

March 2008

**TOP SECRET**

# INTELLIGENCE

Mat Callahan's quarterly newsletter of music, art, and philosophy  
www.matcallahan.com info@matcallahan.com

Dear Friends:

One positive step towards combatting global warming would be if the world's leaders stopped filling the atmosphere with hot air. While it's only wishful thinking, it's still more thinking than they seem to be doing. They appear to be practicing a collective act of Onanism with the Market's "invisible hand". Witness the dog and pony show called the World Economic Forum that just concluded in Davos Switzerland. Here the rulers of our planet show up to bandy about "ideas", which only serves to reveal how few they actually have. Tireless finger wagger, Bill Gates, was there criticizing the failure of free markets to deliver the universal prosperity promised by neoliberal theorists. (after reaping his vast personal wealth therefrom, that is). That skeeza Condoleezza was there to reassure everyone that the economy is strong. Oh boy?! Bono was there to...well, what *was* Bono there for? Does he need a gig?

Meanwhile, the Swiss Police practiced their gestapo tactics on demonstrators, specifically targeting journalists for abuse. The mask of sanity is slipping, folks.

So, in an effort to bring a bit of joy, community and, yes, sanity to the proceedings, Yvonne and I are embarking on numerous voyages to many parts.

Even before we get to March, there are two noteworthy events in February. First, Yvonne and I are playing a concert in Berlin Tuesday, February 19.

Showtime: 20:00

Hofperle

Im Haus der Neukoellner Oper

U7 Karl-Marx-St. 131/133 12043 Berlin

Tel.030/5682 9429, hofperle@gmx.net

Secondly, we're joining my daughter, Shannon Callahan, to celebrate the release of her debut album, "Nectar". All of the musicians appearing on the CD will play at this special event. Join us!

Quasimodo, Saturday February 22

22:00-21.00 einlass \_www.quasimodo.de

Kantstr. 12A

10623 Berlin, Germany

+49 30 318045 - 6

Kosten: 15

for more info check:

MySpace.com-shannon callahan-DE-Folk Rock/Acoustic

In March, Yvonne and I will be heading to the East Coast for a tour. Please check the tour dates and come to a show near you.

Meanwhile, there is more news to report. In the last edition of this newsletter I mentioned that I'd begun work on a new book. Now, I have a new publisher as well. With their help I hope to complete interviews and research this year. Writing will commence thereafter. For more info please contact:

PM Press\_Ramsey Kanaan\_PO Box 23912\_Oakland, CA 94623\_510  
703 0327\_ramsey@pmpress.org

Also, PM has wisely decided to employ the services of a booking agent which will greatly aid in the popularization of the authors and ideas it publishes. Anyone interested in hearing a presentation of the views expressed in "The Trouble With Music" should contact:

Jen Angel/ Aid & Abet,

jen@aidandabet.org

www.aidandabet.org

510-910-5627

## March 2008 Tour Dates

*Saturday, March 1*

*Benefit Concert for the Hartbeat Ensemble*

*Hartbeat Studio: Artspace,*

*555 Asylum Ave, suite 101, Hartford CT*

For tickets call Hartbeat Ensemble, 860-548-9144.

The tickets will be \$15 (no one turned away for lack of funds)

*Wednesday March 5*

*Wrench In The Works Collective Williamantic, CT*

Show Starts at 8:30 pm

861 Main Street

Willimantic, CT, 06226

Contact Linda or Doug: yeahigcrew@comcast.net

*Thursday March 6,*

*Berklee College of Music*

class presentation

*Thursday March 6*

*The Lucy Parsons Center*

Concert: 8PM

549 Columbus Ave.

Boston, MA 617-267-6272

http://lucyparsons.org/

*Saturday March 8*

*Banjo Jim's*

*Down Home Live with Eli Smith and friends*

Banjo Jim's, corner of 9th St. & Av. C\_212 777 0869

www.DownHomeLive.com

*Sunday March 9*

*The Brecht Forum*

concert with Eli Smith: 7PM

451 West Street (between Bank & Bethune Streets)

New York, NY 10014

(212) 242-4201

Email: brechtforum at brechtforum.org

*Tuesday March 11*  
*Red Emma's Books Baltimore, MD*  
Show Starts at 7:00 pm  
800 ST PAUL STREET  
BALTIMORE, MD 22102  
Contact Kate: [kate@manifestor.org](mailto:kate@manifestor.org)

*Thursday March 13*  
*Flying Brick Books Richmond, VA*  
Show Starts at 7:00 pm  
506 South Pine Street,  
Richmond VA, 23220  
Contact Greg Wells: [gregwells36@hotmail.com](mailto:gregwells36@hotmail.com)

*Friday March 14*  
*The Little Grill Collective Restaurant Harrisonburg, VA*  
Show starts at 8:00pm  
621 N. Main Street  
Harrisonburg, VA, 22801

*Saturday March 15*  
*Internationalist Books Chapel Hill, NC*  
Show Starts at 7:00 pm  
405 West Franklin Chapel Hill, N.C, 27516  
Contact Daniel: [Daniel@internationalistbook.org](mailto:Daniel@internationalistbook.org)

*For further tour information contact:*

Broken Arrow Records  
1395 San Carlos Ave.  
Suite C  
San Carlos, CA 94070  
650-654-1700  
<http://www.brokenarrowrecords.com>  
[info@brokenarrowrecords.com](mailto:info@brokenarrowrecords.com)



## **SPECIAL NOTE:**

**For more news please visit our new website  
it will be launched February 11, 2008  
<http://www.matandyvonne.com>**

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## **Simone de Beauvoir**

January 9, 2008 marked the 100th anniversary of Simone de Beauvoir's birth. There's been much ballyhoo in France and elsewhere that is only remarkable for one reason: this woman's ideas cannot be ignored. That being the case, it is incumbent on the sycophants and sophists who dominate public discourse to defame her while giving the appearance of begrudgingly acknowledging her talent. (all envy her fame) Their purpose, however, is to remove her ideas and her commitments to a carefully guarded grave for the truly dead. Why? Why make her personal life (including her naked buttocks displayed on the cover of a magazine) the focus of public attention? Why cast doubt on her participation in the French Resistance? Why reduce her life-long dialogue with Sartre to a matter of sexual predation and titanic egos? And so on...

Because if de Beauvoir had written nothing else but "The Second Sex" her contribution to human emancipation would be enormous. This one book blasted a gaping hole in the architecture of patriarchal thinking that has never been closed. It provided damning evidence of male domination and bourgeois hypocrisy while it offered crucial tools for human-not only women's-liberation. None dispute that it powerfully inspired what would flourish as the Women's Liberation Movement of the Sixties and Seventies. Clearly, many of its core concepts are now widely accepted as not only "politically correct" but simply correct.

If that wasn't enough, de Beauvoir, used the fame she gained as a writer to wage an ongoing battle against domination of all kinds. Her participation in the fight against French colonialism in Algeria and Viet Nam are examples. Her support of the revolt of May 68 in France and the Chinese Cultural Revolution are others. (this included a final, critical break with the Soviet Union following Prague Spring).

The fact that this struggle took place mainly in words printed in newspapers, magazines and books does not reduce its significance. On the contrary, it is a stark reminder of how pathetic public discourse is at present. Who are the public intellectuals now? With a few notable exceptions, we are inundated by the parroting of tired nostrums designed to give the appearance of sophistication while absolutely forbidding innovative thought. When de Beauvoir wrote, it was with the certainty that what she said mattered. She knew her words would influence the actions taken by many and they would be discussed seriously by friend and foe alike. And while she was publicly and mercilessly self-critical, she stood by her principles all her life.

Which brings us back to why the media is having a field day with her "scandalous" sex life. To begin with, her sex life was not scandalous and, actually, holds little interest. Perhaps insofar as it was an attempt to find a way out of the various traps laid by middle class morality it contains some lessons. But each of us must make our own choices. Monogamy can be just as radical, after all, depending on its content and the responsibilities taken and shared by its participants. This is a matter for debate and discussion among equals, with open minds and hearts. It is not a matter for jaded voyeurs or pious priests. Least of all is it for any politician or hack journalist to judge. But that is not the real agenda here, anyway.

What we're witnessing is yet another rerun of the cheesy sitcom, "The Death of False Gods". The script is always the same: a legend has gathered around a heroic figure who is suddenly, shockingly revealed to be tragically flawed. The status of diety was mistakenly conferred. Far from infallible and immortal, our "hero" is shown to be just like us: egocentric, prejudiced, cowardly and untrustworthy. The program ends with a crucifixion. Finally, the Sheriff comes and tells the crowd of gawkers, "It's all over, folks, just go on home now." Fade to black.

By this sleight of hand, we are made complicit in what is most insidious about Fame itself. We ogle the superhuman figure, envying what we can never be, while dismissing the actual person as a mere shell or corrupt body. All bodies are corrupt since all bodies die. It is the immortality we imagine to be in Fame that makes us genuflect before it and become its disciples. What is really immortal is thereby lost forever-unless and until we free our minds and study immortality closely.

I recommend reading de Beauvoir to discover the immortal in her thinking-which is, incidentally, available to all. In addition to the Second Sex she produced a book on another taboo subject: old age. "The Coming of Age" is scholarly in its approach and innovative in its interpretation. While not as notorious as the Second Sex, it is equally noteworthy. It calmly and clearly exposes the "Western" attitude towards old people, approaching death and the generational rifts society goes to great lengths to perpetuate. It is as timely today as when it was written (1970).

In any case, de Beauvoir has been recognized as a great novelist (The Mandarins-1954), social critic (The Second Sex, Coming of Age) and as a philosopher. (The Ethics of Ambiguity-1947, and many other works) It may be that her contributions to philosophy are overshadowed by Sartre's reputation and by her own fictional and sociological writing. But philosopher she was and it is in this light that all her work needs to be viewed. This is the training and perspective she brought to everything. It's the perspective we need now most urgently. A glance at here page in Wikipedia should help get a sense of the breadth and scope of her work. It is extensive, revolutionary and inspiring. Read de Beauvoir!