm sorry, Laura)); and Casey B ("Those go to eleven" — what more can be said?) and so on and on and on, ad nauseam already blissfully accepted my lack of necessary maturity and went on about her business, OR

3) Hindsight is 20/20 but doesn't promise answers: spend enough time doing this and all of your past becomes a Gordian knot pulled tight by time, the question then being a la Gran Morrison, "How many sides does spaghetti have?" only it's "How many people could you have been?" with an unsavory, obsessive undertone, like maybe a single flash-frame retinal burn in of eels fucking.

4) AND, BUT... [diagram of a doomed space vessel trapped in orbit around a black hole]

10 And the temptation is to signify the author now as I-prime, having learned a vital lesson about himself and the nature of need as it relates to other people, but that assumes that the 1 of this timeframe has really changed. Has he?
11 ...there is a voice that continues in that bar, babbling to itself after everyone else has gone home, sitting in the dark. It is the voice that persists, analyzes, trying to philosophize heartache into something meaningful. Something transcendent and universal. It is the voice talking only to itself, alone."
Beautiful Earth

By Maya Richman

After the gap in jungle,
houses change from mud thatch
to white-washed boards/ green
trim/shingle roofs/a sign:

Bemvindo no Belterra.

rows of rubber trees with scars
like ribs, where latex once bled
like milk, where order was
gouged into jungle and then Ford left
to build cheaper tires
in Asia.

Today
we had lunch at a
Brazilian barbeque, where bits of pigs
and chickens were roasted on swords,
served to us sizzling, all we could eat
and are we here to eat and
eat, to paint the jungle white and let it
choke, to soothe our existential guilt
by building a computer lab for street children?
(The twins! Simone and Simoni,
small tight curls, ten siblings and two outfits,
Simoni watchful of her green turtleneck
in the spattering

heat.) I climb the stairs of an empty house,
enter the kitchen, where
dust quilts bottles and
blankets a newspaper. I rip
off a sheet:
a picture of Santa Claus/bearded/berobed
for winter/carrying a brown baby/almost
naked/o ano de 1963.
There is no industry in Belterra
now, so the town suffocates, but
they built a new school, and painted it
green and white. People in the shells
of houses that Ford built
smother fresh trim on the windows, whitewash
the walls. Do they treasure their grafted
America, look down on mud-wall homes?
Or are they trapped in the boards?

They dangle
from the rims of two cultures. Dusty children
stone an iguana who lurches
on the ridge of a shingled roof,
and then they blow kisses
and sell us coke.

On Vila Americana street stands the hospital,
boarded up. We try to pry its splintering door
with a stick, as if it can tell us why
we see rusty rows of beds through its windows
while Brazilians have hammocks,
why American girls pay to slap cement on the walls of the lab,
lay crooked bricks, bash down lattice,
when skilled Brazilians can’t find work—why
we put Colleen’s sunglasses on the bony/boy
with rag/wrapped around a
burnt, bloated belly/why
we taught him
to say
whazzup?
Digger
By Greg Kamberde

The rain is freezing mid air, sticking to the mud on my jacket so it looks like I'm freezer burnt. Christmas has come and gone, but I'm sweating like a pig. Except pigs don't sweat. Pigs can't handle a shovel. Pigs don't try digging up their old, dead dog Digger. Great, the metaphor is dead. I should just bury that while I'm out here.

The snout of the shovel clangs against the frozen earth. I'm huffing and snorting because I'm a writer, and writers aren't supposed to do anything physical besides scratch a pen on paper or tap on a keyboard. Dog exhumation and writing work two different muscle groups, but they aren't mutually exclusive.

Mom is the only person who can pull my strings without either of us knowing it. After all, she's the one who sent me to catholic school. And everyone knows how they teach you at St. Basil the Great. No, not about the lepers Jesus resurrected. Not about where our soul goes after we're planted in the ground. They teach you guilt and how to feel it right down to your bones. They teach you how not to even think about saying no to digging up your old dog, dead some five years now.

The thought of excavating the backyard in search of a dead dog doesn't shock me as she didn't actually ask me to do anything. Mom was moving, and she told me that the vet offered to cremate his remains, if she could get them. No questions asked. She just stood there not looking at me, scratching the ten inch long incision in her arm. I caught myself staring at the fleshy purple trench while an audience of boxes filled with my Mom's life seemed to lean in to hear my answer. Everything was packed up, but a few things, like her dolls and Beanie Babies, spilled out. I guess they couldn't contain their excitement. I looked right into Hoot the Owl's beady glass eyes and told Mom I would dig up the bones for her.

Digger was a golden retriever. His coat was a dark tan and felt like a brush that hadn't been cleaned out in over 20 years. Digger's skin was always red and dry, and he seemed to shrink every year like my catholic school uniform. But maybe it was just me who got bigger. Constantly batting ear and eye infections, our dog, so to speak, was a dogmaned mess. His two front teeth always jutted out of his mouth. It made him look like a court jester.

He was there when my parents got married. He was there when all three of their kids were growing up. He was there when he lost her eyesight and all feeling on the left side of her body. He was there when Dad left. I just hoped he would still be there in the ground, close to the surface.

That's the problem. I've been at it for two hours now and there is a giant pit in the backyard. A giant empty pit. I've hit the water table and my ankles disappear under a slurry of mud and ice. I'm digging in water. Tossing it over my shoulders into the lawn, I don't even see where it's landing. I wonder how long it's going to take before this suburban grave will fill up and drown me. I wonder where the hell my dog is.

I imagine the ground crumbling underneath me and flushing me through the earth. I awaken on the shores of Doggy heaven, the place other parents said old Spot went when he had to be put to sleep. My parents never had to tell me that because I was 18 when we put Digger down. I didn't need a lesson in canine metaphysics. But instead of fire hydrants on every corner and an endless supply of chew toys, I see only people. I see middle aged men with shaking leashes in their hands, whistling, and calling out "here boy!" I see a little girl with blonde pigtails, tape pictures of some many mutt to telephone poles. I look around; no sight of Digger. I keep digging anyway.

I should have found those bones five feet ago. I stir the soup, hoping to spot a glimmer of bone. I want his skull to rise to the surface and tell me why it chewed up my Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles when I was seven. I want to say to it, "Hey, remember that time when I went swimming in the lake, and you came jumped in cause you thought I was drowning? Good boy!" I want to look into its eye sockets and find the bushes where I used to play hide and seek by myself. I want to see me in my filthy school uniform playing in puddles of dirty rainwater. So I stay in the freezing rain for another hour, sweating like a pig, digging in water.

I spent over three hours putting a crater in the backyard where I used to build bookstores out of bed sheets and branches. My feet are numb, I've got frozen mud up my shins, and I don't have any dog bones. Maybe I was just digging in the wrong place? Maybe everything had decayed and I had been looking for nothing at all along? Maybe there just wasn't anything there to begin with.
So did I find his bones? I could say I didn’t find them. I could tell you how I handed my mom an empty box and an apology as she cried and rubbed her forearms scarred from years of IV drops, infections, and surgeries. I could tell you how it seemed like that audience of boxes and dolls seemed to jeer at me, empty-handed. Or I could tell you how I found his skull with those Yorick front teeth, cradling it triumphantly. I could tell you how the audience cheered when a new box joined their ranks. But that would be masturbatory fodder; just an excuse to flex my vocabulary-erection to describe some dirty old bones or lack thereof. Yeah, I’m being dirty, but I am dirty. I’ve got sludgy sod in my shoes, scum under my fingernails, and mud frosts the area where my hair has receded. Forget the skeleton for a moment; it’s got no meat.

I’ve been out here for close to four hours trying to find a dog that probably was never here in the first place. Maybe at one time he was, but he’s long gone now. And now I’m just another chump looking for his dog in all the wrong places. I keep digging anyway.
White Folded
For Terry
By Christina Radis

I.
white folded
in folded white
arms resting hand
settled on chest pressed
to back curved to chest
if we both sleep all day
who will wake who

II.
your eyes aren’t even
open when your left hand
crawls down sinks
in between my thighs
holds a second
before the fingers plunge
in this orbital motion
the same way your right hand
rubs dried sleep from your eyes

III.
close my eyes pretend to be blind
let my fingertips see the curvature of your face
they read your eyebrow Braille recognize
the crescents of your collarbones like comets
they trace your spine all the time
working their way to your waist
sightless I still can find
the spaces where a shirt lifted leads to skin
without any vision I devise ways to divide
hook from eye zipper tooth from zipper tooth
fabric from flesh
IV.
milk white morning undressed and barefoot swivels
into a seashell inside white afternoon awakens
revolutions in one planet after another
venus saturn mars jupiter neptune
me and the moon earth and you
collapsed into evening
we are pulled in pulsing
arcs exquisitely slow rotations
around one another two
orbits fold into a single searing white light
without telescope we are viewable
to the naked eye

V.
when the lights are out
my eyes have trouble adjusting
to the dark so I find you
by touch and sound
move to where your breath
can get to my skin
edge into your arms
the crook of your arms
I am a planet captured
by another's gravitational force
incapable of reversing the pull
Nothing But The Best

By Alex Millard

I've been to the beach many times since then
and I always feel as I did
when you would visit from this mystical incredible land of Queens
where bagels, good bagels, "sell for $3.50 a dozen!"
and I—in plain old California—
would have to settle for bagels not dipped in New York water.

"Only the best,"
you said.
"Nothing but the best."

In those days, I would content myself by
yanking my hand loose from your grip,
running ahead,
gathering treasures
like broken shells,
and smooth rocks
which would be made smoother
by soaking them in half a bottle of your expensive olive oil.

You said,
"Nothing but the best."
and you chuckled, sifting through pins
and second-hand broaches,
holding one up and telling me it would one day be mine.

"Nothing but the best,"
you said,
and you would wrap it up again in tissue
for it wasn't yet the time of year for wearing broaches.

Later,
you would have me read Shakespeare
and Orwell
and other literature for which I was not yet suited.
But you knew better;
You knew what was best
for you taught English Lit for years
in Harlem
and you didn't take any of their—
"well you know,"
so when you caught one of those boys with a
"Playboy or something."
you snatched it from him,
"Read it aloud,
Pointed out all of the grammatical mistakes."

That day,
When I ran into you downtown,
I was wearing that broach you gave me,
the frog with fake gem eyes,
that tell you he's "well read"
he "knows where he's going."
I wore it,
I told you,
because I had this important interview
At Random House,
To be an intern.

Well,
actually,
I was lying;
I had this important interview
to be a phone sex operator.
because when you're a girl,
living in Brooklyn,
who forgets she is well read,
And remembers only that bagels are
"$3.50/dozen,"
sometimes you have to make do.

I wore that broach,
and I got the job
and every once in a while,
when men call
I correct their grammatical mistakes,
or I tell them stories about broaches,
or the ocean,
And I manage to keep them on the line,
because I am the best,
Grandma,
Nothing but the best.
Blue Skies, Nothing But

By Michael Hall Hebein

I drive a tiny weather-beaten car up the long bleak slope of Kansas into Colorado into the mountains. It’s broad daylight again after driving all night. There’s a powerful winstorm wrenching me across the lanes, and, around the state line, suddenly, tumbleweeds are everywhere, leaping strange and gazelle-like over wire fences and right across the Interstate: dead, racing balls of thorn. Now after the long long drive, Holy shit, I am awake. Swerving, I avoid the whirling branches, because What happens if I hit one? But soon there are too many, and I steel myself for impact, hands tightened on the wheel. Here it comes.

The tumbleweed explodes upprotesting into spinning bits. Like those dangerous polygons in the old arcade game Asteroids whose detached sides whiff satisfyingly from the screen after one good shot. After this discovery, I’m trying to hit them, cutting across the Colorado gale at seventy, mowing down tumbleweeds with an unheard whuff and a shower of roots and stems and who-knows-what. Just me and my car and the battery-powered stereo, the car humming discontented at too many RPMs, the car I bought to come here and the car I’ll sell to leave. Every time I see another of those crappy little sedans these days, tearing down Kent some morning by the river, or wherever, I wince and tighten my stomach, remembering Boulder, Colorado, and everything I left broken there.

That town, Boulder, no, when I am there, now, this town, it’s full of Ryans. Even in exile, running from the east and talking to no one at all, it seems, I know four or five broad-shouldered affable students at the University, all named Ryan. I’m walking with two of them now. They invited me on a walk; I said sure. We walked to the end of our street in College Hill and out into the Open Space, the many square miles around Boulder’s urban center where development is forever forbidden. We set out on a walk, but walks are different here, I’m finding out.

Boulder’s settlement is close and nuclear, set just where the Front Range of the Rockies tears up into the sky, where above town three leaning rock faces some hundreds of feet tall tower over the managed sprawl. These are the Flatirons. They’re Boulder’s pride, one of the first things I heard about before I moved here, pictured on just about every postcard I’ve found to send back to city friends. And some forty minutes ago, I was invited on a walk. I didn’t know when we started, but to the top of the Flatirons is where we are walking.

For ten miles out from the base of the foothills, there are no clouds in Colorado. All the moisture gets caught up in the mountains, threatening in feathery writhing piles, and a non-stop glaring sun bakes Boulder, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs and the rest to sixty degrees nearly every day this winter. And here we’ve all tied on our New B’s and set out to casually climb a mountain this afternoon in the sick stark sunlight I could never comprehend. I am red and wheezing when I catch up to the Ryans, them scrambling over the ledges and crags here in the sky at the end of a long twisting steepness my lungs are not ready for. I sit and heave air. From up here the line is crisp where the clouds start to the east, and the eerie flat-blue Front Range sky ends over the Denver plateau. Breathing hard I can see the sharp line of its shadow on the hills and fields, and from this point to that line, the sun-scarred brown earth stretch I live on.

I want to go home, but I will not say it. The Ryans run down the hill, all the way, and I pursue them, panting. It is hard going for an Easterner, up here from sea level. I notice it too later at the bar, a horrible low-ceilinged college dive painted over with graffiti in Greek letters, where each drink takes me much further into drunk than by the ocean, and maybe it’s the crowd I’m with but they’re drinking here all the time. I’ll go to Mountain House Parties, drive far up in a canyon to invariably enormous earth-tone affairs with jacuzzis, atriums, and 4-car garages. I’ll help some fool do kegstands: I’ll lift his legs high while his one hand grips the beer keg’s rim and bears the weight of his torso, the other holds the tap to his mouth while he drinks until his body stops him. He believes more alcohol will travel to his brain due to gravity. And I’ll buy beer and whiskey for my underage roommates; and even more for myself. Microbrews are big, and the Front Range is packed with tiny breweries. I’ll become a connoisseur.

Some icy night this winter after four students have died so far of exposure, their bodies frozen, I guess I’ll try to kill myself with alcohol. Stumbling home from the party I’ll sit my roommate on the corner curb at a cold stoplight, while I give fiery oration, forty minutes’ worth, on the metaphorical and cultural significance of intersections, crossroads of life and death and so on. He’ll explain to me later, “And it was really interesting, dude, but my ass was fucking freezing!,” because I’d swallowed half the bottle of cheap, strong bourbon, and I don’t remember that, or much of anything after. The day following, I’m neither hungover nor dead.
and I'm hanging out with Sarah, the only girl in Boulder who appreciates the unpredictably antisocial urges that in the east had made me "interesting," but marked me here as definitely "weird." She grew up in Brooklyn, and unlike the other people I know here, she doesn't remember Boulder the way it used to be, before the California people, the boutiques, and the sprawl. Back when the passenger trucks were still Suburbans and Scouts driven in from the mountains.

Sarah's jaw drops when I open the door to my room. "Holy shit, Mike. What happened to your CDs?" She's right, but it's worse. The mattress is flipped over and askew on the frame, sheets trailing out like spilled blood from a crash. The folding chair is bent over on itself from splintering my dresser, and the four legs of my piano bench are splayed out from the upended seat, reminding me of a dog hit by a truck, though I've never seen one. The CDs are what stands out, though: cracked and shattered jewel cases littered everywhere, rhinestones of jagged plastic, the discs themselves scratched and broken across the floor. I get a quick memory of shouting wildly, throwing them in stacks against the walls.

"Ah. Yes," I say, perplexed and saddened. I remembered doing it, but I could not remember why. It was not the last time I would destroy my room in a fit of depravity and madness, but, to this day, the wreckage Sarah and I contemplated in silence that afternoon I have blamed completely and unreservedly on Boulder. On the sunlight gnawing at the broad streets and bungalow houses, on the gross cartoonish Open Space and the expanse of gray boxy sprawl beyond, on the dark early mornings riding a bicycle to the hotel pool where I worked, putting The Verve or My Bloody Valentine or The Stone Roses on the sound system and leaving the lights low in the pool and everything else off, the image of an indoor alien landing site, a shadowy lapping calm before the vicious drunken Boulder sunstorm would wreck everything again. And again.
Immediate Action
By Wes Harris

From Zero-Two until Zero-Four, time was black molasses.
Tritium glow on my left wrist, the hands turned back and back. At my post I guarded
against nothing, feared the encroachment of no one. I sat. I couldn’t resist tasting, taking
my tongue, running along the slick dead steel.
No one watched, as I tasted the bitterness
of my decision, made my mind spin possibilities that
ended in dreams.
I woke from the fog of staring into
the elephant grass green black green, tasted with my tongue the slick gray metal, under
me, against my cheek, peep sight sharp, blood drawn, awakened.
Inside my head it took some of the
precious ten percent to remember the
nomenclature, weights and cyclic rates
ranges and employment. Immediate action.
Field strip. I signed for it. Cold steel
appendage arm of my arms, highest casualty causing weapon
that we called The Pig. I was laid up beside my dead
steel lover, in my nose were the oil smells, the sedge and
dark I could taste and would until I
could wake my relief, pass off my love, and wait for the dawn.
Coffee and Cake
By Robert Stupp

The nightclub singer scratched: “But wait!
I am the darkened sublevel of the quiet society.”
Undaunted Jeffery Beaumont feels the allure
of the golden hook,
naiveté from a closet looks out
upon hard nipples, a staircase of flesh
and Frank — screaming in black for a fuck.
Blooded in nakedness
he descends. Dragged to the
‘Candy Colored Clown,’
and a fag with a Pabst Blue Ribbon.
His cracked nose shouts redness
when he is cast back out, purged to the
feet of Laura Dern. Blonde with a dream
of robins, love settled in a blue dress and velvet
skin.

Lumberton idled waiting,
for David’s severed ear.
And when it came yellow roses
bloomed red.
Blackout
By Rachel A. Ruffing

Elmhurst, New York

I woke, late
in the afternoon,
after four days of tourism—the Met,
Empire State observation deck,
hot Central Park
    wanderings, crazed rats
at the turtle pond, dinner in Soho,
condom shop in the Village.
    Wednesday: Checked out
of Hotel Pennsylvania; my friend boarded
a Greyhound back to Pittsburgh, and I
stayed behind
for affection
    and adoration:
for the city, for the man.

Tired legs, stressed, tired
emotions. In need
of twelve hour rest and recovery.

Post 4:00pm Thursday:
"Must be a blown fuse;"
gather information on the early evening news.

Batteries and candles,
    I don’t speak Spanish, but I know the language
of darkness; translation: the lights are out
on most
of the east coast.

"It’s everywhere—
Canada, New York, Michigan, everywhere."

We have friends
    trapped in Manhattan,
maybe on the Metro,
maybe drunk in a bar that serves free
    ice for the “Blackout Special.”

Not too much chaos on Corona Avenue,
    just simple human confusion, babies
on tan, Colombian shoulders, curiosity kills my brain—unbearable
    sweat shrouds ideas of what to do, where to go,
who to call collect. “Are the lines up and running yet?”

Useless cell phones, useless
power outlets! It’s just we three: me, my man,
and his roommate; shot down from
Queens’ thick summer air and too many cigarettes.
Hardwood floors, no running fans—in the heat, we ain’t got
*nothin’* to eat, but we can *hit up the food truck*
*across the street!*

The back of my hand
now a paste of perspiration.
Eyes: exhausted from strains of dilation.

On the sidewalk: three folding chairs, us three folks
drinking wine, taking shots, toasting to
the stars, stars freed from luminous city pollution,
stars in an intoxicated state
shifting from right to left, distant galactic
specks of fire.
I wanted to reach out, pull Mr. Moon from the night
and taste how natural is the light.

Kids on bikes with yellow flashers,
flashlights in the hands
of resident New Yorkers,
car lights, bus lights, blue and yellow
stream of lights around the food truck.
Still, I can barely see the road
or my feet dodging centipedes, or are those roaches?

My man, passing out: most certainly gone.

One chance to loot, no subway commute,
no easy, straight-line movement on a *booze buzz*,
cops drinking cans of soda on the corners,
and police don’t give a damn
about weed aroma or beer bottle accumulation.

I find myself
four-hundred miles away from home, and here I know the dark,
in the pitch-black, with midnight’s long back tilted
against the electric world.
My men are black and white and read all over.

Yeah, you heard me.

I keep my boyfriends in stacks all over my dorm room; they’re crammed into my bookshelves, lying in heaps on my desk, hidden in paper bags in the dusty nether-regions beneath my bed. Some of them are even sprawled out on the bottom of my underwear drawer, obscured beneath white cotton panties and half used tubes of lipstick. I rarely leave my room without one of them, though; I’ve always got at least one of my beaus lining the inside of my book bag or folded up inside my newspaper.

I’m nineteen years old, and these men that I date frustrate my mother like nothing else. She’s often insinuated—no, bluntly told me—that she’d like nothing better than to see me go steady with a nice, well-rounded boy; she just wants to see me walk to the ice cream store on a hazy June evening with a young man whose hand I can actually lace my fingers into. Instead, she’ll usually find me and five or six of my fellas holed up in my bedroom with the door shut, the lot of us reclining on my bed to the gentle whirr-and-creak of my desktop fan.

Okay, okay; you’ve got me. My men; they’re comic book characters. Every last one of them.

Stop laughing. I’m serious.

I’m sure this weird attraction stems from my childhood. I guess I’ve always been in love with pictures, the people in pictures, the people who make pictures. As a kid, I was pretty convinced that the average grimy school boy retained cooties until he was vaccinated by a circle of squawking fifth-grade girls, but I’ve been enamored with lines and shapes from the beginning. While my female classmates kissed the boys on the cheek on the kindergarten lunch line, I would toy with my new 24-count box of Crayola crayons at the cafeteria table, drawing figures with irregular orange circles for heads and no noses or ears on big sheets of construction paper. I hardly ever attempted houses or buildings and would only sketch in handfuls of trees to spice my pictures up a bit. But I drew people incessantly, relishing each bold brick-red line, each squiggly swirling patch of black hair, each tiny little cerulean dot for an eye. I fell hard for two-dimensional boys in the eighth grade; just about the time when most girls start to doodle the names of the captain of the soccer team or their favorite teen pop star in the margins of their math notebooks. I caught a glimpse of my first glossy cover that May on the school bus, the slanted afternoon sunlight pouring over my friend Evan’s latest issue of Michael Turner’s Fathom. After I proved that there was no graphite or dirt on my hands, he let me touch the slick full color pages, within which I discovered Cannon Hawke; the muscular yet elegant liaison between the warring Japanese and American navies. He was not some bulbous, awkward creature, but a nearly flawless composition of tapered strokes of ink, from each strand of shoulder-length hair to the delicate cross-hatching along his cheekbones.

My fingers left light oil marks on the cover after Evan finally managed to pry the comic out of my hands; thankfully, he caught me before I started to drool. After the bus doors sealed shut behind him and the engine began to grumble once again, I slunk down in the brown vinyl seat in an absolute daze. I was in love.

From then on, Evan and I made a deal; paper for paper. On the morning bus ride, I’d sleepily slip my English homework, written in meticulous script on loose-leaf, over the top of the bus seat. In return, on the ride home, he’d gently slide his Fathom comics out of their plastic envelopes and hand them to me, each volume overflowing with beautifully crafted men and women, sensual galaxies of shading and line.

Over the years, as Evan and I became more comfortable with our little arrangement, he began to introduce me to new guys: Deuce, the Sean Connery look-a-like and super spy from Danger Girl; Jay and Silent Bob, the jagged, patchy, black-and-white slackers of Kevin Smith’s Clerks: The Comic Book; Urik Antares, the sparsely detailed, angular Russian sky-ship captain of The Red Star. Finally, after multiple trips to his basement, where he kept cardboard boxes overstuffed with dashing penciled-inked-colored men, he took me via bicycle to Collector’s Kingdom, the local comic shop. Outside, it was a non-descript storefront with posters of Simpsons characters in the windows, but behind those posters lay a pleasure palace; the moment I stepped inside I was encircled by gleaming stylized faces, powerful, seductive contours, alluring swathes of black and white rolling down Adonis-like musculature. I’d fumble through my pockets, my purse, my bike bag, hoping to encounter another slip of green for my paper-for-paper exchange. I never had more than five or six bucks on me at
any given time, but I'd sacrifice what was left of my allowance without blinking just to take home the swarthy Captain Nemo and the rugged Allan Quatermain from The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen. Call Evan a pimp and this place a bordello, but I had already skipped gleefully through that doorway separating passion from addiction.

Six years later, and I still prefer newsprint and magazine paper to flesh. I'd still rather spend a Saturday night sprawled out on my bed, enjoying the bubbled conversations of my two-dimensional harem than stumble and grind with invisible men in some smoke-ridden club.

Is it immature? Maybe. That's what my mother likes to remind me of whenever she finds a $75 dollar stack of my boyfriends in my top desk drawer at home. She'll toss Nemo and Quatermain and Deuce and Cannon on my bed, muttering the name of every potential eligible boy in the neighborhood, as though cataloguing missed opportunity, while I scramble to gather my beads into my arms.

Is it antisocial? Hardly.

I'll tell you a secret: comic readers love people. You wouldn't have figured, would you? You've seen "Comic Book Guy" on The Simpsons; he's the overweight and less-than-fashionable clerk of "The Android's Dungeon" who prefers his PC and microwave burritos to his customers and who peaks in conversation at "No banging your head on the display case please, thank you." But there has got to be a reason he hordes hundreds of issues of radioactive Man and Zebra Girl, and it can't be for the slightly intoxicating smell of ink alone.

Comic book characters are people, people filtered through other people, people created by other people. Every line's thickness, length, and curvature are choices made by some overworked penciler or inker, albeit about three or four cups of coffee and often mere hours before the issue's deadline. Each facial characteristic—it Batman's square jaw or even Commissioner Gordon's push-broom moustache—has been strained from the great river of people the artist has seen—at the checkout counter at Shop Rite, the 24-hour diner, or moving in the opposite direction at crosswalks. Their faces and bodies are a collage of football players, corporate executives, and hunched-over old men. When you meet a comic book man, you don't meet one guy; you meet thousands.

Yet a comic book character is ultimately a manifestation of a single soul on a piece of paper. You have that flicker of connection as you meet their eyes, even if those eyes are composed of nothing more than a thin stripe with a circle under it. You can catch the off-hand smile or the shrug of his shoulders—body language is so much easier to read with action lines—as though you two are sitting in the hazy candle-light of a first date, though it's an encounter that can be ended swiftly and painlessly just by closing the book. They can't be anything but honest with you; their thought and speech bubbles contain exactly what they were meant to say, allowing them to lie only to each other.

The comic book man's competitors—the novel character and the movie star—scoff at his seemingly buffoonish honesty, presuming he can only get the occasional dateless wonder while they scoop up the beautiful and the intellectual ones. But novel characters are no better than pen-pals; you can't fall in love with the same old twenty six letters, no matter how many different ways they are re-arranged on paper. You can use any sexy voice you want when you read the words aloud, it can't replace a wink or a toothy smile. And actors? Sure, a fellow may play a dashing secret agent or brilliant scientist in his films, but there's always that slight chance that you may actually bump into the real live guy at a gas station to find to your horror that he picks his teeth or eats nothing but baked beans. Yet your comic book guy will always be present and accounted for; you can look him in the eye with the assurance that his jaunty grin or heroic visage will be locked by graphite, ink, and computer generated color into the paper forever. And no matter when you flip through those pages, he isn't ever going to change.
Come Clean

By Sondra Petri

All of the things untouched—
clean soled Prada flats
in every color, televisions
poised in rooms abandoned
by adult daughters, aged velvet
upholstery turned brittle and bare.
She is a collector: orchid filled
vases, tortoise shell combs,
silver trays, candelabras, mirrors.
I polish it all, a past displayed
in gilt framed memories—
priceless.
I play maid;
I dust and scrub a life,
unimpressed. Take your time,
she insists, nervous
I may take something else.
And if you break something,
Please tell me, she adds.
I take it all in—
spines on books, unbroken;
fine Italian china, unused.
It takes all I have
to hold my tongue.
Saks Fifth Avenue Pajamas
twice my rent—unworn/
a half measure of common
human decency: invaluable.
All I want here
Is a paycheck—money
for food and tuition. Learning
the dirtiest thing
in a rich house is a girl
paid to clean it.
Now. Pay attention. Mother is a feather boa tied to a string better yet—a leash. Eye lash curled to a perfect hello. Men don’t stay, there’s always more to walking a dog, stroking paws real nice & treats. There is a thunder in my belly. I am six years old waiting for a glass slipper, so I can be someone else’s kid. She must be joking, but isn’t. Look at herself, red skirt all the way above the thighs, and nipples barreling through like door knockers. She is always on her knees. Now, In this circumstance. Father is a bridge built across a swamp—sinking cranes and steel wire deeper in the mud. I am two months old and hungry. He must be angry. Brown wooden floors, a giant room, no windows, king size metal bed in the center, unmade white blankets. She lays on the floor, fetal, willing. He brings the arm up, back and through the air, then down on her, again. The church bells at midnight ring and crack against the backdrop of muffled voices in the street, all at the same time. She dances like it could have been her dream—with him on the mattress even after the marks. Fade. Now. This moment. I creep up on them, a little closer until I am visible—crying under fluorescent lights and chewing my ring finger.

- Laurin Wolf

Now there is a new she. Her body and the little heart inside occupy an area in my space and in my mind that pulses with the encouraging, freeing passion of a wildly but tastefully pierced American exotic. She has a night-lit face that awakens in and renews for me the simultaneous purity and seduction of a movie star whole black and white photograph only my father would recognize. When she called me in the middle of the day in Georgetown to tell me she saw all these shirts she knew I’d love, she apologized for the pointless call even though she knew it was inspired and directed and unquestionably ours. Late one night only a few minutes after what has become an almost nightly phone call, I got a text message from her about being so Re: coming home to meet my parents and me coming home to meet her parents. Sleep Well xoxoxx. I asked her to start signing her text messages “LB” because those are her initials and because my phone doesn’t say who the messages are from and because when she was in high school, her little brother’s friends named a sexual position after her and called it “LB style.” When I asked if we could try it she said she’d like to, but she physically couldn’t.

- Evan Newman
Now it's all different. When Lisa was in high school, she wanted to run away. When Lisa was 17, she wanted to get a motorcycle and drive it into the sunset, she wanted to get a tattoo. She wanted to live fast and die young. She wanted hot boys, sweet love, and good sex. But this is now, this is college, this is preparation, this is the dress rehearsal for life. The dreams of motorcycles and rock n' roll boyfriends are behind. But she did get the tattoo. She now dreams of a career, a family, and good sex. "I wanna be a home-ec teacher," she says. I call her a sellout because I can remember the girl who was going to leave us all behind and rock out in leather for the rest of her life. "But I am talking a bitchin' home-ec teacher. Imagine me teaching 6th graders how to sew and iron with my tongue ring and black boots. I'll be their fantasy for sure." These are the kind of thoughts Lisa has now. She still rocks, but she is grounded and ready. "Maybe not, maybe I could be a sexologist. But how could I explain that to my parents?" She dreams with reckless abandon but walks on eggshells and waits to see the doors open before her. (This is Lisa now.)

- John Steele

Now
My previously loose, flowing eyes are fixed on the plump curvaceous leg
Of a dark coffee table in the center of the room on one black concentric
Hypnotic knot a creamy soft circle that fades like steam into the surrounding
Brown so delicately that my eyes are tricked into perceiving motion under
A glassy shine that displays bright reflected whiteness and false moistness

Ignoring muted distractions like the ceiling light glinting off of the glasses
Of the boy across from me his mouth in mid-formation and his raised
Head cocked the skin of the girl beside him in mid-crawl as her cupped
Hands cover a yawning mouth and nose and the breeze of the girl to my right
In mid-turn to say something kind of try to divert my eyes which watch
The table intensely invested for a matter of minutes by now

The entire time seen through a haze as hair hangs having swung in front of my
Left eye a deep brown swirl similar in geometric and chromatic configuration
And my hand
Prepares to
Push it aside

My eyes prepare
To blink my
Lungs prepare
To push a breath
Out through my
Teeth my heart
Prepares to
Pump blood to
My arteries
Running to my
Wrist under
My watch on which
The tension built
Behind the
Second hand
Prepares it to
Move.

- Ian Clemente
Now they speak of happiness in the past tense.

I.
Do you remember, she asks.
And he never does.

What he does remember: last night, not with her, never with her, but with some approximation of her younger self that he, incidentally, cannot remember. And so, because he cannot remember, he searches, insistently, consistently, persistently, for the she that slipped from his mind pretty much the moment they met.

II.
Not the moment they met, but a short time thereafter: things breathe, things drip, things fall, chests heave and he touches her birthmarks, one at a time, as they lie there not sleeping.

When he asks her if she remembers this, she looks up from the newspaper, pauses, looks him straight in the eye as she says, breathily, no.

III.
Now, when they sleep, it is on opposite sides of the bed, the blankets falling between them, the space between their bodies something that they do not remember ever having not been there. Except, of course, for that night. They both remember that.

IV.
They do.

- Hali Felt

Now that the summer is eleven years past, it won’t come back in anything but pieces. I know we drove across the country in a 1973 Chevy Caprice with fake wood paneling and a big metal box on top. I know the air conditioning was broken and that when we crossed long stretches of desert, stretches starting with signs like “Last Gas Station for 100 Miles,” my father would turn around while driving and spray my brother and me with a spray bottle. I do remember making faces in the rearview mirror for hours. And I remember turning sometimes to find my brother, rapt, silently watching me. His head and shoulders would be hunched down, confused, and his little blonde brow would be furrowed. He would be twirling his fingers together, absent-mindedly doing the Itsy-Bitsy Spider. His hair, bleached blonde from the sun, would be backlit and glowing like brushfire and his eyes would glare white from his brown little face. He would smile, caught. “What’re you doing’ Eves?” I’m just making faces, I would say. “Can I make faces too, Eves?” Sure, I would say. Then he would make faces at me making faces at myself in the mirror. I think we also collected all 100 Bazooka Joe comics and ate every piece of gum that went with them. I know we went to the world’s only underground grocery store in Nevada. I remember a few sticky county fairs, one in particular where a clown asked me why my hair was curly and I looked at someone for the first time like they were stupid. I remember seeing a real cave drawing. I remember hearing my heart break when my parents wouldn’t stop at a mysterious ranch called “Land of the Little Horses.” But I don’t really remember the trip.

- Eva Kokopeli
The Writers

Wes Harris is an English Writing/Humanities major who is making damn sure he gets this college stuff right by taking his time! Finish in 4 years? Pah! Wes prides himself on his unflagging commitment to the 15-year grand plan. He made his first appearance in print in the pages of Collision Volume 1, Issue 2. His work has also appeared in the Three Rivers Review. Wes lives in Observatory Hill all by himself.

Michael Beltein desires not feignedly, but of truth, to remove himself to the fulfillment of a better life; he wishes to vow himself solemnly to continence and perpetual chastity and to let himself be shut up in a narrow place in the parish church of Schire, that therein he may be able to serve Almighty God more worthily.

Josee Hicks is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh. He has no idea what to do with his future.

Greg Kamerdez is a 21-year-old junior at the University of Pittsburgh majoring in Nonfiction. He plans on becoming a high school teacher after he finishes his undergraduate degree, but continues to write in his spare time. Greg grew up in the horribly normal suburbs of Philadelphia and does not miss it much. Other than reading and writing, he enjoys spending too much money collecting rare and not-so-rare vinyl. Nowadays you can find him living in the East End with a 200 lb English Mastiff or at Jerry’s Records in Squirrel Hill.

Alex Millard was born in San Francisco, raised in San Diego, went to Creative and Performing Arts High School in Philadelphia, was a playwriting major in Chicago for two years, and then accidentally ran away to New York. Remembering the need for a degree, Alex found herself a Junior poetry writing major at the University of Pittsburgh.

Sandra Petris is an undergraduate English Writing major at the University of Pittsburgh. She’s spent seven years at a large format bookstore as a mere clerk, selling fiction, non-fiction, bestsellers, and Oprah titles. She has noticed very few literary journals move from the shelves. The impracticality of her nature has remained, nonetheless, unaffected. She has been published in the Three Rivers Review. She lives, works, studies, and raises two children in Pittsburgh.

Christina Radbio is currently a senior at the University of Pittsburgh majoring in English Writing with a concentration in Poetry. She has been published in the Tenth Floor Review and featured as a reader in the Supernova Undergraduate reading series.

Maya Richman is a senior nonfiction and psychology major, minor ing in Jewish studies and French. During the summer of 2001 she traveled to Santarem, Brazil on the service-learning trip that inspired her poem, “Beautiful Earth.” She was sorely tempted to change Belterra’s name to “Fordlandia,” another actual rubber town but not the one she visited. For the sake of nonfiction, she stuck to the unembellished truth.

Rachel A. Raffing graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in April 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Writing. She has had two poems published in the Three Rivers Review (Fall 2002 issue), two poems published with the International Library of Poetry, and two poems published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Michelle Scott is a sophomore at Pitt currently majoring in Urban Studies and English Writing. She also draws a good bit and is a massive fan of comics, cartoons, and animation from all over the world, though the good old-fashioned American comic book is still her first love. Forever a New Yorker, she hopes to return to her home state after college and begin a career as an urban planner.

Robert Siff is a 2nd year student at the University of Pittsburgh. He is an English Literature / Political Science double major. His other interests besides creative writing include: poker, pool, comic book and action figure collecting, soccer, acting, and chess. This is the first poem he’s ever submitted to a publication.
Sweet Icing “How Does A Lion Go?”
(Clemente) Copyright 2004 Sweet Icing
sweeticingmusic@hotmail.com

Sweet Icing is Christina McGinnis (vocals) and Ian Clemente (guitar & vocals). We extend our sincerest thanks to all at Collision for creating this opportunity for which we are grateful. And to Josh Verbanets for singing (beautifully!) on this song as well as providing equipment, expertise and enthusiasm.

Project Moham “7-17”
(Project Moham)
promo@projectmoham.com
www.projectmoham.com

Project Moham is a four-piece punk rock band that hails from Northeastern Pennsylvania. Named after a combination of a rogue terrorist group from the film Fight Club and a local Palmerston legend, Project Moham has been playing the local scene for four years now. In those four years, there have been a number of lineup changes leading up to this permanent lineup. Project Moham has released a number of small EPs (including an acoustic EP) and recently released their first full-length album on Fool Records in the fall of 2003. The record is a compilation of the best songs that Project Moham has written in their entire four-year existence.

This Band Is Called The You “Nothin’ Goin’ On”
(Verbanets) Copyright 2004 This Band Is Called The You

Hi; we’re called This Band is Called The You and we’re a rock and roll-band type thang. We like to write songs that keep the pretty parts pretty and make the loud parts loud. We attempt to be entertaining and energetic while singing about things we’re interested in. We’re equal parts weird-rock, singer-songwriter, grunge, mod, slop, and folk-rock, but hopefully not in an annoying way. Oh yeah, we’re a POWERTRIO!! We sometimes take ourselves very seriously and sometimes we don’t. Thanks very much.

Universatile “Archetype Architect”
(Staten)

Universatile is a live hip-hop band consisting of lead vocalist, Savant Rockwell, a guitarist known as the Ferryman, keyboardist Max, and drummer Jinx. The song “Archetype Architect” takes the traditional approach to hip hop and features production from Nice Record Work.
John Steele “Vampires”
(Steele)
jrs26@pitt.edu

John Steele is an up-and-coming singer-songwriter from the Philadelphia area. He has played venues in both the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas including The Point in Bryn Mawr, PA and The Quiet Storm and Buskers in the Strip here in 'da burgh. In his spare time, John attends classes at Pitt sporadically and majors in English Writing just in case his rock star dreams fall through. He is scheduled to record his first full-length independent release at MARS Recording in June. With a little help from his friends and baring an act of God, it should be completed in time to resume classes in the fall.

Code Green “Everlasting”
(Code Green) Copyright 2003 Code Green
knowledge@CodeGreenVibe.com
www.CodeGreenVibe.com

Code Green’s self-titled debut CD is due out in May and the band is currently booking shows all around the regional scene to promote it. Code Green has been featured in the First Annual “Rockin’ Suburbs” Festival in Bridgewater, PA. They are located 30 miles north of Pittsburgh, and having received some publicity in the Beaver County Times, continue to play shows.

The Rain featuring SMI “Kurt Angle”
(The Rain and SMI)

The Rain is a five piece band featuring Jim Barr on keyboards, Tim Clark on saxophone and flute, DJ Huggy on bass, Deak on drums, and Scott Simon on guitar, that is making a huge impact on the Pittsburgh music scene. Their musical foundation is based in jazz, funk, hip, and soul. The skill level of their members allows for a musical range from current top 40 club songs to Herbie Hancock covers to creative genre-blending originals. The Rain has continued to expand their fan base with performances at some of the major venues in Pittsburgh and the east coast to a weekly Friday night: THE HIP HOP CAFÉ SERIES at the Shadow Lounge on 5972 Baum Boulevard.

Monarch “Turn Around”
(B. Strown) Copyright 2003 Northern Records.
www.monarchtheband.com
band@monarchtheband.com

The boys of Monarch formed in 2001, originally calling themselves Scotland. The first lineup has stayed intact and consists of Aaron “Fly-fly” Strown on drums, his brother Brennan “Elephant” Strown on guitar and lead vocals, their friend Joe “Slammin” Salmond on the bass and some guy, Brett “The Mighty Mashed Potato” Zoric on keyboards. The band is flattered by and thankful for the current attention they’ve been receiving while playing at venues all across the country. The sound they achieve presently is often compared to Sigur Ros, Radiohead, Coldplay and Jeff Buckley, and is best heard at full volume. Their debut record, released by California based Northern Records in March of this year, has been receiving positive reviews. Its title, The Grandeur That Was Rome, is taken from a line in the book Tender Is The Night by Jazz-age novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, who was born in 1896.