

**B O U L D E R**

# WEEKLY

## **DANISH PLAN**

Will the United States  
be here two years  
from now?

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Publisher Nate Jordan  
is putting Boulder  
writers on the map

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As the demand for  
fish increases, folks  
head to the farm

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Classical cellist  
Matt Haimovitz is on  
a rock 'n' roll tour



# **CRITICAL CONDITION**

## **BOULDER COUNTY'S HEALTH-CARE CRISIS**

**BY PAMELA WHITE**

# Arts & Culture

http://www.boulderweekly.com

## Solving the Monkey Puzzle

A local writer's journey from Christianity to Kerouac

by Adam Perry

### On the Bill:

The next **Monkey Puzzle** event is titled **FORBIDDEN LOVE** at 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 28, at the Mercury Café, 2199 California St., Denver, 303-294-9258. For more information about Monkey Puzzle and how to submit to the journal, go to [monkeypuzzleonline.com](http://monkeypuzzleonline.com).

**N**ate Jordon's current life and work can be summed up in two words: Monkey Puzzle. He edits the quarterly journal by that name (a 100-page book of poetry, stories and photos, mostly by Boulder-area students) and sees it through the publication and distribution process. Monkey Puzzle currently has a circulation of about 500 copies per issue, but a recent deal with Small Press Distribution will help Jordon get upcoming chapbooks and novels by the journal's contributors into bookstores nationwide, which may prove to be the boost Boulder needs to show the world that our burgeoning literary scene is no joke.

"Nothing in my life is ever easy to explain or understand," Jordon said in a recent interview at Naropa's Paramita campus. "I was very idealistic in my early 20s and thought that I had a message to give to the world and the best medium to do that through was poetry. I felt an immediate kinship with Jack Kerouac. I didn't know you could write like that; it felt untrained, guttural, gritty and beautiful. To a certain extent, that's what I look for in Monkey Puzzle writers: someone who can engage me intellectually and emotionally."

"If you're writing from a true and honest source and you mean it and there's emotion involved, it's gonna move someone. If it makes you wanna fuck, fight, cry, yell, hug someone, kill someone, that's what I want; that's what I think good writing should do."

Impressively, Monkey Puzzle readings actually live up to Monkey-In-Chief Jordon's "emotional and visceral" vision, with vibrant and volatile local writers reading

their work between performances by exciting local bands and even theater groups.

"I call them events or gigs, not readings," says Jordon. "Readings sound like something you do at bedtime."

Ironically, it was during his spare time in the military that Jordon was exposed to the two books, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert M. Pirsig and *Tristessa* by Jack Kerouac, which first made him feel "separated from the beasts." What's more, the man who turned Jordon on to what's sometimes known as "counter-culture literature" was Sgt. Norton — "the smartest person and the biggest asshole I've ever known," says Jordon.

Raised as a devout evangelical Christian in Houston, Jordon says *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* helped pull him out of "a very limited existence." In his early 20s, through a "voracious reading diet" and disciplined daily writing practice, Jordon began to embrace his talent as a writer,

which was heralded and supported by his teachers throughout high school but ignored by his intensely Christian parents, who wanted him to focus on football and the Bible (which are practically inseparable in Texas).

Before falling in love with the work of Pirsig and Kerouac, Jordon didn't consider writing to be a serious path.

"I didn't have confidence in myself. Without anyone to encourage me, I had to believe in myself. There was no support [and] I still don't get support. No one in my family really knows or cares about what I'm doing, except maybe my grandfather."

Jordon was born to teenage parents in Germany while

his father was in the U.S. Army. He had all the paperwork to prove his American citizenship, of course, but before his 18th birthday, a letter from the secretary of state informed Jordon that the United States had no record of his birth and he'd be deported immediately unless he agreed to join the army and complete a tour of duty. The government wouldn't acknowledge Jordon's citizenship, and he ended up serving in the military for a time.

After his honorable discharge from the military, Jordon (transformed from Evangelical Christian athlete and serviceman into a one-man writing-and-publishing machine) made his way through Mexico and California, where he earned a BA in writing from CSU Fresno before coming to Boulder to get his MFA through the Kerouac School at Naropa. (To add to his darkly comical experience with paper-work mix-up, Naropa printed Jordon's name wrong on his diploma.)

The multi-media experience of Monkey Puzzle events isn't surprising, considering Jordon's big (and very serious) plans for Monkey Puzzle Press (which is releasing a few books by local writers, including myself, this spring and summer), MonkeyPuzzleOnline.com, Monkey Puzzle Records and even Monkey Puzzle Films, through which Jordon plans to release "short, eloquent films in the vein of *Pull My Daisy*."

That being said, Jordon's only goal is artistic integrity. "I don't care about reaching whatever the 'pinnacle of success is,' you know? All I want is my banana.

Success is people being impacted by my work. That's all I'm looking for. Monkey Puzzle itself is a platform for people to see their work in print for the first time, and to see them have that epiphanic experience [where] they take themselves and their work seriously. I always tell people, 'If money is your concern, seek thine treasure elsewhere.' If money is how you grade success, go be an attorney. If your grading of success is connecting with the human community, art and music and writing [are] the right fields. Besides, in the end, it's our music and literature that separates us from the beasts." **2**

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**Face** at Boulder's  
Dinner Theatre  
Monday, April 6, 6:45 p.m.

Adult ticket prices range from \$54 - \$108  
Tickets for kids 18 and under are \$18

Admission includes two drink tickets and an appetizer or a dessert. Call or email Molly at 303-499-7077, ext 18, or [m.goldsmith@harhashem.org](mailto:m.goldsmith@harhashem.org) to reserve your spot now!

**Har HaShem's Spring FUNdraiser**

The Har HaShem House Band will be opening for Face!  
More about Face at [www.facevocalband.com](http://www.facevocalband.com)