

December Pin Up of the Month: Jessica Skrzyniarz



Occupation: Retail supervisor and promo/sales model

Nicknames: Jess, Ica, Blondie, Barbie

Favorite Holiday Songs: Any Gary Hoey Christmas Music.

Favorite Movies: *The Hangover*, *The Godfather*, *Wedding Crashers*, *Inception*, *Old School*, *Fight Club*, *Sweet Home Alabama* and *The Twilight Saga*.

Hobbies? Swimming with marine life, watching reality TV and listening to loud music.

Favorite watering holes? The Brickhouse, Telly's and Oriental Delight.

Favorite holiday tradition? Party hopping on Christmas Eve.

Best Christmas gift you've ever received? My parakeet Fred (named after Mr. Flintstone) when I was five.

A Three-Part Adventure - The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey

"Thirteen hours of Middle-Earth is just not enough," I said to my buddies the day *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* was released. Well I'm getting my wish, for on Friday December 14, the newest installment to the Middle-Earth epic opens: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. I couldn't be more excited.

There are a lot of expectations surrounding the *Hobbit* movies. Part of this is due to the fact that there are going to be *three* movies. Originally, I was a little skeptical about this - as was **Dawne Dela Cruz, Treasurer of The Rhode Island Science Fiction Club (RISFC)**. "I'm a little curious as to why this is going to be three movies," she said. "How are they going to split this up?"

The book itself is more novella than novel, and being stretched into two movies - let alone three - seemed a bit overreaching. However, like many fans, I've come to have real faith in Peter Jackson. He actually *shows* you what happens, as opposed to Tolkien's characters, who tend to say, "Oh you should have been there when the Ents trashed Isengard..."

Plus, Jackson's taking material from Tolkien's other works (e.g. *The Silmarillion*) to give us glimpses of events that we would never have an opportunity to see otherwise - such as when Gandalf leaves to discern whether or not the Necromancer of Dul Guldur was indeed Sauron - the big baddie in the *Lord of the Rings*. It's hinted at in the *Hobbit*, but explored only in other writing by Tolkien.

Next, there's that whole 48 frames per second issue (or HFR, high frame rate) surrounding the film's newest presentation technology - a format that is said to be closer to how the human actually sees. Jackson recently remarked on it in the *Huffington Post* saying, "It's something that becomes a real joy to watch, but it takes you a while...." Early screenings made some viewers feel seasick, while others reported an especially intense sensory experience.

Well, I guess I'll have to see it in HFR for myself. This calls for a viewing or two at the Providence Place IMAX.

Waterfire Sparks Documentary

The air crackled with anticipation before the unveiling of the first official documentary to cover the WaterFire phenomenon.

The premiere of "WaterFire: The Art and Soul of a City," took place at the Vets Auditorium on Saturday, December 1st, to a full house that included Mayor Tavares, Buddy Cianci, MCs from the Rhode Show, numerous local luminaries and countless volunteers, on whose shoulders so much of WaterFire rests.

Musical warm up acts set the tone for the evening, with performances by WaterFire regular, fire dancer/musician Spogga and others. The screening was enthusiastically received, concluding with a prolonged standing ovation.

The closing QA session was followed by a significant announcement for WaterFire: the organization, which currently scatters its boats, wood, staff and equipment across several spaces around Providence, will be renovating a new, extensive headquarters. The space will be shared with other arts and entertainment organizations - indeed, as the announcement was being made, supportive Roller Derby Players and members of ERB, filed on stage in silent, albeit visually striking, support. Mayor Tavares then announced that the city will support the project with a grant of \$500,000.

Entering the premiere, I was concerned that we'd be watching one long infomercial. While the film certainly has some self-promotional elements, it very aptly avoids that trap, celebrating the event without waning self-congratulatory. The documentary ties in elements of Providence history, from the birth of the "Creative Capital" and "Renaissance City" all the way back to Roger Williams.

There's a fun exploration of the earliest incarnation of WaterFire and how close it came to being a one-time-only event. In the middle of winter.

Fortunately for all who have enjoyed a fire-lit, musically accompanied stroll along the Providence River, the event took deeper root in the city. Estimates of the number of people who've been to WaterFire over the years exceeds the entire population of Rhode Island, several times over (estimated 15 million).

The documentary explores the impact of these visitors on the state, on other artistic ventures, and on attendees, sprinkling in fun facts. For example, one poll shows that support of WaterFire may be the only issue RI politicians all agree on. The film also follows the WaterFire team as it carries the torch to other cities, especially a recent excursion in Rome, Italy.

The cast of characters is diverse and lively, and director Joe Rocco of RocJo Productions keeps his story moving at a comfortable pace, with moments that are touching, surprising and funny. While artistic mastermind and creator of WaterFire Barnaby Evans and irrepressible former Mayor Cianci deliver most of the best lines, numerous other interviews contribute wit and wisdom, and the narration by Robert John Hughes (written by Mary Steele) ties the piece together well.

Capturing this night-time imagery is no small cinematographic challenge, and capturing the grandeur of an outdoor event is another real challenge in video - both are handled skillfully by director of photography (and editor) Jim Karpeichik, with assists from several videographers including Louis Leta, Thomas Payne and Scott Santos.

At 59 minutes, this video nimbly passes the "itchy bottom" test. And for hard-core WaterFire fans, there are 50 minutes of bonus features, extra interviews and a loop of some of the best footage, which you can play anytime you're looking to create a little of that "WaterFire feeling."

More information and DVDs for holiday stocking stuffing available at www.waterfire.org or www.rocjo.com .

Analyzing the artists of North Kingstown's Shady Lea Mills



I scan my memory searching for a life jacket story, but all I can think about is how clean her studio is. I thought artists were supposed to be messy. It suddenly became clear to me that I over

analyze everything each time I walk into an artist's studio space. And at Shady Lea Mills 15th Annual Open Studio Tour earlier this month, I feel more like a giddy psychoanalyst than a reporter on the job.

There were over 40 studios to peruse. My original plan was to interview Michael Richardson, Justin Tarducci and Timothy Underwood of Anchor Bend Glassworks, but my plan failed beautifully because they were too busy popping popcorn inside of freshly blown glass to an amazed crowd. While I waited for the flock to dissipate, I wandered from studio to studio, mentally deconstructing each artist's psyche.

Casey Weibust's space has a warm, cozy feel, almost every inch covered in art. "You don't have to be an amazing artist to do printmaking; you can just experiment and be free to create," Casey says. "This is how we used to make images before we had computers." I found myself wishing for a time machine to transport myself 50 years into the past.

I am soon lured into a studio with couches, low lights and a strong aroma of sandalwood incense. "I work on keeping it a certain vibe," said Claudia Flynn. She continues to talk, but I'm distracted by the baby doll head on the body of a deer. Flynn's voice begins fading in and out because *I swear* her creations are so powerful they speak louder than words.

I arrive back where I started at Anchor Bend Glassworks. Co-owner Michael is more than willing to give me what is probably his 10 billionth glass blowing lesson of the day. He is an amazing teacher and made me feel like I created a grand piece of art. Not to sound cliché, but there is something mind blowing about making art out of *liquid glass*. Oh, and as for my "professional" diagnoses, I have none. Let's just say I was blown away.

Yosefa Leora is a journalist based in Rhode Island. She can be contacted at yomotif@gmail.com or at DareMe Yosefa on Facebook. She can also be followed at @goagnome on Instagram.

Image Credit: Claudia Flynn

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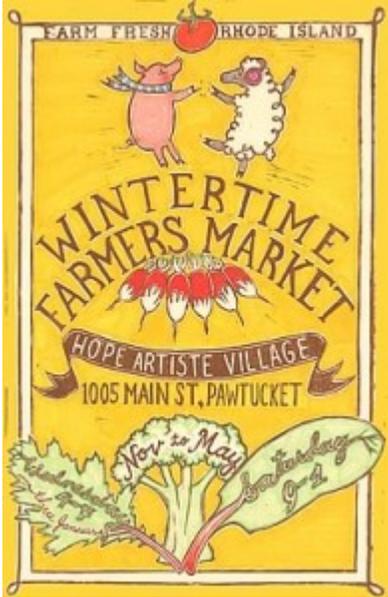
Blood! Sugar! Sid! Ace! What's a writer to do when his characters come alive?

"I talk to myself, because I answer quickly," quips grizzled writer Sid (Lawrence O' Leary) to his three created characters: Sugar! (Stacey Forbes), Blood! (Jami Tennille) and Ace! (Adam Buxbaum). Now as to whether they represent parts of Sid or stand alone as individuals, that is left for the viewer to decide as the creations argue, taunt and tease each other regarding art, religion, relationships and life in the locally produced feature film *Blood! Sugar! Sid! Ace!*

Its strength lies in its dialogue, and though some sections are weighed down by conversations that belabor the film's main point - that Sid loathes himself - writer/director Mike Messier and camera operator/editor Tim Labonte keep the pacing quick and the lens moving. They spin us from one conversation to the next with ease, hitting chords that are vulgar, brooding, honest and heartfelt along the way.

Blood! Sugar! Sid! Ace! Is Messier's first feature length film, produced by Man and a Camera Films and Stand Still Pictures. It was screened at Providence's Brooklyn Coffee & Tea House on November 10 to a receptive crowd. The filmmakers are currently accepting donations to cover the cost of film festival entry fees. *For more information, go to bloodsugarsidace.com.*

Shop Local This Holiday at the Wintertime Farmer's Market



For this year's gift giving, enterprising shoppers might skip the malls and hit the Wintertime Farmers Market at Hope Artiste Village, where local, healthy, and tasty meet.

It's the place to go to make a colorful, fresh dish for tonight's party, but the offerings extend beyond the fresh vegetables and fruit. Just ask Mark Kavanagh, of Fairland Farm, who cannot say enough good things about the farm's dried cranberries. Their 18-month shelf life makes them great to keep on hand for those last-minute gifts, assuming you can resist the temptation to eat them yourself.

"The market accepts cash, credit, and debit," says Sarah Lester, market manager. You can purchase Fresh Bucks in \$5 gold coin increments or a decorative gift card that will surely please the localvore on your list. These gift cards can be used year-round and never expire.

For the budding cook/scientist in your life, pair a Farming Turtles grow-your-own-mushroom log with a jar of Poblano Farm Brontosaurus Kids' Pasta Sauce to use when the 'shrooms are ready. Add a bottle of bubbly from Yacht Club Soda, the official soda of Rhode Island, and a box of honeycomb from Aquidneck Honey, which owner Betsy Restituyo says "can be eaten like candy," and your young friend will be ready to celebrate in local style.

Package a bottle of Cranberry Rosemary Vinegar with a bag of Edible Yard's fresh cranberries for the gourmet chef. Add a copy of "Rubies in the Sand," the cranberry cookbook, for extra delight. Seafood lovers will appreciate the packaged scallops from Bomster Scallops, and meat or poultry lovers will be happy all winter long with a Winter Poultry CSA subscription or Meat Money Shares from Pat's Pastured.

Need a stocking stuffer? Stop by the Virginia & Spanish Peanut Co., which is celebrating its 100th anniversary next year. Fourth-generation owner Shelley Kaloostian-Conti's favorite is the cashews, but she doesn't hesitate to recommend any of the dried fruits and nuts.

Visit the Wintertime Farmers Market on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or on Wednesday from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket to grab some fantastic gifts for the food lovers on your list while supporting your local farmers.

Lunar Notes

Forecast Period: November 15, 2012 to December 13, 2012

Aries: Get ready for some changes in the financial situation. Pay off any debt you have and try not to incur new debt. A career move proves beneficial and may relieve your financial worries, but err on the side of caution and stash the cash while you've got it. You have grand ideas, so put them to use in your daily routine and revise your work methods. Networking pays off in unexpected ways.

Taurus: Partnerships, love affairs, and all personal relationships continue under stressful circumstances. Big changes are in store in that area of your life. A casual love affair reaches the commitment stage; a long-term commitment comes to an end. Whatever the situation, be sure to allow for complete discussion and understanding of where each party is coming from before making changes.

Gemini: Be sure to put a healthy diet and exercise regime into your daily routine as bad habits will catch up to you now. You are laboring under more responsibility while keeping your senses alert to new opportunities and ideas. Your eye is on the big picture and foreign shores even as you manage the everyday humdrum of your life. Remain open to the new and on the alert for the lucky break.

Cancer: While children may leave home or return home, most Cancers are entertaining the prospect of new romance and new avenues of creative expression. This can be merely a clever email response or an epic novel and all stages in between. Some love affairs get really serious, while others flame with passion and burn out quickly. Be wary of those into power and control. Listen to your gut.

Leo: Big changes in the domestic environment - moving in, moving out, redecorating, or reorganizing. Conflict with significant others in your life requires clear, unemotional thinking and discussion, which is rather difficult when the situation is filled with intense emotion. Step back and take a breath. In your vast network of friends and acquaintances, there is a special one with special advice. Take heed.

Virgo: Your immediate environment is subject to change along with your mental attitude and some long-held ideas and beliefs. You are doing some serious thinking about where you're going and where you want to be. A career move may be on the agenda or some advancement in your present position. Romance develops with someone established and with social standing.

Libra: Your financial picture is changing. If you've handled finances well in the past, you should be in good standing. If you've maxed out your credit cards, you'll have to live with that fact. Whatever the case, you are now looking at what it is that makes you feel secure. Often money is not a part of that equation. Looking within brings you to a faraway place. Here you will find solutions.

Scorpio: You make big changes now in your personal appearance, your job, your home, and how you look at life. There's a huge attitude change that goes along with all of this. Your life is busy and you are quite active in and around town. A monetary windfall arrives - a tax rebate or an insurance payoff that you were not expecting. You find innovative ways to make the boring daily stuff exciting.

Sagittarius: You're especially conscious of your physical and mental health and look for ways to ensure that you maintain good health in all of its aspects. Discussions with loved ones get heated when the subject of money comes up. Be sure you know what you are talking about before you open your mouth. You've got some good, if unusual, ideas that reflect just who you really are.

Capricorn: You are entering a period where old friends leave and new friends arrive on the scene. Some of these new friends are beneficial, while others are problematic. You have reached a goal you set for yourself and now it is time to plan anew. You're energized and raring to go. You've got the stamina now to complete whatever you start. Don't get belligerent; try a little diplomacy first.

Aquarius: Your professional life and your standing in the community are subject to change, bringing a shift in your aims and ambitions. This could end up being a major lifestyle change. While work and career objectives remain on the front burner, don't neglect your social life. Romance is all around you; get out there and socialize and make connections. True love is around the corner.

Pisces: A spiritual awakening has you questioning all that you have believed in. This sends you on a new spiritual quest. Travel plans may have to be put on hold due to legal issues or miscommunication. You're comfortable being an armchair traveler as your home and private space provide solace and security. New friends enter your life while the old ones prove their worth.

2nd Story Answers the Call

J.B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* opens on a family at a dinner party, coat tails and white bowties in abundance. Everyone is snooty, and often, characters retire to the drawing room. I have no idea what a drawing room is. And unless you were choking on mustard gas in the trenches in the Great War, you probably don't either.

2nd Story's production of *An Inspector Calls* is a worthy examination of our relationships and our interconnectedness with society. The patriarch of the Birling family, Arthur (Tom Roberts), whose character falls somewhere between Thurston Howell, III and J.P. Morgan, asserts that he "Cannot let the Upton Sinclairs do all the talking ... a man must mind his own business." This isolationist attitude was popular in Victorian-era America. The wealthy were content and complacent and this script provides some heavy conflict to completely ruin that attitude for the Birling family.

As the Birling dinner affair winds down, Inspector Goole (Vince Petronio) comes to the estate and begins an unwelcome inquisition. A working class girl named Eva Smith committed suicide, and it seems each Birling is connected. As the Inspector, Petronio almost comes off like a supervillain. His psychological probing borders on devious, and he casts the weight of villainy onto each person he interrogates. Petronio is all at once smooth, animated, commanding, and subdued.

The dinner party the Inspector interrupts is the celebration of Sheila Birling's (Laura Sorensen) engagement to Gerald Croft (Tim White). It's revealed that Sheila got Eva Smith fired from her job because Eva laughed when Sheila was too fat to fit into a dress, and Gerald had an affair with Eva while she was under an alias. Gerald is initially a pretty unremarkable character. He has the kind of lifelong affluence that results in a Romney-esque personality of room-temperature oatmeal. But when White recounts the evening he first met Eva, he is engaging and honest, and you are left helpless but to immerse yourself in the film reel of memories that follows.

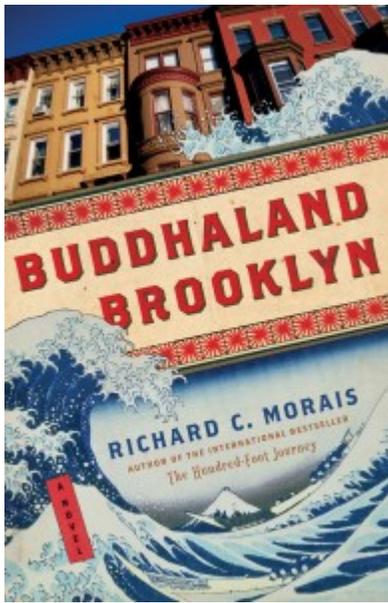
Sybil Birling (Joan Batting) is kind of like Cruella de Vil with some Nurse Ratched peppered in. She refuses to take responsibility for anything, and Batting plays her with a coldness that is almost decadent. As black sheep/slacker son Eric, Jeff Church offers great contrast to the uptight snobs of the Birling family. From his first entrance, he is slouching and completely disinterested in the ongoings of family life. Eric has the most tragic connection to Eva Smith, but you are unaware of the humanity of his character until the connection is revealed. I always appreciate characters who are more than what they seem; and moreover, actors who recognize that quality.

Ultimately, each family member is made to realize that their position of privilege has somehow negatively impacted the world, if only epitomized in Eva Smith. The Inspector leaves as mysteriously as he came, leaving the Birlings in wonder.

An Inspector Calls questions responsibility and truth. Can we really take credit for all we have? Are we worthy of those we love? Do we learn from our failures, or are we doomed to repeat them? Even fabricated circumstances can bring about a realization of profound truth.

Performances will run through December 2 at the 2nd Story Theatre in Warren. For ticket information, call 401-253-9300 or visit www.2ndstorytheatre.com.

Book Review: *Buddhaland Brooklyn*



Soon, it will be winter. You'll look out over brown fields and at empty branches, and though you understand that life remains, this knowledge cannot ameliorate the scene's barrenness. A similar conclusion can be drawn about Robert Morais' new novel, *Buddhaland Brooklyn*.

Much of the responsibility for this lies with Morais' choice of narrator, the Reverend Seido Oda, a phlegmatic Buddhist who lived most of his life within the walls of his monastery in Japan. His supervisors choose him to go to New York to oversee the construction of a temple in Brooklyn and guide believers in the tenets and practices of the faith.

Reverend Oda, however, carries a tragic past that warped him into an emotionless, unsympathetic man. Chosen to be a monk at a very early age, he was taken somewhat unwillingly from his family. When the entire family is killed in a fire, Oda is left alone. A disappointing love affair with a worldly woman in his young adulthood only compounds Oda's well-developed tendency to shut out the world. He becomes an art teacher at his monastery, transforming into the kind of instructor he and his fellow students mocked when they were young.

All this changes with his transfer to Brooklyn. A more different world from the sheltered monastery where Oda drifted toward nothing but his eventual old age and peaceful death could not be imagined, and this is likely Morais' intention. We are introduced to a crew of apparently prototypical Brooklynites, but they come across less as colorful characters than rote caricatures.

All this might have worked had Oda been capable of expressing himself with anything other than

unconvincing melancholy. Not even love can cut through Oda's tough emotional hide. His assistant, Jennifer Meli, is attracted to the aloof Reverend Oda, and gradually draws him out of his shell. She is uncertain about whether this is the right thing to do, and her desire for Reverend Oda is less a reflection of love for the man than of her own journey toward deeper understanding of their chosen religion. Meli is one of the few fully realized characters here, and she almost saves the novel.

The point of the story, I suspect, is to show Oda's slow restoration to life and to chronicle his transformation into a better spiritual leader and a better man. In Brooklyn, he experiences all the frustrations of urban life, and there are some funny scenes where he must deal with the bureaucracy, pace, and pushiness of life in a large city. These, however, are immaterial compared to the unacknowledged pain caused by the loss of his family.

His tone, though, is so bloodless that even the most powerfully felt emotions come across as flat and two-dimensional. Reverend Oda isn't a cold fish, he's flash-frozen, but that doesn't mean the book had to be, too. Had there been another narrative point of view, the pulse of the text might have risen above the 45 beats per minute at which it lumbers along. Brooklyn can do that to you. But it never happens here, to the detriment of an otherwise promising story.