

# Underground Species emerges at Edinburgh Castle

BY ED BOWERS

A POETRY reading was held Feb. 28 at the Edinburgh Castle featuring poets, writers and musicians, among them myself. Poetry readings in the Tenderloin bar scene are rare. Most are South of Market, a spot many bohemians apparently regard as a safer environment to wax poetic.

If poetry is not dangerous, then it is boring; I prefer to read in danger zones. I'm trying to get permission to recite my verse outside Iraq's Green Zone.

This show was in honor of a new magazine, *Specious Species*. Joe Donohoe publisher and editor in chief of *Specious Species*, is an excellent writer I have known for seven years. He is an apprentice of V. Vale, who publishes *RE/Search* magazine, probably the premier periodical of the literary and cultural underground, which has done remarkable retrospectives of William Burroughs and J.G. Ballard.

Underground magazines are right up my Tenderloin alley. Even if I wasn't included, I'd pay \$5 to own *RE/Search* magazine. It is smart and sexy and fun and sane, qualities I've always looked for in a woman but have as yet to find in full.

Bucky Sinister, Christian Parenti, myself, Elaine Pagels, Kevin Epps and Kevin Kelly are interviewed. All have brilliant, fascinating, insightful and exciting statements. In fact, the proofreader on my interview thought it was so good she wanted to commit suicide after reading it.

That's OK. If somebody wants to kill him or herself off after reading my opinions then I guess they're better dead.

So, much thanks to Allen Black, the owner of Edinburgh Castle, for giving the Underground Writers of the Underground Tenderloin a moment to express themselves in a dignified manner, rather than to have to scream inside a Bryant Street jail cell, or howl on the streets.

Upon entering the pub, I purchased a Bloody Mary at the bar. Good drink. Excellent bartender. Too much tomato juice, but I felt like I had so much vitamin C inside me, that I zoomed right upstairs to see the first act and entered a perfect room for a poetry reading.

S. Clay Wilson's painting of Skulls was on the wall, as well as a painting depicting designs that were imprinted on blotter acid and distributed in linear time that is now ancient history. Both paintings are works of art appreciated only by the few who understand that The Lotus Grows In Crap.

The first act was a band called V.B.I.-Digital Landscapes. These people love the beeping of electronic sounds. They are modern. They adapt to science and technology. They have a good sense of rhythm. But so does a lizard.

I long for the days when musicians breathed life into instruments and came off the stand with a sweat. Computer music scares me. Some ancient

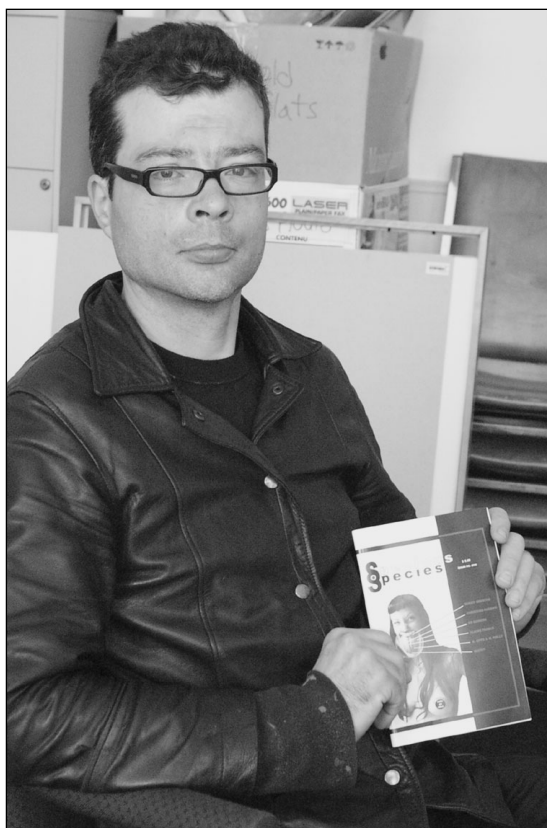


PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

Joe Donohoe shows off his new magazine.

Nazi seems to be whispering in the ears of well-meaning bohemian musicians: "Kill the human soul and replace it with more efficient and predicable electrodes."

After the computer music concert, writer James Tracy was introduced. He read a piece about standing up against fascism. He reminded me of a brave little man standing in front of a tank about to run him over.

Tracy is a damn good writer, and with a name like his he should stop writing well-written rhetorical pieces and get into pulp fiction. With a name like James Tracy, he could write pulp fiction and get more public play.

I might add that the artistic underground is only about fighting fascism. Sartre and Camus cut their teeth in the underground during World War Two. It's what made them writers.

Underground writers better get over wanting to be trendy and get used to the fact that either they are fashion statements or they are at war. These are very edgy times we live in and there's a lot of unnecessary human suffering; as in the past so is it now. Hitler was a spirit not a man. And spirits don't die.

After Tracy there was me. I read a poem that got me kicked out of San Antonio for not behaving

myself. Drugs, sex, sadness and mysticism, a lethal combination of elements inside the American snake. I entered the snake and got out. Now I'm beckoning from the other side.

Next came Joe Donahue reading a story about his screwed-up ex-girlfriends. I could really relate with that.

"A junkie ex-girlfriend will lift your wallet, but a tweaker ex-girlfriend will help you look for it," wrote Joe.

That's a profound line. It's a good thing, with his taste in women, that Joe never got married. I was married twice. I don't know whether he would have survived tying the knot. The knot gives you a lot of rope to hang yourself on.

Next up was Bucky Sinister. He's a great talent. I first met him through Bambi Lake in 2000. Bambi told me that if I wanted to be a writer in San Francisco that I would have to write poetry and read it in public. Bucky asked me what work I had done.

I hadn't done a goddamned thing regarding writing except practice it for 30 years. I ripped up everything I wrote. I was a fanatic perfectionist. So I went back to my little room after that encounter and started writing all kinds of sloppy poetry and then to my horror began reading in public.

But, anyway, poetry bored me before Bucky asked what I'd done. But now it amuses me. So thank you Bucky and Bambi, I guess.

I remember Bucky in 2000 as being a bit happier than he is now. Now he is a recovering drug addict and alcoholic who did a comedy routine about being a recovering addict in *Narcotics Anonymous* who is an atheist without a higher power. Atheists bore me. They have knee jerk reactions and think they know everything.

But Bucky is a fine writer, and he could be a fine comedian. However, artists tend to be greedy. It is necessary to concentrate on one talent. My advice to Bucky is to decide whether he is a writer or a fool.

Either is fine with me. Personally, I hope he concentrates on writing honestly and deeply about his experiences in life. There are too many comedians, and as a Tibetan lama once informed me, there is a special hell for clowns. People who make suffering funny have a long row to hoe. Ask Richard Pryor or Lenny Bruce.

Next on the agenda was Vale and his band. Vale was on keyboards, a sophisticated-looking woman named Tallula Bankheist was the singer, and on flute was a man named Jun.

Vale is a genius when it comes to creating magazines. But I guess geniuses need hobbies. I occasionally take photographs on a throwaway camera and Vale plays music.

Tallula Bankheist should try memorizing her songs. Reading them off the paper is not professional. Jun the flutist is damn good, but he should learn how to play the blues and talk on the flute like a crazy bird because he has the talent to do so.

Vale's band attempted to play a song I love, being a major ex-whoremonger, called "The House of the Rising Sun." Of course, they screwed it up.

Two weeks earlier, I was at a poetry reading on the street in front of the 16th Street BART Station sponsored by poet Charlie Getter when a couple of street people, one with a guitar, attempted to sing "The House of the Rising Sun." They were slaughtering it so badly that I actually got up and suggested that they play behind me as I read another poem.

Children, don't sing a song about whorehouses in your living room, or even on the street if you haven't been there. It won't work.

Tallula Bankheist also read a poem with musical background called "White Stains" by Aleister Crowley, possibly the worst poet to ever get attention in the whole wide world. He didn't call himself the vilest man in the world for nothing.

But the most important aspect of this event was that I had fun and I want it to happen again.

A poster by Spain Rodriguez, one of my favorite underground comic strip artists and a genius, was created for this event. I sincerely appreciate his support and effort in this project, as well as Joe Donahue who can be contacted at [www.speciousspecies.com](http://www.speciousspecies.com) with subscription inquiries.

My next project is creating poetry readings for residents in the spacious lobbies of Tenderloin SROs, some of them psychiatric hotels. I'm concentrating on the Midori right now. ■



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