

Mil Mania

The Official Newsletter of WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM



Welcome To The January/February 2010 Issue of Mil Mania!!!

I hope 2010 is treating everyone well thus far, and that this month's biggest holiday proved a love-filled one -- be that through sharing the company of a significant other, friends or furry little family members. Here in the world of this insane artist, it's already been a busy year. January brought the new experience of being interviewed by a features editor whose attention was captured by *The Rodent Reader Quarterly*. And, February saw the resulting article officially appear. An unusual experience for one accustomed to being on the other end of the pen, so to speak, I must say it also proved a bit nerve-racking (though ultimately rewarding) one as well. You can read more about that on p. 5. Also, nerve-racking was the latest in a seemingly endless series of tech challenges -- one that made me wonder for a time if this newsletter would even make it to inboxes this month. Needless to say, this fear was unfounded. But the adventure made for quite a story to fill the current "Temporary Insanity" column -- despite the fact I suspect this condition may be permanent. And, of course, Keela's back to dispense her usual "madvice," a Valentine-appropriate movie is reviewed, and the usual "Nutshells," "Mayhem" and "Pet Peeves" make an appearance. So, curl up with a cup of hot cocoa and peruse this winter edition of newsletter madness. Here's hoping you enjoy it.

Finally, Happy Valentine's Day -- a wish some might call belated. But, if you ask me, wishes for love are always apropos.

Volume 6, Issue 1 January/February 2010

ATTENTION

Mil Mania Readers:

Once more, I want to extend an extra special thanks to all current subscribers -- and encourage you to share *Mil Mania* with your friends. Feel free to forward this issue and encourage signing up for future ones (plus, newcomers can check out all back issues on the subscription page: www.artistinsane.com/news_sign_up.htm).

Let's make this a record year of readership!

Insanity's contagious -- pass it on!!!

Newsletter Spotlight



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Member of...



and...



All Content Written By Mil Scott Unless Otherwise Noted © Mil Scott www.artistinsane.com

Photo: Phoebe (mouse)

More of my photos have been featured in the January and February issues of *Magniloquence* — the monthly newsletter of my local Mensa chapter..

You can view them full size (plus explanations) at the following page:

http://www.artistinsane.com/winter_2010_magniloquence_pics.htm



Music Mayhem



Brian Fitzpatrick continues to play shows throughout the weeks ahead, and is heading into the studio in March to record his next album -- which already I can't wait to hear! He's also producing a video for Michael McDermott's "Carry Your Cross" -- a hauntingly beautiful song from his latest CD. The last video Brian directed for Michael was fantastic -- I'm sure this one will be no less so!!!

Michael McDermott is playing a host of shows throughout Feb. and March -- including several on the East Coast! Despite a hectic schedule of late, I will definitely catch at least one of these, so stay tuned for a report in the next issue. For more info on McDermott happenings -- including the renewed Monday Morning Madness, go to... www.michael-mcdermott.com.



As always, feel free to drop by my "space" at



www.myspace.com/artistinsane

AND My Profile at



<http://www.facebook.com/milscott>

Psycho Therapy

Disclaimer: I am not a "real" psychiatrist... nor do I play one on TV.

Dear Dr. Mil,
I have been doing things in such an unthinking manner lately. After the fact when something stupid's happened, I say, "Why did I think that would work?" Any advice for seeing that the trees are the forest...before another branch knocks me out?
Bristled and Bruised

Dear Bristled,
As with many other questions that have been featured in this column, there are various ways to view this matter -- and several behavioral traits that figure into what answer might be most appropriate. With that in mind, it seems wisest to offer a few possibilities and allow you to decide if any of these fits your circumstance.

First, since your question implies more than an isolated occurrence, I'd ask in return what kind of time frame you've had to work with in each case...i.e. if you've had to make spot decisions, which one often re-thinks later, particularly when the outcome isn't what one might have hoped. Or, if you have had sufficient time to contemplate responses, is it possible the trees of which you speak -- i.e. others involved in these plans gone awry -- swayed out of control as the result of winds not of your making?

Assuming you've eliminated these scenarios, it must next be asked is whether any changes may have taken place in your life

lately to alter your usual manner of decision-making. Has some larger concern kept you pre-occupied? Have you been working overtime or become heavily involved in some extracurricular activity?

Sometimes we make decisions simply based on getting something out of the way or off one's to-do list. But, not taking the time to make fully considered choices can end up causing the opposite effect -- and necessitating additional time and consideration to straighten out the resulting misunderstandings or correct mistakes. For example, I recently read a statistic that attorneys and judges have the poorest driving records in terms of accidents, with financial professionals close behind. It was speculated the reason for this is that such occupations involve hectic schedules, precise deadlines and a great need for multi-tasking. What's really scary about that finding is the damage it doesn't account for; if distractions and too-full plates are resulting in slow reflexes or poor decisions on the road, imagine how many wrong judgments and bad advice are being handed out by these "experts" on whom countless people are relying. Proof the trees are indeed the forest and that many innocently walking through are being knocked out by its inhabitants. A daunting reminder to invest sufficient time and thought into every decision, even those we might at first blush write off as routine. While we definitely need to prioritize -- which requires a view of the forest as a whole to determine which trees may need particular attention -- it's perhaps most important to keep our eyes on what's directly in front of us. If not, it's only a matter of time until we run into a limb or trip over a log.

Of course, it's often said that to recognize a problem is the first step toward its solution. The fact you've done that by sending in your question indicates you're already headed down a path that will lead you out of the woods.

Thanks for writing.

Dr. Mil

Comments on this topic or questions of your own? Send them to mil@artistsane.com. Thanks.

Temporary Insanity

The Tech Knots Tighten



I know I've written before about my difficulties with the many electronic devices and components supposedly designed to make one's life easier. But, somehow the topic remains only too maddeningly relevant -- never more so than over the past few days when it seems nearly every tech item I own has suddenly conspired with the rest to drive me utterly over the brink into complete non-functionality. For example, just last night I was typing away on a section of this newsletter when I attempted to move the cursor to another point in the article. Much to my surprise, nothing happened. Thinking it just a momentary glitch, I tried again. But, again, nothing happened. Aware a vast majority of computer problems can be fixed with a mere restart, I calmly stopped what I was doing and re-booted the machine. And, yes, I'll admit, my blood pressure began to rise ever so slightly when this "fix" had no effect. Still not quite ready to panic, however, I dug an

old mouse out of a desk drawer and proceeded with the next line of defense in my (clearly limited) arsenal of tech know-how: system restore. Lest you're not using a PC or haven't had the (dis)pleasure of your computer going haywire on far too many occasions, that's the process which reverses any updates or changes to programs or the operating system since a specified point...a course of action which has proved reasonably helpful to me in the past. This time, however...not so much.

The newsletter temporarily left behind, I next set off in search of info regarding updated driver downloads on the manufacturer's website. Of course, I quickly realized I had no idea what brand or type of pointer my computer was equipped with, which sent me on another search. And, I must say, my hope of seeing the problem resolved satisfactorily began to ebb when I finally unearthed the "details" section, where I was cheerily informed "this device is working properly." Uh, not exactly.



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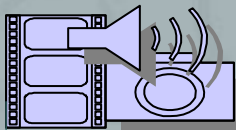


Ignoring that bit of (mis)information, I returned to the manufacturer's website, and proceeded with what I believed was the correct download. Seconds later, this was interrupted by an error message noting the driver already installed was newer than the one I was attempting to replace it with. I was therefore further instructed to uninstall the current one if I wanted to replace it with this alternative. At that point, I basically chickened out, and abandoned the whole operation. Somehow I envisioned crashing the machine entirely. And, while its present state is far from ideal, I wasn't quite prepared to take that risk -- especially since I suddenly realized I hadn't performed file backup in quite some time. I could just imagine losing not merely the newsletter I was working on, but the entire second issue of *The Rodent Reader Quarterly*, which was also in progress. Hmm...maybe this would be a good time to catch up on that.

With this in mind, I ferreted out the external hard drive on which I've backed up my last three laptops -- including (for me, anyway) an admirable amount of the data from this one. And, though I was quite anxious to get back to my newsletter, I figured it couldn't take all that much time to bring everything up to date...until, that is, I was backed up in this effort by the discovery the hard drive's power cord had been chewed off to about 6" in length by a wayward pet. And, of course, the end that plugs into the wall was nowhere to be found. I knew I should have listened to my tech-genius brother-in-law when he said to use an online backup service. But, at this point, I wasn't about to embark on any new electronic adventures. Given my batting average for the evening, I could just envision somehow hitting "delete" instead of "upload" or "transfer" or whatever the proper command might be, and striking out entirely. Instead I grabbed a couple of blank CD's and decided to store the most pertinent info on these antiquated orbs.

I suppose I should just give in and buy a new laptop -- and maybe a new backup hard drive as well...which is probably where this story will end in the near future. Except, of course, that it won't "end" at all. The last time I got a new laptop I managed to put off the dreaded setup, program installation and related tasks just long enough that the store return option had expired before I opened the box and turned it on...to find the screen flawed by an ominous yellow line running down the center. This was eventually resolved (or rather, reduced to a tiny red dot which still has me occasionally attempting to remove it from photos...), but suffice it to say, I'm pretty sure any course resembling "true love" of my next laptop is unlikely to "run smooth." In the meantime, here's hoping this one just keeps running -- at least long enough to finish this newsletter. We'll see... Wait a minute...is that a mini-touchpad on the F9 button? What happens if -- oh, gee...does that option say "enable"? It worked! My pointer's back -- enabled and just fine!!!

Wish I could say the same for me. Sadly, when it comes to computers, I could really use an upgrade -- or, maybe, I should see if I came with an F9.



Ravings of a Mad Woman

This column corresponds with the Mad Ravings On... section of my website (www.artistinsane.com/movie_madness.htm) and is dedicated to selected reviews of movies, television and books... most of which are unlikely to represent "the latest" in any of these categories, but rather a random selection that represents a new and/or note-

Definitely, Maybe — A part of me will forever associate Ryan Reynolds with the TV series, *Two Guys and a Girl* -- though I should hasten to add that is by no means a bad thing. Although it started off on shaky ground in terms of both acting and storylines, this show about Boston co-eds survived its first couple of seasons to evolve into an admirably plotted and well-oiled sit-com machine -- one that graduated to a surprising level of maturity along with its lead characters. In fact, not only was I sad to see it eventually leave the air, I actually started watching *Monk* (reviewed in the Sept./Oct./Nov. '09 issue of this newsletter) because I heard Reynolds' TV co-star, Traylor Howard had joined its cast. But, I digress.

The point I'm trying to make is that Reynolds had become a broadly comic actor in my book -- and as such, not someone I'd have pictured in a romantic lead. As the slightly uptight, and endlessly earnest Will, however, he surprises, even charms, playing a somewhat hapless "nice young man," whose life was changed forever by a decision to become involved in the far from "nice" world of political campaigning. This decision and its results, however, are shared largely in flashback; when the film opens Will is staring at divorce documents awaiting his signature, and caring for his 10 year old daughter, Maya (Abigail Breslin), who raises questions about her parents' marital demise. Instead of giving her direct answers, Will begins a bedtime story in which he presents three women he once dated, and leaves it to Maya to determine which became her mom. An inventive premise in its own right, the storytelling approach to revisiting Will's past allows him to glean new meaning from various events, often thanks to the added perspective of Maya's observations. And, once the mystery portion of Will's entanglements with his romantic triumvirate is solved, Maya adds her own contribution to the tale by attempting to tie up loose ends and help her dad create an unexpected happy ending.

While the story is well acted, engaging and greatly enjoyable overall, I did find Maya's openness to her dad finding happiness with someone other than her mom (or rather, so quickly embracing this possibility) a bit unrealistic. Still, the many touching moments and a very satisfying quest involving the book *Jane Eyre* "definitely" win out for me in making this more than a "maybe" on my list of romantic comedy recommendations. Check it out and see if you don't agree.

Extra! Extra!

The Rodent Reader Quarterly has hit the paper!



Read the article here:

http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/entertainment/index.ssf?/base/living-0/1265864750106180.xml&coll=3

...and a blog by the features editor who wrote it here:

http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/today/index.ssf/2010/02/broadway_couple_celebrate_love.html

Pics, too! http://photos.lehighvalleylive.com/4424/gallery/domesticated_rats/index.html

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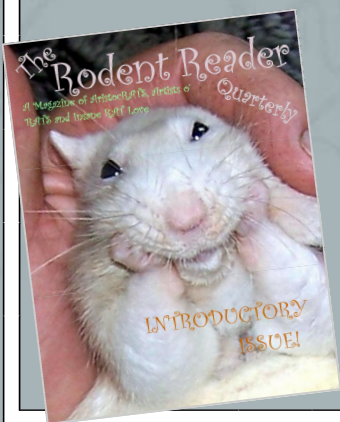
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Thank you for your support!!!

P.S. The next issue will be out next month!



Pet Peeves and Paranoia

A Different Kind of Love Bird



While catching up on some work around the house back on Memorial Day, I heard a strange rustling sound in the fireplace of a seldom-used room (which fireplace is vintage and electric, I hasten to add, meaning it's more a decorative piece of furniture than a heat source — a fact significant to this tale because there's no reason for it to be vented or otherwise have access to the outdoors.) My first thought, of course, was that one of the pet rats had somehow escaped, and in roaming the house had, discovered this great, private hideaway to curl up in and take a nap. You can imagine my surprise, therefore, when the squatter turned out to be not a rat at all, but a baby bird. The room wherein the fireplace stands, you see, is attached to a large unfinished space atop a garage we added to our house a few years back...the eaves of which apparently provide a haven for nesting. This little guy must have fallen from one of these nests, and

was now hopping around in search of a bit of help — and more than likely a bit of food.

Needless to say he'd come to the right place in landing where two crazy animal lovers are always willing to lend a hand to any animal mouth in need — or should I say *mouse* in need...or rat, cat, dog, guinea pig, rabbit — well, you get the point. Ironically, the one type of creature we'd never had firsthand experience with before, however, was a bird — meaning we weren't feeling a whole lot more secure about what to do with this odd little being than he was sure of what to do himself. We therefore acted on the only bit of avian knowledge we were vaguely aware of, which was to give him bread soaked in milk. He accepted this very eagerly...and soon proved far more sure of himself than we'd imagined, spiritedly shaking a piece of it (as vigorously as a dog might shake a rope or sock in play with his master), before dropping the now apparently vile object to let us know when he was full. Clearly, we were in for an adventure (and quite a messy one, at that).

Acting on the one other notion my husband had regarding birds, we did an internet search on baby starling care, as he thought this was most likely our new friend's species. And, the information we found was not only helpful, but positively fascinating. (You can check it out for yourself at www.starlingtalk.com/index.htm, including a very touching story about Kuro, the oldest domesticated starling on record... www.starlingtalk.com/kuro.htm.) Starlings were first brought to America by a group who wished to introduce every bird mentioned by Shakespeare (starlings appear in Henry IV.) Sadly, this decision has since been found regrettable by many, with tales of destruction wreaked by them in both urban and agricultural areas widely publicized. What's apparently not publicized, however, is their beneficial side, regarding which the aforementioned site quotes author Rachel L. Carson, who in an article called "How about Citizenship Papers for the Starling?" wrote, "In spite of his remarkable success as a pioneer, the starling probably has fewer friends than almost any other creature that wears feathers. That fact, however, seems to be of very little importance to this cheerful bird with glossy plumage and stumpy tail. Without seeming to care whether the benefiting farmer thanks him or reviles him, he hurries with jerky steps about the farms and gardens in the summer time, carrying more than 100 loads of destructive insects per day to his screaming offspring, cramming his own stomach full of such foods as Japanese beetles, caterpillars, and cutworms. With complete indifference to angry protests, he finds roosting places in warm cities in the winter, going out each morning, a faithful commuter in reverse, to earn his bread in the surrounding countryside."

Frankly, I don't know all that much about the pros and cons of the starling populous at large (although I must say their detractors seem to echo those who believe all rats to be vile, disease-carrying pests — and knowing how far this stereotype is from the truth, I can't help wondering if the bad rap starlings receive isn't similarly undeserved). But I am getting to know this one very interesting individual. Although it was our initial plan to simply raise him to an age that would allow him to rejoin his outdoor counterparts, we learned from our continued research that, having started caring for him so young, he had almost certainly imprinted with us, making him unable to be set free on his own. As a result, we ended up buying him his own cage, accessories, etc. and, now known as Herbert (or more commonly, Herbie), he's settled in more and more as a member of the family.

What's more, he's become a very conversant one. The starling website noted these birds are extremely intelligent and can usually begin speaking human words at 15-20 weeks of age. Naturally, we found this prospect rather exciting, and began attempting to teach him his name and a few phrases as he matured. Finally (at about 22 weeks) he started making sounds that seemed close to what we'd taught him (in terms of syllable count, though not clear words) — and then one day it happened: the name "Herbie" spoken as clearly as if by you or me...well, a bit more as if by me, since it seems he's most closely mimicked my tone and inflections. Soon after, he was returning my requests for a



(cont'd on next page)



Pet Peeves and Paranoia (cont'd)

“Kiss?” (complete with a little sound of smacking lips following the word) – and responding with his own “Thank You.” He was also declaring “You’re so handsome” – with a little “Mm Hmm” of certainty uttered afterward for good measure. Best of all, he began to coo the most endearing “I love you” one could possibly imagine.

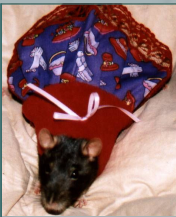
Of course, as soon as I turn on the video camera (the first of these objects I’ve ever owned, purchased solely to capture such animal adventures) thus far he’s chosen to mimic not me, but a clam instead. And,

when visitors before whom we’re eager to have him display his talents come over, he often does the same. Ah well, when I do manage to capture his lovely voice on video, I’ll be sure to share it on my website.

In the meantime, we continue to enjoy his company – in fact, he’s sitting on my wrist as I type this, and I’ll freely admit I’m glad to have had my horizons expanded through his acquaintance. Here’s hoping that by sharing his story here your own horizons might be expanded as well – and that the next time you see a starling outside your kitchen window or in your yard, the frown of disapproval the sight might once have prompted will not merely be forestalled by thoughts of a dear little friend named Herbie, but replaced by a broad smile.



Molly Madvises



MOLLY

As per the precedent set by *Dear Abby* which syndicated column retained that title when passing to its originator’s daughter, so this column continues to retain the name of its originator though now written by another. The “madvice” currently offered herein is that of Keela, one of the “noisy neighbors” Molly (introduced in the Dec. 2005 newsletter linked here... http://www.artistinsane.com/Mil_Mania--12-05.htm) spoke of frequently — and who, like Molly, knows a bit about life as learned by her adventures as a rodent single mom. Also like Molly, she has a strong mind of her own with much rat wisdom to share. I hope you’ll enjoy her commentary.



E-mail your “Molly Madvises” questions to mil@artistinsane.com and I’ll pass them on to Keela. Thanks!

That said, on to this month’s question...

Dear Keela,

A wealth of blessings have come my way. Undoubtedly. I am tickering up a list in my head as I write. All the wonderful people, events and material possessions that I’ve encountered, and those I wish yet to experience -- they are treasures. I aim to thank God daily for my health, clarity of mind, resilience, endurance, talents, and... Well, from one gal to another, I must say, my fashion sense. These traits and qualities make me truly "me" (the latter at times tends to precede "me"!). But right now I am grasping a bit to determine whether this "me" is the "me" to be living the life that I've created. It feels right... Sometimes... Not... In comparison to others... I don't know. I really don't. Perhaps I am having a moment as did Tolstoy's Ivan Ilyich. When on his deathbed, he agonized over the thought, What if my whole life was wrong? I don't want it to be wrong then or now! Keela, how do we know when we are on purpose...or simply sporting a stunning knock-off?

Cleaning Out My Closet

Dear Cleaning,

Well, first I have to say I wasn’t familiar with that Ivan Illy or Icky person or whatever his name is, so I had Mom help me do a little research to help understand how he fits into your question. And, I have to say, it became evident pretty fast that there isn’t much comparison. It seems he was a pretty unpleasant character -- very self-absorbed, our research told us. It doesn’t seem he was very thankful for his blessings, to say the least. So, right at the beginning of your question, you kind of start off answering it for yourself, if you ask me. I mean, you speak of the wonderful people in your life -- which indicates you have solid relationships, and clearly bring much to the table in making new friends. As for your fashion sense, yes this is something even a rat gal like me can relate to -- in fact, maybe I can relate more than most hu-women because the colors and styles I sport might not always be the ones considered most appropriate for given situations. I don’t know if you read one of my columns from a while back when a reader’s question involved criticizing someone else’s footwear choice -- I think they were wearing yellow shoes or some such thing. Anyway, I pointed out that I wear pink shoes everywhere, which might make some snicker a bit (since that kind of thing is only for proms and the like, according to hu-people). But, my pink shoes have served me well thus far, and they’re really comfortable,

Mil Mania

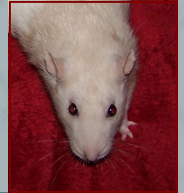
Molly Madvises (cont'd)

so I don't worry about anybody's snickers -- except, of course, when I patter past a person eating the candy by that name and have to work hard to keep my pink shoes firmly on the ground (because I just want to jump up on their hand and take a bite -- of the candy, that is)!!!

Anyway, as far as looking at your life in comparison to others, well, that's sure to stir up a whole porridge pot of confusion and dissatisfaction and all manner of negative thinking. After all, you can always find someone in a "better" position than yours -- more money, more popularity, more beautiful clothes. -- and you can find someone in far "worse" shape, financially or personally or in some other sense. Kind of reminds me of that Hamlet character Shakespeare wrote about -- always tying himself up in knots about what he "should" do or if he shouldn't or when was the right time if he did. Just made a bad situation worse, if you ask me. But that other character who seemed kind of a busybody offered the best advice in the play when he said, "To thine own self be true." Because that's what really matters here. You're the only you there is, and if you follow that old but never worn out bit of advice, you'll always know you're the genuine article.

Keep those letters coming!

KEELA



P.S. I'm on facebook! Here's the link: www.facebook.com/keelascott. Add me!

Don't forget...

Mil's Mercantile



Including many new items featuring my pet rats...year round gifts, cards, postage and more.



AND, of course -- Rodent Reader merchandise...



www.zazzle.com/artistinsane

In A Nutshell

"But words are things, and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think."

Lord Byron

"I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paper-work."

Peter De Vries

"Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart."

William Wordsworth

"Better to write for yourself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self."

Cyril Connolly

Jan./Feb. 2010 Vol. 6, Issue 1

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Thanks for reading this issue of *Mil Mania*! And, remember, this is a work in progress, subject to various changes — all aimed at an improved publication. Please send me your thoughts, including all suggestions. Thank you!!!

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