

ABOUT BOOKS

Montana Moments *History on the Go*
By Ellen Baumlér
Published 2010 by the Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, MT
\$14.95 softcover

Got 90 seconds? Then you have time enough to read a snippet of *Montana Moments*, Ellen Baumlér's condensed version of some of the most intriguing facets of the state's history.

The new book would be perfect fodder for a roadtrip, since it covers the state from head to toe. In fact, many of the vignettes were compiled by Baumlér, the interpretive historian at the Montana Historical Society in Helena, as she prepared sign text for properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

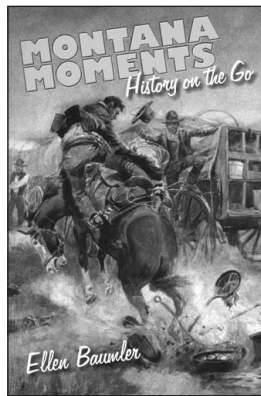
Others originated in her two collections of ghost tales, *Spirit Tailings* and *Beyond Spirit Tailings*, and were originally aired on KCAP radio station as a popular series called "History Half-Notes" (hence their 90-second brevity).

Baumler has chiseled the myriad entries into 19 sections, beginning with "Creatures Great and Small," which encompasses everything from touching canine anecdotes, to the discovery of Maiasaur at Egg Mountain, to famous race horses and rare black garter snakes.

Montana's history is rife with eccentric characters, and Baumlér includes a colorful assortment in chapters titled "Desperadoes, Dandies and Darned Good Men" and "Wild, Wicked and Wonderful Women."

Places are also part of the package. A chapter titled "Traveler's Respite" lists some of the state's once resplendent and, in some cases, still thriving hotels and resorts. "Special Places" includes several historic nuggets, from Fort Connah, built by the Hudson Bay Company in 1846, to homesteads hand-crafted by immigrants in the early 1900s, and brothels and speakeasies.

Montana Moments makes the past more accessible, especially for those of us with short attention spans, and certainly backs up Baumlér's assertion in the introduction: "History is not boring."



— Kristi Niemeyer

The Governor's Dog is Missing
By Sneed B. Collard III
Published January 2011 by Bucking Horse Books, Missoula, MT
\$16 hardcover

In his new novel, Missoula writer Sneed Collard introduces two intrepid sleuths, Slate Stephens and Daphne McSweeney – a pair of 12-years-olds determined to unravel the mystery of Governor Rickson's missing dog, Cat.

"And you did hear me right about the dog's name," explains narrator Slate. The governor, a former wheat rancher with a passion for heavy equipment, named his Border collie after his favorite Caterpillar backhoe. "I mean, who wouldn't, right?" asks Slate.

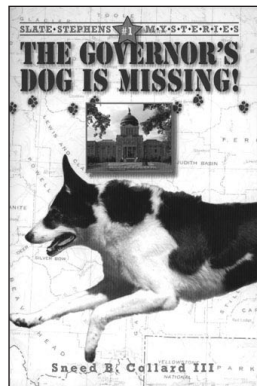
The kids, both spending the summer in Helena while their geologist dads look for earthquake faults, unearth more than the mystery of Cat's disappearance. Their investigation leads them through the bowels of the Capitol, up and down Last Chance Gulch, and around the town's landmark Firetower. Slate even crashes through the annual Summer Symphony at Carroll College, in pursuit of a dog that might be Cat.

Along the way, the two well-read and vocabulary-hungry detectives regularly challenge each other with unusual words (peripatetic, perambulate and gneiss, to name a few), share engaging tidbits about geology, politics, biology and history, and wrestle with a growing attraction to each other.

The Governor's Dog is Missing is the well-known children's author's first novel in his series of Slate Stephens Mysteries. The next, titled *Hangman's Gold*, takes the busy detectives to Bannack.

If the first book is any indication, mystery readers of all ages will want to climb on board for what author David Lubar (*Attack of the Vampire Weenies*) describes as "fast action, hilarious humor and a well-crafted mystery."

— Kristi Niemeyer



The Casebook of Sheriff Pete Benson

By John S. Fitzpatrick
Published 2010 by Riverbend Publishing, Helena, MT
\$12.95 softcover

John Fitzpatrick's second novel chronicles the crimes and characters of an imaginary Rhyolite County, where the sheriff's beat is bigger than some states.

Life as a big-city police detective is not what Pete Benson had in mind for himself after he acquired a wife and family. So he leaves the force and moves to quieter turf in sparsely populated Montana, where he signs on for the less hectic lifestyle of a county sheriff.

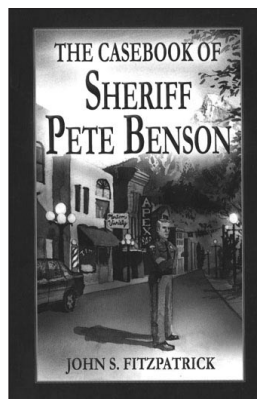
The county seat boasts a population of 3,000, everyone knows everyone, and gossip travels like wildfire. Benson's job is to keep order and insure the safety of Rhyolite County's inhabitants.

His casebook is a chronicle of crimes committed within his jurisdiction, and they run the gamut from murder and thievery to hi-jinks by local pranksters. Told in a matter-of-fact and easygoing manner, each chapter relates a new case, with the town's characters serving as witnesses, bystanders or commentators, offering their opinions over coffee at the café.

Humor and touches of the sheriff's signature sarcasm spice up the entries. Benson's sidekick, Kay, can be counted on for a good practical joke, and his wife, Connie, keeps him grounded in this entertaining new tale by the author of *Sherlock Homes: The Montana Chronicles*.

Fitzpatrick is a native of Anaconda, and currently resides in Helena.

— Judy Shafter



Fair Game

By Sarie Mackay
Published August 2010 by Lantern Lodge Publishing, Red Lodge
\$15.95 softcover

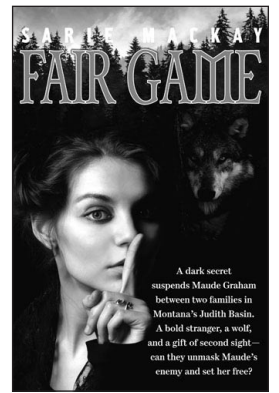
Red Lodge writer Sarie Mackay tells the story of a fiery young Scotswoman, ensnared in a conflict between two powerful ranching families in Montana's legendary Judith Basin, in her second novel, *Fair Game*.

Protagonist Maude Graham suffers a brutal loss and retreats to the wilderness, only to be forced from her reclusive life by a bold stranger and an alpha male wolf, inspired by one of the earliest members of the Yellowstone Park wolf reintroduction project.

The heroine has a gift of second sight, passed down from her Scottish grandmother, which is both a blessing and a curse – and no help at all when love arrives.

The wolf pack weaves its way through the tale, raising its litter of cubs in the forests of central Montana, far from bounty-hungry trappers. Several historical figures from Montana's past make cameo appearances in the book, which culminates in a bombshell plot twist.

Mackay, who graduated summa cum laude from the State University of New York at Fredonia with a degree in English literature and a specialization in professional writing, works in the nonprofit sector. She is also the author of the historical novel *Lodestar*.



The Totally Out There Guide to Glacier National Park

By Donna Love, illustrated by Joyce Mihran Turley
Published by January 2011 by Mountain Press Publishing Company, Missoula, MT
\$15 softcover

Donna Love's latest nature book for young readers is a very appealing guide to one of our greatest national treasures.

Her informative text is well researched and full of facts and numbers to give dimension to the peaks, lakes and valleys of Glacier Park.

Love takes us back into geologic history to look at how the mountains and glaciers were formed, and then brings us forward to talk about the state of the glaciers today. Biodiversity is illustrated with descriptions of the wildflowers, tamarack and cedar forests, and the richness of wildlife that inhabits the area.

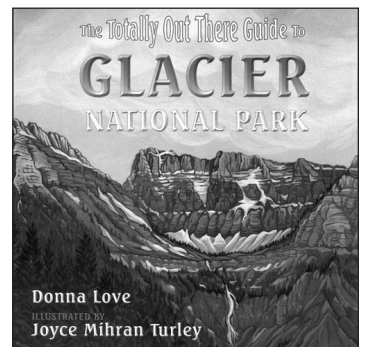
Although photographs are used, illustrations by Turley provide a lovely accent to the text.

The book is packed with information. Did you know that there are over 260 kinds of birds to be seen in Glacier Park and 23 species of fish swimming its waters? There's a list of fun facts and a glossary to help young readers expand their knowledge and vocabulary.

The author also discusses the human history of the area, from its first native inhabitants, to the coming of the first Europeans, and the establishment of the park in 1910. She also points out that the century-old park is showing its age, and deserves our care and protection so that coming generations may enjoy its natural wonders as thoroughly as we do today.

Love, who lives in Seeley Lake, is the author of *Loons: Diving Birds of The North* and *Awesome Ospreys: Fishing Birds of the World*. Both books were also illustrated by Turley, a Colorado resident who has illustrated many award-winning nature books for children.

— Judy Shafter



Blue Lines A Fishing Life

By Tom Reed
Published by Riverbend Publishing, Helena, MT
\$12.95 softcover

Blue-lining ... "You know, fishing those blue lines on the map, those thin blue lines."

These curvaceous lines on a topographic map guide veteran fisherman Tom Reed, who prefers angling in the small streams that wander through a landscape.

While there's plenty of glory to be found in yanking trophies out of a big river, Reed says shallower and narrower courses provide more challenges. The fish are warier, streamside foliage lurks to grab your hand-tied fly, and the fish are generally pan size. "Small streams ... call you home, call you to the heart, to the source," he writes.

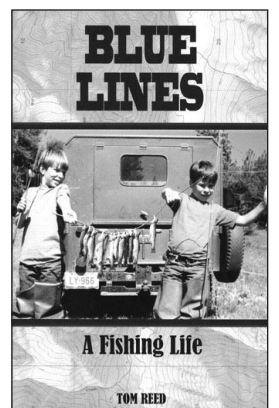
There's a different Zen to small-stream fishing and the author acquired the addiction early in life, growing up in a Colorado family of fisherfolk. The call of the trout stream is strong for the afflicted, causing them to cast all reason aside. They drop out of college, embark on lengthy journeys, drive down dusty roads in unreliable vehicles and subsist on stale food – all for the chance to match wits with an aquatic creature, who would like nothing more than to abscond with a newly purchased \$5 fly.

There's an art and grace to fly-fishing done well, and the author takes us on several journeys to illustrate this point. Drive the back roads of Colorado, Wyoming and Montana, and join the author as he scrambles down steep embankments and spends hours contentedly casting for elusive trout in clear cold streams.

This is not a how-to book, but there are plenty of useful pieces of advice among the pages. Lessons in geography and local fishing history slip into the dialogue as well.

Reed currently lives in Pony, Montana, where he works for Trout Unlimited. Previous books include *Give Me Mountains for My Horses* and *Great Wyoming Bear Stories*.

— Judy Shafter



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Nominations open for High Plains Book Awards

Nominations for the fifth annual High Plains Book Awards will be accepted through March 11. For information on how to nominate a book or a writer,

go to highplainsbookawards.org. The 2011 awards include a new category, Arts and Photography. Nominations are also open for books published for the first time in 2010 in these following categories: Best Fiction, honoring the best novel or short-story collection; Best Nonfiction; Best Poetry; Best First Book (fiction, non-fiction or poetry); and Best Woman Writer Award.

Each year, an Emeritus Award is also presented to a regional writer for a body of work. Past Emeritus winners include noted authors Margaret Coel, Gary Ferguson, Louise Erdrich and Larry Watson.

All nominated books are read and evaluated by community readers in the first round of the selection process. Finalists in each category are judged by writers with connections to the High Plains region who have published in the particular genre they will judge.

The awards are given during the annual High Plains BookFest, held in early October in Billings.

ABOUT BOOKS

Ballad of the Northland

By Jason Barron
Published 2010 by Kanabear Books in
Lincoln, MT
\$19.95 softcover

Jason Barron's debut novel is a work of fiction, but the author has drawn extensively from his own life experiences of growing up in a remote area of Alaska and living minimally off the land.

The central character is an orphaned boy, who remains unnamed throughout the story, living with relatives who eke out a meager existence in the bush country by hunting and trapping. Every day is a challenge to survive and every task is difficult. Hunger and the cold are the norm.

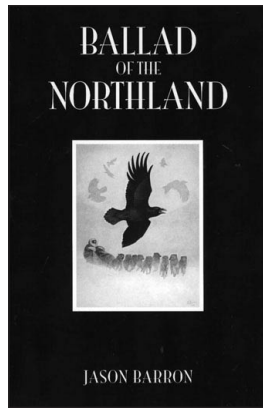
One day he learns about "The Great Race," the 1,000-mile dogsled odyssey called The Iditarod. A determination to compete sets the boy on a rigorous path of training and solitary pursuit, with just himself and his beloved sled dogs working in tandem toward their goal. Dreamlike sequences haunt the young man: his mother's face, a young girl he once met, an elderly musher who comforts him with wise words.

"You are a true son of the Northland, and the land itself will hold you in its bosom when the time comes, when the moment of your ending is at hand," the old musher told him. "The Northland is a ballad and you are a part of it."

The author – a veteran Iditarod racer – has created an unforgettable character, and writes with authenticity and clarity about the Alaskan landscape. His book is a fine read for adult and young adult audiences.

Harmony Barron, Jason's wife and fellow musher, illustrated this novel with a series of charcoal sketches of wildlife and scenery. The Barrons live in Montana with their children and raise sled dogs.

– Judith Shafter



Getting Good Crops Economic and Diplomatic Survival Strategies of the Montana Bitterroot Salish Indians, 1870–1891

By Robert J. Bigart
Published September 2010 by the University
of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK
\$39.95 hardcover

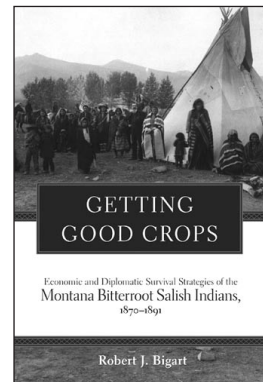
In 1870, the Bitterroot Salish Indians – called "Flatheads" by the first white explorers to encounter them – were a small tribe living on the western slope of the Northern Rocky Mountains in Montana Territory. As pressures intensified, from droughts and dwindling resources to aggressive neighboring tribes and Anglo-American expansion, the economically impoverished tribe accepted government promises of assistance and retreated to the Flathead Reservation, more than 60 miles from their homeland, in 1891.

In *Getting Good Crops*, Robert J. Bigart explores how the Salish survived into the 20th century, despite their small numbers, their military disadvantages, and the aggressive invasion of white settlers.

Bigart, Librarian Emeritus at Salish Kootenai College in Pablo, argues that a key to the survival of the Salish was their diplomatic agility and willingness to form strategic alliances and friendships with non-Salish peoples. The Salish also took steps to sustain themselves economically – including "getting good crops" to feed themselves when traditional food sources became increasingly scarce.

Raised on the Flathead Reservation himself, the author seeks to convey the Salish story from their perspective, despite the paucity of written Salish testimony. What emerges is a picture – both inspiring and heartbreaking – of a people maintaining autonomy against all odds.

Bigart is the author or editor of numerous publications, including *A Pretty Village: Documents of Worship and Culture Change, St. Ignatius Mission, Montana, 1880–1889*.



Finding the Bad Inn Discovering My Family's Hidden Past

By Christy Leskovar
Published 2010 by Pictorial Histories
Publishing Company, Inc., Missoula, MT
\$25 hardcover

In 2007, author Christy Leskovar published *One Night in a Bad Inn*, an intriguing history of some of her ancestors. Her new memoir is a prequel to that book, telling of her research efforts to uncover the family history that appears in *One Night in a Bad Inn*.

Her decision to write the first book came after remarks made by a relative about a murder committed by her great-grandmother. The author eventually retreated from her corporate career and devoted herself full-time to research and writing.

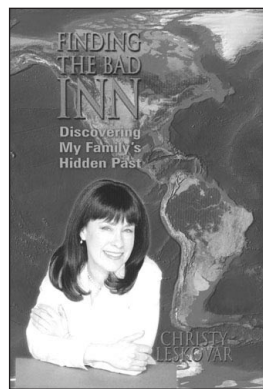
The quest for information took years and thousands of miles of travel, both in the U.S. and abroad. Countless hours were spent in courthouses, and visiting historical societies, museums, police stations, newspaper offices, cemeteries and more.

Interviews helped the author understand that opinion and fact must be separated when writing family history. "A writer who begins his research with strong unsubstantiated preconceived notions, and cherry picks the facts to support those notions, isn't writing history," she notes.

Finding the Bad Inn is part treasure hunt and part detective story, as Leskovar follows clues that send her back in time to unravel the sequence of events and sort out all the characters that were a part of her past. The journey not only enlightens the author, but tells the reader where and how a person can find vast troves of public information.

This is an entertaining read, but also quite useful for anyone interested in sorting out their own family history.

– Judy Shafter



Good Camel, Good Life Finding Enlightenment One Drop of Sweat at a Time!

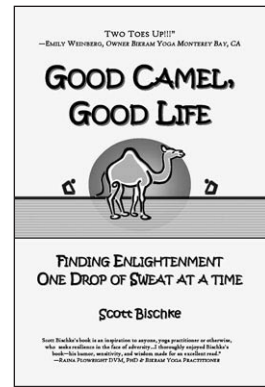
By Scott Bischke
Published 2010 by MountainWorks Press of
Bozeman, MT
\$14.95 softcover

In his new book, Bozeman author Scott Bischke tells the tale of undertaking Bikram Choudhury's rigorous brand of "hot yoga" and the grueling Bikram Challenge, in which practitioners commit to practicing 26 postures every day for 90 minutes, in a room where the thermometer registers 105 degrees.

Clearly, the author relishes challenges. His book *Crossing Divides, A Story of Cancer, Hope, and Hiking Montana's Continental Divide* described an 800-mile odyssey that he took with his wife, a recurrent cancer survivor, along the Continental Divide. The couple has hiked, biked and canoed in remote places around the world.

But even so, this new undertaking was daunting: "I had come to the Challenge hoping I would gain confidence, become a better person, show myself that I could do anything I set my mind to do. But stepping into the Torture Chamber for the sixth day in a row, feeling the 105°F heat pour over me, everything ached ... A couch, a heating pad, a half-dozen Advil, and a large glass of cabernet now sounded far more attractive."

Bischke is a science writer and editor, who has worked as a chemical engineering science researcher, an environmental engineer and as the lab director for the Yellowstone Ecological Research Center.



What Lasts

By Jennifer Greene
Published 2010 by FootHills Publishing,
Kanona, NY
\$16 softcover

Poet Jennifer Greene contemplates continuum in her quiet, powerful book of poems, *What Lasts* – the arc between grandfather and grandchild, the thread that binds us to our ancestors, and to generations still to come.

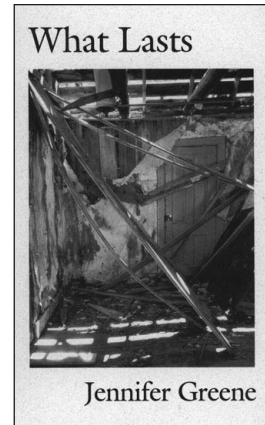
"All my kids/ have their father's hands who are just like his/ grandmother Mildred's hands. Who knows/ how far back those hands reach or who was/ the first to have them."

Her husband, children, parents and grandparents are tenderly plied together in poems that pay homage to the past, and offer prayers for the future. "Someday, you'll swim away from me/ and plant roots and prune vines/ in another house with/ your own cubs./ But right now, I'm/ home to you. ..."

Greene also considers the geography of home, from the Atlantic Ocean, to New Mexico and the Flathead Reservation, where she was born, raised and is now raising her own family. In "Homeland" she writes: "For those of us who are/ not immigrants, for those of us who call this our homeland or the/ mother country or mother or where we raise our kids and try to keep/ them safe, America has always been a dangerous place."

"With a telling of a season, a stop at a gas station, or a conversation in a grocery store, Jennifer says to us that she is the sum of all of the stories of her relatives and ancestors and an old tribal world," writes award-winning Salish educator Julie Cajune.

Greene's first book of poems, *What I Keep*, won the 1998 North American Native Authors Poetry Award; her writing also graces the CD *Heart of the Bitterroot: Voices of Salish and Pend d'Oreille Women*. *What Lasts* is part of the Montana Poets Series, edited by Craig Czury.



Cycling, Wine, and Men A Midlife Tour de France

By Nancy Brook
Published February 2011 by Morgan
James Publishing, Garden City, NY
\$16.95 softcover

Nancy Brook clearly isn't afraid of challenges. After a string of break-ups (seven in seven years), the single mom and bank vice-president packs her wounded heart, a bicycle, a backpack and two suitcases to France for a 700-mile cycling tour, parts of which traces the Tour de France route.

Prior to the trip, back home in Billings, she's been honing her college French and training with a "Nazi bike coach." Riding a bike evokes the joy she felt as a child, pedaling "a purple banana-seat bike through Montana's countryside ... By rediscovering my love for cycling, I integrated long-forgotten pieces of myself that loved to explore and venture into the world."

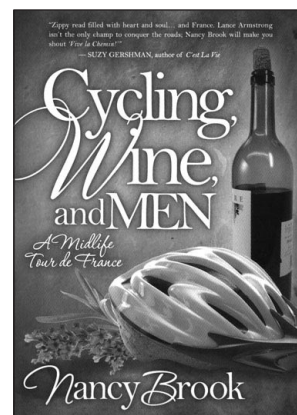
As her cycling skills grow, she begins to contemplate a trip to France. She finally enlists in a tour that takes cyclists from Bordeaux to the Alps, camping, drinking wine and sampling French cuisine enroute. In addition to riding 50-60 miles a day, participants will ascend two major mountains, including Mount Ventoux in Provence: "One of the hardest, hottest and windiest mountains that you can climb by bicycle." It doesn't help that she's hungover from the previous night's Bastille Day celebration when she ascends the peak. But ascend it she does, a feat she suspects will be "the most difficult physical challenge" she'll ever encounter.

As Brook pedals through France, she's recasting her life back home and arrives at last, like Dorothy returning from Oz, at the realization that "the beauty and adventure I sought were always at my doorstep. I only needed to open my eyes to see the treasure that was here all along."

Brook has punctuated her memoir with tips and statistics about dating, bicycling, camping and museums.

"Nancy's tour de France quickly becomes an engaging tour de life. Honest, reflective, with more than a little sauciness ..." writes Allyn Calton, editor of *Magic City Magazine*.

– Kristi Niemeyer



Send us book ideas

Two Helena publishing companies welcome book ideas.

Farcountry Press invites writers, photographers, and illustrators to submit their book ideas for consideration.

Farcountry publishes award-winning books on regional popular history, natural history and national parks for a general audience and for children.

The company also publishes color photography books on regions, states, cities and national parks, but generally does not publish poetry or fiction.

Please send book proposals to: Acquisitions, PO Box 5630, Helena, MT 59604. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or your materials will not be returned, and do not send original art or photographs. For more information, visit www.farcountrypress.com.

Riverbend Publishing also welcomes book proposals about Montana and the West. The company publishes award-winning books on regional history, natural history, photography and Glacier and Yellowstone national parks, plus cookbooks and fiction.

Send proposals to Editor, Riverbend Publishing, PO Box 5833, Helena, MT 59604. Visit www.riverbendpublishing.com for more information about the company.

ABOUT MUSIC

— By Mariss McTucker

John Kline: *I of the Storm* Recorded, produced and mastered by John Kline at his home studio in Mobile, AL, 2010

Multi-instrumentalist and Helena native John Kline's new CD was composed, he says, in the spirit of "theme albums of the '70s, and '80s progressive art rock" from Yes, Pink Floyd and Kansas. In this, he succeeds well.

The clinical psychologist is a pretty talented picker who knows his way around music production and editing.

Kline lays down 14 tracks that are all originals, save for the Dave Brubeck jewel, "Take 5."

We're talking cool effects and walls of sound here, all kind of transcendental. Besides guitar, Kline tackles bass, keyboards, drums, violin and harmonica.

The exotic and Near-Eastern sounds of "Dog Raga" open the compilation; throbbing rhythm and pretty melody infuse "Summer in Winter" with its silky guitar stylings. There's a harmonica-powered blues jammer with squiggly guitar licks ("Ham Bone Tone"), and a really cool bass line and guitar effects on the rock 'n roller, "Up."

Tender piano introduces the twin-guitar sounds of Atlanta southern rock on "By Any Other Name." And the title track, "I of the Storm," has Kline channeling Hendrix on sustained, moody Stratocaster riffings with lots of reverb. Cool!

Kline credits "unsung musicians" as influences, as well as the late Joe Munzenrider, his music theory teacher in Helena who passed away in 2009.

His 2006 release, *Instrumental Conditioning*, held the No. 1 top-rated instrumental rock album on Rhapsody for a brief stint.

Visit the artist at www.johnnykline.com.



Kelly Roberti: *Slumber*

The Ballads of Kelly Roberti
Recorded at The Shed Studio, Bozeman,
MT, engineered and mixed by Jake
Fleming, produced by Kelly Roberti,
2010

Longtime Bozeman musician Kelly Roberti has assembled some top talent to help him create an album that's just right for winding down on a late evening. Aptly titled *Slumber*, the CD meanders through seven relaxing original numbers with Roberti playing bass, Alan Fauque on saxophones, Eric Funk, piano, and guest vocalist Jeni Fleming.

"Counting sheep, I sleep," Fleming whispers on the title cut, stretching out the words to drowsy, pretty piano. Fauque demonstrates his astounding technique playing dreamy lines on "Vittorio," as Roberti sounds out the deep, deep bottom notes and produces some inventive lead; and "Faithful" has Funk tiptoeing on piano, laying down the Latin ambience, Fleming singing softly and Fauque cookin' on sax.

Right about this time you notice there are no drums. But they're not missed. Roberti is so good and understated, and spot-on rhythm-wise, it's obvious he's the percussive linchpin.

The enigmatically titled "The Cleansing in the Dance of the Sad" has Roberti leading off, and Fauque wailin' on soprano sax, cool and trembly. Fleming and Fauque combine on "Bullets" ("I would take bullets, square off with demons"), as Roberti takes off on some riffs.

One of the great charms of jazz is that you can hear the silences between notes. "Lullaby," with its quiet, nocturnal feel, makes room for them. Nice.

Roberti has appeared on a slew of albums with the best Montana jazz players as well as other world-class musicians; he received the 2010 Montana Governor's Award for the Arts besides

And proving that he's savvy about making music in the 21st century, not only is Roberti offering this album as a conventional CD, but also in a "new and unique reusable form, on an exclusive, *Slumber* commemorative USB flash drive."

Visit www.kellyroberti.com for more details.

Paul Kelley: *Round the Bend*

Recorded in 2010 at Audio Works
in Missoula, MT, by Jim Rogers,
produced by Paul Kelley

Frederico Brothers member and versatile Missoula musician Paul Kelley has a solo CD out, featuring his original material and a cast of excellent Garden City players. It's a mix of country and folk, R & B, blues and rock 'n roll, all genres Kelley is quite comfortable with.

Among the pickers lending a hand are Ellie Nuno, fiddle, Chuck Florence, sax, and Phil Hamilton on harmonica. Kelley adds acoustic and electric guitars and bass, and does all the singing.

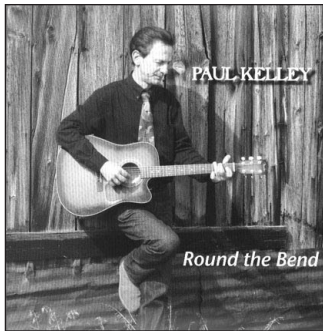
He's got a great voice and it's in fine form here. His sound is a warm tenor-baritone mix, with a cool warble that is quite expressive.

He sings all the harmonies, and it's uncanny how he can match the harmony vibrato to the lead voice. Takes a terrific ear to do that.

"Buddha Rock" is a great story – never mind the meditation, it's rock 'n roll that will set us free. Ha! Kelley has a breathy delivery and there's a Bo Diddly-esque "Hand Jive" rhythm to this one.

Kelley bends notes to good effect on the South-of-the-Border "Consolita," and gets into a J.D. and the Jaguars (one of his old bands) mode on the slow-w-w blues song, "Kick Back," where he digs way down deep and gravelly for notes. ("Put down that Twitter-Berry thing, baby.")

"An American Soliloquy" is a two-parter; "Open Any Window," written



in 2003, makes reference to 9/11, and "Rang Dang Do" is about Kelley's visit with a soldier just deploying to Iraq.

"Lost Moments," a retro look at the late '50s-early '60s, is a love song with wailin' sax and waltz-time piano. Kelley drags out "milksha-a-a-ke and two straw-w-wws" to stylish effect. I half-expected a fade-out here, like on the old 45s.

Everyone on the album contributes just the right mood to Kelley's songs. Terrific production values abound as well.

Kelley also sings the song he wrote for the late Tim Ishler, a long-time and well-loved musician who passed away in 2008. "Tim's Song" is sad and emotional, and a great tribute to a man we all still miss.

Kelley can be reached at paulkelleymusic@gmail.com.

Russ Nasset and the Revelators:

Blue Highway

Recorded and mixed 2010 by Ryan
"Schmed" Maynes at Club Schmed
Studios, Missoula, MT; additional
recording at Practice, Inc., Austin, TX,
by Herb Belofski and Stephan Belans

The first notes of Missoula music icon Russ Nasset's new CD get you hooked on some good ol' rock 'n roll. Following on last year's superb *Human Tongue*, Nasset's solo effort, *Blue Highway* is replete with his usual trademarks: catchy tunes and white-hot guitar pickin'.

It also boasts great surrounding talent in the Revelators, his long-time band, featuring his son, Sam, lead electric guitar, Tim Martin, bass, my favorite drummer Kenny Field, and special guests Don Pawlak on pedal steel and engineer Ryan Maynes on all sorts of keyboards and accordion.

The 13 original numbers (12 by Russ and one by Sam) span the range of rock styles with great Fender guitar sounds providing the bedrock.

The elder Nasset recovered from a stroke several years back, and though he doesn't partake in booze and cigarettes any longer, his voice still remembers doing so, fortunately for us. He's in great vocal form, singing in his world-weary, river-bottom baritone about lost loves, jealousy, and the too-much-drinkin', too-much-drivin' life on the road. It's perfect.

You'll get your chunky blues fix in "Honky Tonkin' Guitar Man," wherein Russ growls about his "funky little motel room" between squirrely guitar licks. The country shuffle "I Need a Little Time to Myself" has steamin' leads from Sam (who seems to have learned pretty well from the old man) and terrific wappin' drum work from Field.

There are a couple of nice belt-buckle shiners, too. "Needless to Say," is one, with old Latest Flames bandmate Pawlak providing creamy pedal steel sounds. Another is the 50s prom-dancer "Somebody Steals Your Heart." Ah-hhh.

You have your barn-burnin' instrumental, of course. The Nasset tears it up on "Road Rage," and the rock-solid drums are right in there, but not overpowering.

Sam's tune, "Sugar Daddy," finds him channeling Buck Owens, Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis all in one swell foop. He exaggerates his syllables to comic effect ("buh-haybee;" "you give me all your lovin', I'll give you all mah mo-hunee"). Fun!

And don't forget the barroom closer "All Because of You," the Chuck Berry-styled jitterbugger drenched in reverb that simply boils over ("feel like I'm walkin' on broken glass, my head is throbbin' like a robin's ass").

Sterling sound that we've come to expect from Maynes and cool CD art (the disc itself looks like an old grooved LP) add to the inventiveness. Pick this one up!

Visit the group at www.reverbnation.com/russnassetandtherevelators.



Dolce Canto: A Cappella Around the World

Choral Music from Many Lands
Recorded live in Town Hall, Seattle, by
Soundwaves Recordings, Huron, OH,
and at The University of Montana Music
Recital Hall and Missoula Unity Church,
by Rich Kuschel of The Recording
Center, Missoula; final mastering by
Jason Hicks, Hamilton, MT

This is a tuneful debut effort from the popular chorus of Missoula singers, who take the listener on a trip around the world of a cappella, that terrific art form for voice only.

Dolce Canto performs all across Montana at many venues. It has oodles of performers, from professional musicians to community members who just like to sing. Their mission statement defines the confab as one that "studies and performs exceptional choral literature," and they certainly stick to that premise here. They all "share an enthusiasm for the choral art," and their vast trove includes sacred and secular music across historical periods and musical styles, representing several continents – Europe, the United States and Latin America.

The spirited prayer, "Exultate Justi in Domino," from Poland, starts us off; and the softly minor "Earth Song," from the U.S., follows.

A most interesting trio of songs from Down Under, "Three Australian Bush Songs," may be the most inventive offering. Over eight minutes long, the piece segues from "Dawn" to "Birds" to "Sunset." It starts with a mellifluous and fulgent chorale sound of moving chords, then drops to a whisper, gathers and rises into a chorus of cawing and "coo-coo-rus," a veritable avian cacophony, and winds down to snake hisses, for crying out loud. It ends with a solo female voice blessing the sunset. Cool!

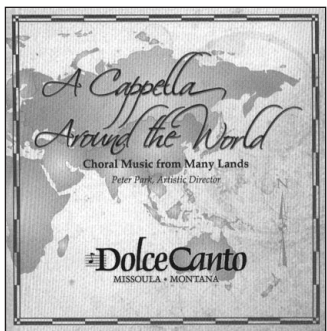
Thomas Hensley's fabulous tenor voice regales us on "Mata del Anima Sola," from Venezuela, with its Latin dance sounds, and Argentina's "Te Quiero" is a romantic piece wherein Caitlin Shipp and Malcolm Lowe trade lovely solo leads, then intertwine in a duet, with the full chorale answering. Nice!

"The Fall," from the U.S., is hilarious. We're caught off-guard with the song's sad and slow beginning as a man tells his parents he's a tree. Then the family's conversation elicits gales of laughter from the audience. It's wrapped up neatly by fa-la-las from the group.

This is a splendid first effort from a bunch of singers who want to further the musical appreciation of choral music.

Dolce Canto is directed by Peter Park, noted Missoula choral conductor and executive director of the International Choral Festival from 2001-2006. The group made the recording with support from the Missoula Community Foundation.

Visit them at www.dolcecanto.info.



State of the Arts welcomes CDs

State of the Arts welcomes CD submissions by Montana musicians for inclusion in the About Music section. The recordings must be professional, commercially available, full-length CDs, with cover art and liner notes. Brief biographical information on band members would be helpful to the writer.

Please send submissions to either the Montana Arts Council, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT, 59620; or Lively Times, 33651 Eagle Pass Trl., Charlo, MT 59824.