

Independent bookstores are more than places to buy books

By David Rosenberg, Slate

Like the independent bookstores he photographs, Bryan David Griffith is a bit of a throwback. He does have an email address, but if you want to reach him on the phone, you have to dial a landline, and most likely track him down through his answering machine. His yearlong project covering more than 20 independent bookstores around the country was photographed with a large format film camera; he travels to each location from his home in Arizona via a makeshift camper in which he sleeps, loads film, and stores his equipment.

“I’m kind of old school,” he said. “I have an engineering degree, so it’s not like I’m a technophobe. I just haven’t adopted technologies that don’t enrich my quality of life.”

One of those things he doesn’t want to see leave are the independent bookstores, a business he sees as a lot more than simply a place to buy books – they’re a meeting place away from the often segregated, homogenous world of social media.

“You’re going to encounter other people who work there or who will be there by chance who might have different experiences that you do,” he said. “I think that’s a healthy thing for our society to interact with and make friends with people who have different ideas than what we do.”

Read the whole story

McConaughey masterful in 'Interstellar'

By Jeremy Miller

In the distant future Earth is struck with famine and drought, and crazy climates. Humanity has transformed from a technologically driven society to one much simpler, working solely for food and survival.

In "Interstellar" Cooper (Mathew McConaughey) is a dying breed; having once been an engineer/pilot for NASA he's firm on his faith in technology. Like most of the human race, despite his past career and education, he's turned farmer. He lives on the farm with his father-in-law Donald (John Lithgow) and his two children Tom (Thimothee Chalamet and Ben Affleck) and Murph (Mackenzie Foy and Jessica Chastain). His eldest kid Tom shows a strong liking to farming and unlike his father finds joy in knowing that's his future.

His daughter Murph, however, shows more of inkling towards science and engineering like her father.



The Miller Metter – 5 stars out of 5.



Some freak occurrences start taking place at the farm and Cooper takes Murph on an expedition that leads them to what will become their future. Desperate for a solution to the human race's undoubted extinction, Cooper agrees to take part in an expedition to a mysterious rip in the space/time continuum in order to find a habitable planet.

Leaving his family is obviously the hardest thing he's ever done, especially since he's parenting solo due to the death of his wife some years prior.

Murph is at the tender age of 10, and knows enough to know that chances are slim he'll come back to her. His boy on the other hand, is prepared to take over the farm and be the man of the house.

Coop has an absolutely heartbreaking farewell with his kids, especially with Murph, and off he goes to NASA to save the world. Heading the operation is Professor Brand (Michael Caine) who's uplifting and calming presence actually makes you feel like this could all work.

Cooper's joined by a small crew, each with their own purpose. We find a healthy taste of sexual tension with one of his co-explorers Brand (Anne Hathaway) whose brilliance is matched by her beauty.



Flying toward the black hole the team is faced with the hardest decisions ever made by man in history, and Cooper must decide between the fate of the human race and seeing his children again.

McConaughey – wow! “Dallas Buyers Club” was a good movie with good performances. He did a great job in that flick. That was nothing compared to what he did here. I have never seen him channel so much intensity, so much emotion and raw realistic power, and he did it flawlessly. This is hands-down the best performance of his entire career.

There were scenes that literally broke my heart, there were scenes that I cheered and some I panicked, and McConaughey’s acting was what drove that home for me. Every once in a while Cooper receives a transmission from his kids and when he does, get ready ... not a dry eye in the joint.

Caine is always phenomenal in these supporting roles. He’s the glue of the emotional web of characters, holding all of it together. Matt Damon pops his head in for a while, he doesn’t disappoint either.

Visually this thing was absolutely perfect. Though it’s set in the distant future, it has a certain calming simplicity to it, nothing over the top or unimaginable. The camera work was literally perfect, every scene looked like a perfect picture and everything director Christopher Nolan did to capture life in space was relayed beautifully.

The film received some heavy criticism for its scientific accuracy and to those who do I say this – it’s a movie, one of the best, so shut up and enjoy yourselves.

Christopher Nolan and Jonathon Nolan penned one of their (if not the) best screenplays to date and behind them they had world-renowned physicist Kip Thorne, so settle down.

I like to think that I understand the basics of black holes and time travel, etc. but this movie took these subjects to a whole different level. No movie that I’ve seen is equally stunning visually as it is emotionally and story/script-wise.

Another thing that people seemed to complain about was the

sound mix. Idiots. When a space ship is crashing do you think that everyone can hear each other clear as day? No. Nolan does that on purpose to maintain realism. Deal with it. Sound mix is fine, you may have to pay a shred more attention here or there but you should be anyways.

The last hour of the film was quite possibly the best last hour of any movie I've seen in longer than I can remember. Brace yourselves to have your hearts and minds ripped out and smashed together for three hours. This was not a mellow experience. When it was over, I was literally speechless.

Nolan proves again why he is absolutely unparalleled when it comes to making big movies. Brilliant movies, movies that make you think and wonder not just explosions and nonsense. The movie has emotional ups and downs and I would not call it a happy movie for the family to see on a Friday night. I went alone; glad I did because I cried probably five times.

Nolan could have catered to what people always want/need/receive in a movie and given a totally unlikely outcome where everyone wins and everything is happy and perfect, but no! He goes with realism and it hurt and it was sad and stressful beyond belief, but they payoff was so much sweeter.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.

Gas prices make Thanksgiving

driving appealing

By Lynn Doan, Bloomberg

With gasoline prices sinking to under \$3 per gallon, Americans traveling by car this holiday season will have plenty of company on the road.

Drivers will make up about 89.5 percent of holiday travelers this year, a gain of 0.1 percentage point from 2013, while air passengers will drop by the same amount to 7.5, forecasts prepared by Englewood, Colorado-based IHS Inc. show. A 0.1 point increase may not seem like a lot, but based on last year's estimate that 39.6 million people traveled by car for Thanksgiving, that would roughly equate to at least another 40,000 people piling onto America's highways.

The car-over-plane travel choice is made easier by the fact that airfares aren't coming down like gasoline pump prices are. While the plunge in oil has driven down wholesale jet fuel prices 17 percent since August, almost matching the 18 percent drop in retail gasoline, airfares have risen 3.4 percent over that time, data compiled by industry groups show.

Read the whole story

Part-time jobs put millions in poverty or close to it

By Patrick Gillespie, CNNMoney

NEW YORK — Seven million Americans are stuck in part-time jobs.

They are unable to get full-time work and the benefits and stability that come with it. It's a constant struggle for these families and a worrying sign for America's recovery.

Overall U.S. unemployment has fallen steeply in the past year (from 7.2 percent in October 2013 to 5.8 percent in October 2014), but too many people can only find part-time positions.

The number of people working part-time involuntarily is more than 50 percent higher than when the recession began.

There was a similar spike in part-time workers in prior recessions, but it dropped quickly. That's not happening this time around. In fact, some states have seen an increase during the recovery in people languishing in part-time jobs who want something more.

Read the whole story

Then and now: A part of Bijou evolves



Highway 50 and Takela spring
2004. Photo/Bill Kingman

Until April 2004, the beige cabin and adjacent two-story green building facing the stoplights on Highway 50 at Takela Avenue in South Lake Tahoe had housed various businesses. Between them and the beach behind it were a few aging cabins and residences.



Disappearing buildings.
Photo/Bill Kingman

Two months later, most of these buildings were gone.



Condominiums obscure the
view. Photo/Bill Kingman

By the following spring, construction was under way on a condominium development.



Safeway controls the corner.
Photo/Bill Kingman

Today, Safeway operates the gas station, the traffic signals are updated, and new pedestrian crossings have been added.



The area more than 90 years ago. Photo/Theresa and Darrell Eymann collection

If you had stood on that construction site in the 1920s or 1930s and were looking east toward Nevada, you would be facing the entrance to Connolley's Bijou Inn and beach.

– Bill Kingman

Ascending to a world of

majestic views



Mount Shasta is the focal point for much of the Gray Butte hike. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

MOUNT SHASTA – It seemed like if we would extend our arms, we could scoop a snowball off Mount Shasta – we were that close.

While this majestic mountain dominated our view, it wasn't the only thing that captivated our attention. From our perch we had a 360-degree view of the North State. This included Mount Lassen, Lake Siskiyou, Trinity Alps, Mt. Shasta Ski Resort and the town of McCloud.

In getting to the starting point at Bunny Flat it seemed like the Everitt Memorial Highway might take us to the top of Mount Shasta. (The highway is named after John S. Everitt, a forest supervisor for the Shasta National Forest who died in 1935 fighting the Bear Springs Fire.)



Scenery is incredible along the trail and from the top.

The road continues three miles farther and 900 feet higher, but it is not open year-round. It was already closed in early November. There is a gate there – which is where we started. It's about a 7.5-mile round-trip excursion from the parking lot.

Tom had intended to lead us on a different hike, but dogs are not allowed. People in the parking area told us we could walk up the road to Panther Meadows with AJ and Britton, then take a dirt trail to Gray Butte. (There are five colored themed buttes on Mount Shasta. The others are black, red, green and yellow.)

The pavement is a steady climb. To our left Mount Shasta is in view much of the way, so that compensates for being on asphalt for a hike. The other positive is that Pam, Tom, the dogs and I have the route to ourselves.



Pam Valentine and Tom Ward hiking Gray Butte trail.

At the campground we veer off to the right and finally feel like we are truly hiking.

Not far out of the campground is Panther Meadow. The view from there of Mount Shasta is stunning.

The trail is marked fairly well. It traverses through old-growth red fir, with hemlock near the summit. At times we are on dirt, sometimes rocks. A few patches of snow indicate we are probably lucky to even be on it. I'm sure some Novembers this isn't the place you'd want to be hiking.



The top of Gray Butte provides a 360-degree view.

Bunny Flat is at 6,950 feet; Gray Butte is 8,119 feet. We were still a ways from the summit of Mount Shasta, though from our vantage point it was hard to believe we would have another

6,000 feet to climb. Shasta is 14,163 feet – the fifth highest peak in California and the second tallest mountain in the Cascade Range.

Letter: Community helped with Kingsbury Grade

To the community,

As we at the Nevada Department of Transportation and Q&D Construction substantially complete the Kingsbury Grade Pavement Reconstruction Project, we want to thank local community members and businesses for their understanding and support.

Originally scheduled to continue through next summer, the project has substantially completed last week; one season ahead of the original schedule. Completing this important project ahead of schedule could not have been accomplished without the understanding of the entire community.

Many know that Kingsbury Grade was closed to through traffic near the summit in May and once again in September and early October as we reconstructed the roadbed and made safety and other improvements. By closing the grade to through traffic for these time frames, we were able to greatly cut overall project length. While this construction schedule allowed the project to complete more quickly, we know the impact that important road projects like these can have on those living and working in the area. That is why NDOT and Q&D Construction want to thank each and every resident, commuter and community member involved in the project.

Before construction began through completion, we had an opportunity to meet with residents as well as community and business leaders. This continued dialogue with the community helped us provide the most efficient, successful project for all. For example, working together, we were able to ensure that Kingsbury Grade remained open to all during the Genoa Candy Festival.

Thanks also goes to our partners at the Nevada Highway Patrol and Douglas County Sheriff's Office for helping ensure public safety throughout the project.

In addition, the South Shore Transportation Management Association, Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and South Lake Tahoe resort association leaders, including the Ridge, were all engaged partners in proving feedback, guidance and strategies to enhance the project. We thank everyone for their patience.

Due to the understanding of the entire community, we are now able to provide an improved Kingsbury Grade that will connect Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley for years to come.

Pedro Rodriguez, Nevada Department of Transportation project manager

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- The Joint Commission has identified Barton Memorial Hospital as a 2013 Top Performer on Key Quality Measures.

- The Veterans Affairs Commission awarded the Food Bank of El Dorado County \$9,000 through its El Dorado Veterans Fund at El Dorado Community Foundation to support its No Vet Goes Hungry Program.
 - Candy Cane Lane, the Carson Valley Inn's custom outdoor drive-through Christmas light display, will be lighted for nightly viewing starting Nov. 30.
 - Squaw Valley is donating \$20 from every lift ticket sold opening day – Nov. 26 – to the Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to helping local athletes and coaches pursue their dreams in the field of skiing and snowboarding.
 - “Ski Town Après Ski” is the latest cookbook from Vail resident Jennie Iverson. It has Tahoe recipes in it.
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Mammoth to host Grand Prix ski event

By USSA

PARK CITY – The Sprint U.S. Grand Prix has a long legacy of creating Olympic champions. This year many of them will return to compete on the 2014-15 tour, including 2014 Olympic champions Maddie Bowman of Meyers, Joss Christensen, Kaitlyn Farrington, David Wise of Reno and Sage Kotsenburg.

More than \$400,000 in prize money will be awarded at the three Grand Prix tour stops.

The season opener will be held at Colorado's Copper Mountain Resort. Mammoth Mountain will host stop number two and Utah's

Park City Mountain Resort will host the tour finale. The Grand Prix will host FIS World Cup level and Platinum level AFP events at Copper and Park City and the Mammoth Mountain's stop will be part of this year's TTR World Snowboard Pro Tour.

Mammoth highlights

An iconic tour stop on the Sprint U.S. Grand Prix since its inaugural season, Mammoth Mountain returns again to host halfpipe and slopestyle skiing and snowboarding Feb. 4-7 with broadcast coverage on NBC and NBCSN.

World Snowboard Tour Pro Series: The event at Mammoth will be a World Snowboard Tour Pro Series event. The Pro Series consists of the top tier of elite level snowboarding events globally, featuring a consistent field of the best riders in the world, competing regularly throughout the season, at world class events.

The freeskiing events at Mammoth will be an AFP Platinum level.

Mammoth's Unbound halfpipe and slopestyle course each have a long Grand Prix history and served as the naming site for both the 1998 and 2014 U.S. Olympic snowboarding teams.

Sedans making a move on SUV snow market

By Andy Stonehouse, Ski

Grand and gracious full-size sedans come to mind for a night on the town, not a ski trip up to the slopes. But vehicular times they are a-changin'.

Some of America's most beloved four-door family brands now boast models with the winter-beating traction and agility of all-wheel drive, handling all but the deepest of blizzard-buried roads. And even the Koreans are getting into the game.

The Chrysler 300 – often called “the baby Bentley” – manages to take its imposing street cred into winter's worst when it's equipped with the optional all-wheel-drive package. The result is reliable all-season mobility coupled with fuel savings (up to 27 mpg) in the non-winter months, when the 300 defers to two-wheel-drive mode.

Chrysler does a great job of offering AWD 300s in every flavor. A 370-horsepower Hemi engine? Can do. (There's probably an Eminem-approved ski rack on a designer's computer screen.)

Read the whole story