

Condon hits bullseye with debut novel

Latecomer Phil Condon, whose novel, 'Clay Center,' has found literary success, will give a reading Monday

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Author Phil Condon got started late on the road to becoming a writer and has taken a number of divergent paths along the way. With the publication of his first novel, "Clay Center," last year, Condon is being noticed in the literary world, winning a number of awards and receiving a starred review in Booklist.

And all of this is from a man who claims to have waited until his mid-30s to write seriously, although he doesn't consider this late start a detriment.

"Since I didn't start writing until much later than most people, I had already gone through many phases," Condon said. "They all sort of blended together, so no single style or person really influenced me."

Though Condon doesn't point to

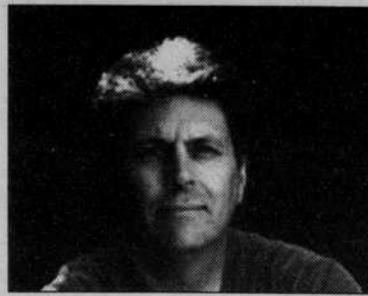
any particular influence on his writing, he named a few influences that led to him writing.

"I think Henry Thoreau with 'Walden,' and also a lot of Russian writers, like Fyodor Dostoyevsky with 'Crime and Punishment,' kind of brought me toward writing," Condon said. "I have always enjoyed writers who are very serious about life and death matters, who write seriously about big ideas."

Condon said he tried to deal with these kinds of ideas in "Clay Center." The novel, which takes place in the last few months of 1969, deals with members of the anti-war movement and the destruction of youthful idealism. For Condon, it was a topic he had been trying to grasp for some time.

"I was trying to get a feel for the end of the 1960s and trying to make sense and meaning out of that period," Condon said. "Looking back on it, I began to see shapes and patterns that I didn't see at the time. I began to feel that this was the book that I had to write before I could start a larger project."

The public would not be adverse to



Courtesy

Phil Condon, author of "Clay Center," will give a free reading at the University Bookstore Monday at 7 p.m.

another project from Condon, according to Condon's literary publicist Judy McHale.

"The book has gotten a lot of good reviews and good feedback," McHale said. "We've gotten requests from various media sources for copies of the book because they are interested in reviewing it, which is a pretty rare response for someone's first novel."

Condon's renown doesn't only stem from his literary accomplishments. A professor of environmental studies at the Univer-

sity of Montana, he directs the school's Environmental Writing program, which is part of the reason he was chosen by the UO Bookstore to give a reading at the University.

"Writers who have come through his program are well respected and do well when they come through here," UO Bookstore Author Events Coordinator Brian Juenemann said. "We think we can transcend that pattern by bringing him here."

Phil Condon will be appearing at the Knight Library Browsing Room on Monday at 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

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Ecstasy act pits Congress against club ravers, music

Throughout history, youth have rebelled against the tyranny of a government out to deny them their right to dance. In fact, right now, a battle is being fought between club kids and Congress that is worthy of the film "Footloose."

Just two weeks ago, Protect Live Music, which is a division of the Drug Policy Alliance, rallied people for their "Day of Outrage" protesting the Ecstasy Awareness Act and the CLEAN-UP Act.

The Drug Policy Alliance is an organization devoted to reforming the United States' drug policies to be, what they would call, more fair and compassionate. They are currently organizing support against legislation that could be used to end live music.

If made law, the Ecstasy Awareness Act (H.R. 2969) would "prohibit profiting monetarily from a rave or similar electronic dance event, knowing or having reason to know that the



Helen Schumacher

Notes from the underground

unlawful use or distribution of a controlled substance occurs at the event." Likewise, the CLEAN-UP Act (H.R. 834) makes it illegal to promote "any rave, dance, music, or other entertainment event that takes place under circumstances where the promoter knows or reasonably ought to know that a controlled substance will be used or distributed."

The problem with this vaguely written legislation is that it is impossible

for venues or promoters to stop all drug use that takes place at music events. I've been to concerts where security guards check all bags and pat down attendees, but still fail to prevent drugs from entering the show. And, according to the Drug Policy Alliance, "promoters and property owners can still be prosecuted even if they have good security and a strict zero-tolerance policy."

It is doubtful that, if passed, either one of these acts will be taken to such an extreme as to ban dancing and music to the extent that Kevin Bacon's character faced. But the possibility would exist, and that's frightening enough.

For more information visit <http://www.protectlivemusic.org>.

Contact the Pulse columnist at helenschumacher@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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