

## In the bag

What do you say to a bike messenger wearing a suit? Will the defendant please rise.

December, I hate it! By the time you read this it will be January and it will be another 10 months until we have to listen to worst genre of music ever conceived by white guys with wigs. Sometimes I wonder what Christmas in South America is like. It is summer below the equator in December, so they have better climate to get away from it all. If I lived down there, I would probably have an annual Christmas camping trip, but I'm sure I'm not the first atheist-secularist-agnostic- (pick one) to have that brainstorm.

The roads are a little safer now that Wrongway has been terminated. It is probably just a short-term absence though, Special-T or Allen's will probably hire him soon.

Recently I held a survey to see what the average age of a Western bike messenger is. After tedious minutes of computation on my casio calculator it spit out a number that is showing a change at Western and the

bike messenger Industry. 37.4...When I first started in 1989, most bike messengers were in their 20s, with a few in their 30s. At Western we have 11 messengers 40 or older, with only 4 messengers 29 or younger and 9 messengers 30 to 39. It makes me want to heave my prune juice.

Riding down Market Street the other day I saw this guy wearing a red Yankees jacket. What is wrong with people? You don't wear your rival clubs colors and names, it's just not right. What's next? Giants wearing blue, Niners wearing yellow and blue. I think I'm gonna get my hometown San Diego chargers hat in silver and black.

Have you ever noticed that bike racks and smoking areas seem to be the same place? Is it because bike riders are really cool, and smokers like to be near us, or is because smokers have been forced to smoke by the underclass of society, bicyclist?

There is nothing cuter than seeing your child running around the house with a vibrator saying "it's a blimp". I guess it's time to lock the sex stuff drawer. Also in her vocabulary is condom, cockring and tickle my butt. Where do kids these days get this stuff?

Even though I loathe Christmas time, it is nice to have time off work to be with to be with the people I love. So let's remember our friends who are no longer with us and appreciate the friends that are still here.

Peace. Uncle Dumptruck



photo: John McD



## FORMER PELICANO MAKES BIG SPLASH IN THE ART WORLD

BY AMERICA MEREDITH

At Lewallen Contemporary, my favorite gallery in Santa Fe, a side room had been reserved for a single piece of art. The series of oil paintings was comprised of 54 individual canvases, pairing the letters of the Navajo alphabet with the animals in party hats, a pair of whitey tidies, a can of Colt 45, the Starbucks logo in Navajo. It was easily the best piece of art I saw throughout that entire Indian Market weekend. The accompanying label proclaimed that the title of the piece was Navajo Lingo, the price was \$24,000, the piece had sold, and the artist was Steven Yazzie.

Ha ha ha, thought I, wouldn't it be funny if it were the same Steven Yazzie that I used to ride with a Pelican Delivery Service back in '96. Well, the fact that you're reading this in *Cognition* takes any suspense out of that — he was one and the same.

Yazzie moved to SF from Portland where he had previously messenged, with Gina Kilpatrick and Travis T. Gina remembers staying up all night with, spun, and painting furiously with Yazzie, trading oils for acrylics. He did not stick around in SF too long —leaving to ride in New Orleans. While he was here, he worked at Pelican, designed their Team Pelican shirts (a pelican dropping packages like bombs upon the City), and raced for them in CMWC 96. He distinguished himself by making it to the finals despite having both a broken derailleur and a blow out during his qualifying heats. Yazzie also showed his work in both

the SOMARTS and Acme Gallery CMWC art shows. As he was preparing to move to New Orleans, I made him an offer on a particularly striking painting of an anguished boy against a pole, sporting an apple on his head with arrows trained at him ala William Tell, but he had already promised the piece to someone else.

After moving around the country and painting steadily, Yazzie stepped

into the Native art world lime-light in 1999 with his 160, mural, Fear of a Red Planet at the Heard Museum in his home, Phoenix. The Heard is one of the most prestigious venues for contemporary Native American art in the country, and Yazzie was chosen to paint the mural during a six-month residency. With that time crunch, the challenge of the project took on Herculean proportions, but the piece, which narrates the story of forced relocation of Navajo, Yaqui, and Colorado River tribes and cultural genocide instituted by the US government, was a resounding success.

His artistic roots have a humble start. As a Marine serving in the First Gulf War, Yazzie's drawing skills brought to light by his colleagues, lack of porn. Any form of pornography is illegal in Saudi Arabia, so his fellow Marines fostered his studies in anatomy and rendering the human figure. Then someone would say something obvious and stupid like, "I want a blond with big tits," he shared in an interview. "That's when I started draw-

ing." (Phoenix Times)

In recent years, Yazzie has shown extensively in the southwest, attracted a loyal base of collectors, and produced several murals including one for the Barnum and Bailey Circus. He is part of the ArtTrain USA intercontinental traveling exhibit, Native Views: Influences of Modern Culture, which will arrive in California in 2006. And proving the

adage, "Once a messenger, always a messenger," Yazzie has been the subject of innumerable articles that cannot seem to avoid mentioning the fact that he has tattoos and drinks.

As an artist of Navajo, Laguna, French, Hungarian, and Welsh descent, Yazzie has carved a place for himself in both the Native

American and mainstream art worlds; no mean feat. His work is refreshingly honest, and it is frank in its expression of sexuality, which is astonishingly taboo in the current Native art world, where nude subject matter is still disallowed from many art shows in traditional communities. His subject matter is carnivalesque: humans in all their absurdity, dogs, birds, monkeys. The colors are vivid and the surrealist juxtapositions fresh. The paintings have a weight to them, saying all the more about the human condition because of the speak-n-spells and party hats.

"I paint paintings because they smile back at me," Yazzie told *Phoenix Times* interviewer. "I believe in it and it makes me happy."



Self Portrait, Yazzie 2003