

Mil Mania

The Official Newsletter of WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM



Welcome To The Summer '09 Issue of Mil Mania!!!

Volume 5, Issue 5 June/July/August 2009

At last!!! Yes, this has proved the hardest fought battle against the deadline clock yet — and clearly I've been beaten badly by its incessant ticking! A few of the reasons can be found within this unprecedented *three-month* combined issue...including an extensive (and hugely rewarding) project for musician Michael McDermott, repeated "photo-ops" for Magniloquence, and a myriad of "side" projects for personal acquaintances and special occasions. In other words, one might call this the "How I Spent My Summer (nothing at all resembling!) Vacation" edition of *Mil Mania*. And, because fall is already shaping up to be only slightly less busy, I have a feeling the next issue will be a combined one as well; it's currently expected to hit e-mail boxes sometime in October.

In the meantime, thank you and a warm welcome to all the new subscribers who've signed on since spring — and I'm amazed at how many of you there have been! Thanks as well to all my longtime readers for your patience. I hope each and every one of you had a fun, fantastic — albeit perhaps for you, too, *frenzied* summer. I look forward to journeying with you into the calmer, cooler days of autumn, and preparing for the holidays to follow.

Lastly, I hope you'll find this issue was worth the wait — and encourage any and all comments, suggestions or other feedback it inspires. As always, happy reading!

Mil

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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

Happy Father's Day!



(Edison with his son, Thomas)

Happy 4th of July!!!



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and...

R.A.T.S.
Rat Assistance & Teaching Society



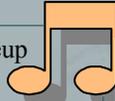
All Content Written By Mil Scott
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Music Mayhem



Brian Fitzpatrick has announced major lineup changes to his band, and is, as of this writing, touring Europe with a different band altogether — formed from members of a group he played with throughout the 1990's. Watch for more Fitzpatrick music news as this becomes available in the months ahead.

Michael McDermott's new album, *Hey La Hey* was officially released on August 11th and is now available in hard copy form on Amazon.com, or via download on his website...



And, speaking of his website, the newest incarnation of www.michael-mcdermott.com has launched at last — and features a brand new McDermott bio I had the privilege of writing (and which you can find under the "About Michael" heading. Because there are a few ongoing bugs the webmaster has yet to work out regarding punctuation, etc. I've also added it to the following page of my own website in its correct form... http://www.artistinsane.com/michael's_bio.htm)

Though this is my most recent piece for the site, look for more of my writing to be published there in the weeks ahead — I was asked several months ago to create artist profiles and interview pieces for each of Michael's band members, as well as CD descriptions of his entire catalog for the online store.

In other McDermott news, I announced in early August that I wouldn't be organizing a pauper community birthday celebration this year. Obviously, this is in no way the result of any lessening in my appreciation of Michael's work; but, rather than reiterate the reasons here, you can visit the following archived discussion from Michael's bulletin board for the entire explanation — as well as the responses it prompted: www.mcd_b'day_conclusion_post.htm.

I'm afraid I also have to share one additional bit of McDermott news that's still more bittersweet: the passing of Michael's beloved Golden Retriever, Vincent (a.k.a. Vinnie) on Aug. 7th. I had the privilege of meeting this wonderful individual (who, because of an accident just following birth, had only one ear — thus his name) on several occasions, and though he will be greatly missed, I'm thrilled he enjoyed an amazing (and, if you saw how — uh... pleasingly plump he was, you'd know just *how* amazing) 15 years of truly living...and giving.

Lastly, although I missed Michael's most recent Philadelphia show in late July, I've been told he'll be returning to the area in November. See you then!!!

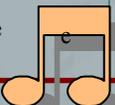
As always, feel free to drop by my (newly updated) "space" at

MYSPACE MUSIC

www.myspace.com/artistinsane

AND my profile at **facebook**

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/profile.php?id=711026302&rcf=profile>



I've been published in the *Mensa Bulletin* (national publication) again! (an excerpt in the June issue.) Thanks to the editor!



Read the article in its entirety at...

www.artistinsane.com/mensa_bulletin_june_09.htm

Psycho

Therapy

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

Dear Dr. Mil,

I mean what I say, and perhaps with a tender naivety, I want to believe everyone does the same. Lately I've encountered many situations where I know that I am being lied to. One day I'm given a misleading statement. Another day I get omission of truth in an explanation and then there is a teeny-tiny white lie. I interact on a daily basis with someone who builds so much fabrication into stories that it's making me wonder if they are a compulsive liar. Today's instance of being hit with a boldfaced lie made me about lose it. "Stop all this lying, people!" It's not that I find being lied to so much as an insult to the receiver's intelligence, but more so a waste of energy. Chances are the lie will come around and bite you in the butt. Why can't people be real?

Believe It or NOT!

Dear Believe,

That's a great question — not to mention a topic that truly taps into my own "insanity"...because few things on Earth drive me more "crazy" than people who misrepresent, misuse or otherwise abuse the truth. And, I have certainly encountered my share of uncomfortable encounters and situations resulting from a refusal to accept this kind of behavior...or merely let it pass. Interestingly, comfort is one of the key motivations behind a liar's act — by avoiding a conflict certain to result from different views on a subject, prevent some form of consequence from a wrong action, or to make a wholly selfish desire seem intended for the good of others.

Psycho Therapy (cont'd)

As you pointed out, however, this type of behavior invariably comes back to revisit the liar in a way he probably never expected — and almost surely never wanted...and which is likely to prove highly uncomfortable, indeed. As C.S. Lewis put it, “If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth, only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.”

Don't get me wrong; it's difficult to deal with many situations directly — and one would have to be far more crazy than even I profess to be to go around seeking out opportunities to share stark truths with reckless abandon. Unfortunately, in dealing with the greatly diverse group that is humanity — that diversity, of course, also being one of humanity's greatest assets — it's inevitable that from time to time we're all going to run into one of these comfort seekers looking to pull the wool over our eyes. And, while separating the sheep from the goats may make the former group the more desirable in a specific Biblical example, when dealing with a liar, it's often a better course of action to adopt a goat-like directness in scaling his mountain of verbal garbage and chewing through it as determinedly as a goat might a tin can (so the saying goes...in fact, goats have far too much sense to eat anything of the kind — I've been told it's actually the glue from the cans' labels a goat's really after...though this also applies to this question, since it's the gooey slime flowing from a liar's mouth he's hoping to attract you with — and the ill motivation it conceals you must work to prevent ingesting.)

Sadly, it's not always so easy to immediately recognize every lie that comes our way — and that aforementioned diversity in people means some will be able to more successfully fool us — or we may see through someone we think so obvious that we watch in utter disbelief as another chomps blindly through his worm-filled can, glue and all. Worst of all, sometimes we simply have to endure the resulting indigestion — or allow another to do so — before the liar is ultimately exposed for what he really is...and learns some pretty unappetizing lessons himself. And, yes, I may well share that naivety you mentioned, in that I firmly believe this exposure will come at last. Some may think that belief is crazy. But, hey, even if I am proved wrong once in a while, at least it's an honest mistake.

In closing, I have to add a longtime favorite quote by Tennessee Williams, which explains my own choice to ever proceed in the direction of truth, regardless the immediate — or yes, sometimes even lasting, discomfort... “when I weigh one thing against another, an easy liking against a hard respect, the balance always tips the same way...” So tips my balance — or *imbalance* if you prefer.

Thanks again for your question — and take comfort in the good mental health your views expressed in it represent!

“Dr. Mil”

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

Temporary Insanity

Assembly Required: Insanity Optional



With the arrival of summer comes as well the arrival of the season for pool parties, barbecues, and general outdoor cooking. Ironically, while both my husband and I enjoy food prepared on a grill, we've never become involved in the actual practice ourselves. Part of this, of course, is the result of an always hectic schedule, which allows very little time during the warm weather months for recreational activities. Another part has been attributable to inexperience, and simply never bothering to do the research on exactly what equipment was needed, and what to do with such equipment once it was obtained.

This year, however, we listened to friends who'd bought new homes excitedly share stories of their first cookouts, noticed TV ads with smiling families routinely engaged in this pursuit seem to expand exponentially, and finally decided it was time to explore precisely what was involved in creating this whole “shrimp on the barbie” blissfulness for ourselves.

Since we generally spend one afternoon every weekend buying groceries, running errands and the like, we were already at our local home improvement store for the hugely exciting item of a toilet repair kit — the third of its kind we'd purchased in recent months, only to have a toilet that seemed fine when we finished “fixing” it invariably decide to start all over again with its refusal to stop running at the exact moment anyone other than I or my husband tried to use it. It was almost as if the handle had some sensor to detect “foreign” DNA. Frankly, I think the thing either needs an exorcist or could be of great use to the FBI — as long as the latter force didn't want to employ it for its rightfully intended purpose. But, I digress...

In any case, we naturally had to walk past the grill setup on display near the front of the store en route to the plumbing section — and, of course, with all these recent temptations fresh in our minds, we became sidetracked (not an easy thing to do, I realize, when one's on a mission to make the much-looked-forward-to purchase of toilet parts. But somehow we allowed ourselves to be pulled away nonetheless.) And, wouldn't you know we almost immediately ran into a wonderfully cheerful salesperson full of backyard culinary expertise.

We'd already decided that if we were indeed going to embark on this experiment — at some point — we were going to do it the old fashioned way, with real charcoals rather than taking the easy way out using propane. Besides, we weren't ready to dive in with one of those essentially full-blown outdoor kitchens big enough to collapse the average deck. As a matter of fact, given this was merely an experiment after all, I was in favor of starting with the smallest grill option available, which was about 12 inches in diameter and roughly the same dimension in height. Of course, that introduced the added dilemma of requiring a table to set it on — preferably not a wooden one that might catch a spark and create a bonfire over which one could have cooked without the grill...assuming one got it out in time to still have a house to retire to once dinner — grilled, smoked or blackened — was finally over. Long story short, we were therefore talked into a considerably larger “portable” unit, complete with legs, wheels — and instructions for assembly.

Ay, there's the rub.

I'm sure there are some amazingly gifted individuals out there for whom putting a grill together (or pretty much anything else) is looked on as a minor detail. For us, however, few words inspire more trepidation than the menacing term “assembly required”. Oh, we've done plenty of it, mind you — and it's usually turned out okay in the end...it's merely proved a matter of such frustration we're not quite sure whether the project's end or that of one of our life

Temporary Insanity (cont'd)

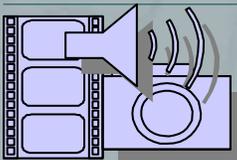
spans is likely to be reached first. It seems those helpful directions, ostensibly in English (though clearly printed in a non-English-speaking country) invariably omit one particular all-important detail that results in dis-assembly, re-assembly, a part obviously missing, or parts that clearly should have been used somehow left over. Again, I remind you of our success in toilet repair. When it comes to assembling household items, we seem fully qualified as master plumbers by comparison. In any case, at the vision of fighting with grill parts on an empty stomach later that evening, my hopes for a lightly browned chicken breast with a hint of charcoal flavor started a pretty quick swirling descent down the proverbial drain.

It's here I must refer you to the essay on faux finishing that fills this column in the January '09 issue of this publication — wherein I noted that upon completing the dining room ceiling, I was sure we'd had enough of this self-inflicted torture to prevent our attempting such foolhardiness again anytime soon...until before we knew it we'd embarked on the same project in another area of the house...without learning our lesson even there. And, having arrived home from our errands that included purchasing a grill, completing that bit of bathroom repair one more time, and enjoying a couple hours of relaxation, the thought of a little something to eat came to mind — and how delicious a taste of that aforementioned grilled chicken began to sound. So, by now after 9PM, we decided to at least open the box and see how complicated this whole assembly process seemed to be. Maybe we wouldn't really tackle the job just yet. But, surely it wouldn't hurt to acquire some idea as to what we might expect. Oh yes. You guessed it. Hmm...two long legs, two short legs, a couple handles — I mean, really...how hard could it be?

I suspect you can imagine as the reader what we as the doers failed to so quickly grasp. And, though I'll spare you the details — including a card on which 12 different types of hardware were packed under *one* vacuum-sealed piece of plastic (you can figure out for yourself how long it was able to be deciphered which was part letter A or part letter C — and how aggravated that left M-E) — I will tell you the good news is that by 11PM we were enjoying our first meal on this newly purchased apparatus. The bad news is we probably have the only portable grill in the country with the handle on a side with one long leg, one short leg and just one wheel — making the “port” part of that equation un-“able” to be executed.

Of course, having never used our deck so much in the past, we never gave much thought to our lack of a screen door leading out to it. In light of all the (quite stationary) grilling we'd be doing from now on, we suddenly realized we might need to soon plan one more trip to the home improvement store.

Then we came to our senses and called a professional.



**Ravings of a Mad
Woman**

This column corresponds with the Mad Ravings On... section of my website (www.artistsane.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 noteworthy discovery to me.

Calendar Girls — Although I was planning to review another film for this issue, the fact a certain quote from this one keeps finding application in both non-*Mil Mania*-related writing pieces and personal correspondences of late, I've decided it's probably time to revisit it here at last. Released in 2003, this British film starring Helen Mirren and Julie Walters created little fanfare upon its release, but the commercials I recall seeing at the time proved sufficiently intriguing as to make me stop flipping through TV channels one night to give it a try. And, while the sum may not add up to quite as much as certain parts of it alone, the fact I've found those parts so worth continually sharing has made me realize a little context in which to place them might be worth sharing, too.

That said, *Calendar Girls* deals primarily with the longtime friendship between Chris (Mirren) and Annie (Walters), who are what one might call quiet rebel members of the genteel Women's Institute. They sit amongst the more proper, mature ladies at every meeting, often poking fun at the topics covered and those presenting them. Things quickly take a more serious turn, however, when Annie's husband, John, is diagnosed with cancer, and we follow the story of his declining health, which prevents him from delivering a speech he'd been scheduled to give for Chris and Annie's group. The key line of the speech declares that “the flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire; their last phase is the most glorious” — words which provide not merely Annie, but her entire circle, both comfort and challenge, eventually inspiring them to embrace a radical idea to raise money for a new couch in the family waiting area of the hospital where John spent his last days.

Each year, the Women's Institute creates a calendar, perennially revolving around some aspect of the home topics their meetings cover — a collection of flowers one year, baked goods the next, etc. Chris, however, always living on the edge of the group's rule-book — and currently dealing with her teenage son's pre-occupation with the anatomy of the opposite sex — proposes a slight twist on this tradition. Why not make a calendar that expands upon these homemaking activities by sharing the glory John wrote about in the women who pursue them...in its fullest and most naturally beautiful form?

Lest anyone get the wrong impression, this is all dealt with in the most tasteful manner — a couple scenes with the young male photographer the ladies employ to carry out the project are particularly delightful, as his attempts to help them create his art and preserve their modesty prove wonderfully touching in their gentle amusement. And, the finished product that results is very artful, indeed.

The second half of the movie is where things fall apart, however, cinematically speaking. Once the calendar is completed, there are
cont'd on p.5

More of my photos were featured in the June ...



... July ...



...and August issues of *Magniloquence* — the monthly newsletter of my local Mensa chapter. You can view them full size (including explanations behind them) at the following page:

http://www.artistsinsane.com/Summer_09_magniloquence_photos.htm



Ravings of a Mad Woman (cont'd)

consequences to be dealt with, both in terms of family reaction to the calendar, and how it impacts Chris and Annie's friendship. Keep in mind, I don't dispute the validity of exploring these circumstances — in fact, I applaud the recognition that actions have consequences, and that even those most nobly intended can sometimes go awry. The problem is, I think the filmmakers might have somehow improved upon the manner in which they covered this aspect of the women's story, as the film seems to fall a bit flat here when compared to its outstanding start.

As I noted at the outset of this review, however, I still believe what we're left with is something valuable — which the women's effort likewise proved to their charitable cause. The story this film tells is, in fact, true...and the calendar raised more than 500,000 British pounds. More than that, though, I believe the themes regarding not allowing potential to be limited by age, and the positive results that can come from challenging the status quo are life lessons to be remembered, and followed. I continue to be inspired by these women — and John's recognition of their glory — and hope that by writing about them here, you, too, might be inspired to shock your world one day...if you haven't already!

You go, "girls"!!!!

Comments from *Mil Mania* readers on the May issue...

"Just read through your May newsletter. Good stuff. "
S.H.

"As it turns out, I ended up adopting two male baby rats sooner than I'd anticipated! I hope that my new buddies, Bob and Simon, The Boomtown Rats, are happy in their new home. They ate a little banana for breakfast this morning. Bob is the more outgoing of the two so far as Simon is quite shy and timid and is enjoying hiding out in the little house I made for him....

I LOVE The Agile Rat site! It's toooo cute!! I am going to buy a hammock from her for sure and possibly a few other things... I loved seeing your photos on there. Thanks again for all your advice."

C.B.

"There are a couple of gals on one of the rat lists I am on and I tell them all the time...and I will tell you again, too.....If I were a rat, I would want to be YOUR rat! It is soooooo good to hear from you, and hear about your animals.

M.K.

"...newsletter looks great!"

L.P.

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,

In catching up on family stuff with a friend, I got to thinking of how all those fun, classic board games of youth really can speak to our life experiences. My friend shared how a family match of the game Sorry turned volatile and caused a lot of tears, hurt feelings, a scattered mess to clean up and a string of apologies to extend. For me lately, it's been like a one-sided game of Battle Ship. A different friend keeps attempting to knock me down, to "sink my battle ship." She's been as strategic in her attempts to "push my buttons" as one is in pushing those red and white pegs into the unfolding map of their opponent's boat line up. I don't like this kind of game, so I've steered my boats to safe waters by only having light chit-chat with her and, at times, avoiding her calls completely. But, Keela, I know that I'm not playing fair either. What's a game to move to that might provide smooth sailing?

Needing a Clue in all this Trouble

Dear Needing,

First, I have to say I don't know much about the board games you mentioned — we rats love to play and make up lots of games of our own (like I explained in my latest review as mentioned in this column's P.P.S.), but the only "board" that came to mind when trying to figure out what you were talking about was *smorgas-board*!!! Oh, how I *love* those! Anyway, since I knew I was scampering off the subject and needed a little more information I scurried to ask Mom about all this (and stopped off for a bit of blueberry muffin to help me think along the way). What I found out was that most board games involve rolling dice and exchanging phony money and pushing things called tokens around — which would be pretty difficult for those of us who don't have thumbs. Plus, it all sounds like a lot of work (and boy, does work make me *hungry*!).

The other thing I found out was that these board games are sometimes really just a way to spend time with people you don't know very well so you don't have to come up with things to say to each other every minute you're together. My mom's not very good at making conversation, you see, and she says sometimes things like that can break the ice. I thought that made a lot of sense — since ice isn't very tasty, it seems like a pretty good idea to me to get that out of the way as soon as possible. In any case, at other times, Mom says, board games are just plain fun, and a good way to laugh at ourselves and with each other in a group of people you know very well and like a lot — which is why she and Dad pull them out after Thanksgiving dinner to play with Grandma and Uncle Frank. They have this game called "Cranium" that makes them hum songs and answer questions and draw pictures with their eyes closed, and even act out stuff to make somebody else guess what it is they're doing. I thought they'd all gone crazy the first time I saw them doing these things — but then I spotted the bowl of popcorn on the coffee table and stopped paying attention!

Back to the subject at hand, though, Mom said there's one more reason people play games, and that this one isn't about having a good time at all, but is aimed at darker types of competition. She said these people aren't interested in sticking to the rules for winning phony money or reaching the last space first, but are all about manipulating people's feelings and gaining advantages for themselves (kind of like Tom Sawyer made a "game" of painting a fence — or rather getting other people to do it for him!). In fact, they don't even always let you know they've started a game, so you're coming in a couple of turns late, and probably starting short of currency or points or whatever else it might be you need to have any chance of winning. In other words, by the time you arrive, you're already pretty confused, which makes it kind of hard to make the correct move for the situation, and the next thing you know you're even further behind...which makes it that much harder to catch up. Whew! I'm getting tired just *thinking* about all the work that rat-presents — and, worse yet, you were probably under the impression it was supposed to be your day off (since no hu-man or hu-woman should be playing board games at work.)

Anyway, when you get to the sweet potatoes of the matter (I know that expression usually includes "meat" - but I'm a veg-rat-arian), it seems to me we're back to the subject of this month's "Psycho Therapy" column, because people who play one-sided games like you're talking about are really trying to deceive someone or win something unfairly, which means they're really lying. And, like Mom madvised there, the best way to proceed through life isn't by playing any games with a liar at all, but dealing very

Mil Mania

Molly Madvises (cont'd)

di-rat — I mean, *directly* with the situation, and letting her know she's just going to have start over and play by the rules, or you're going to clean up the popcorn and go home.

Like Mom has said before, one of her favorite movies is *Green Card*, which is kind of about a deceptive game like you're talking about, only one that starts out for reasons that aren't so bad — but wherein not being honest from the start still proves a really bad idea in the end. What *Green Card* shows us, though, is that even when one makes such a big mistake as lying, truth and forgiveness and love can still triumph — provided, that is, one is willing to surrender the game...which can be, sometimes, the very best move of all.

KEELA

P.S. I'm on facebook! Here's the link...

<http://www.facebook.com/findfriends/?code=1325151454#/profile.php?id=100000109802208&ref=profile>

If that doesn't work for some reason, just look me up! I'm under Keela Scott and the photo at right is my profile pic. Add me!



P.P.S. (In a contest on facebook!) I won a copy of the new children's book, *Marshall Mouse and His Green High-Tops*. You can read my review of it on my web page... www.artistinsane.com/keela's_reviews.htm. AND, my review was also posted on the *Marshall Mouse* myspace page! Thank you again to the author and her ratrepresentative!

Don't forget...



Recently updated with a host of brand new items!!!






Go to:

www.zazzle.com/artistinsane

In A Nutshell

A couple quotes from a writer born in July...

"The liar's punishment is not in the least that he is not believed but that he cannot believe anyone else."

"I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation."

George Bernard Shaw

...and a couple more from one born in August...

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."

"Women and elephants never forget."

Dorothy Parker

...and one just because I recently discovered it and am a big fan of its author...

"I dream my painting and then I paint my dream."

Vincent Van Gogh

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The Official Newsletter of
WWW.ARTISTINSANE.COM

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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And, if you like what you've read, please forward this publication to anyone else you feel might enjoy it.