

★ ★ MADISON HOUSE PRESENTS ★ ★

PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH PEAK EXPERIENCE PRODUCTIONS

THE STRING CHEESE INCIDENT

AUG
5TH, 6TH, & 7TH
DOORS AUG. 4TH



**MUSIC ★
CAMPING
PERFORMANCE
ART ★ ★
EDUCATIONAL
WORKSHOPS
AND MORE!**

HORNING'S HIDEOUT

WITH VERY SPECIAL GUESTS:

AUG 4TH: ZILLA
AUG 6TH: ALPHA BLONDY & TRANSGLOBAL UNDERGROUND
AUG 5TH: ARTURO SANDOVAL & NEW MONSOON
AUG 7TH: RAILROAD EARTH & ANDERS OSBORNE

PLUS additional performances by That One Guy, Banana Slug String Band, El Circo Performance Troupe & DJ Lorin and much more!

TICKETS: **REGUE**
www.stringcheeseincident.com ★ ticketswest outlets
WWW.PEAKEXPERIENCE.CC

movies BY LOIS WADSWORTH



MARK BITTNER

Birdland

Personal attachments within the flock

THE WILD PARROTS OF TELEGRAPH HILL:

Nonfiction Feature. Produced, directed, filmed and edited by Judy Irving. Original music, Chris Michie. Additional photography by James Attwood, Howard Munson, Mark Bittner, Jacquelyne Cordes. Production sound, Jaime Kibben. Sound editor and re-recording mixer, Samuel Lehmer, Skywalker Sound. Featuring Mark Bittner. Urban legends by Ivan Stormgart, Maggie McCall, Gary Thompson, Elizabeth Wright, Jamie Yorck. Shadow Distribution, 2005. G. 83 minutes.

Reading about the birds is nothing like seeing them in action, obviously. Highly honored documentary filmmaker Judy Irving has the eye for catching these social animals showing their distinct personalities and different ways of relating to one another. I fell hard for Connor, the isolate and a bachelor among many pairs because the flock contained no blue-headed lady parrots. Connor, one of the oldest birds in the flock, is smart, sensitive and soulful.

The book that inspired the documentary, Bittner's *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* (hardcover, Harmony Books, Random House, 2004) is now available in paperback by Three Rivers Press, 2005. Bittner describes the chaotic scene around the bowl when the entire flock first landed on his fire escape:

"Fights were breaking out everywhere. A bird would jump on the lip of the bowl and lunge at the bird next to him, stabbing him with his beak if there was any resistance. They used their beaks on one another quite freely. Birds perched on the bowl were often attacked from behind with a bite on the leg or wing, or a yank on the tail. The bitten bird would scream loudly and fly away. I was totally captivated. It was like watching the Three Stooges, only much funnier."

Like any really interesting film, *Wild Parrots* also must have conflict and a villain, maybe death. The red-winged hawk plays the bad guy, picking off weaker individuals within the flock whenever possible. It's no accident that an active migration of hawks across the city coincides with the time when young parrots fledge. A neighbor's video camera catches a hawk with its prey, a scene that still haunts me.

Irving's film uncovers the strong need many of us share to have a relationship with wildness in nature. But that's not its only or even its main virtue. Bittner searched for meaningful work a long time. Then he discovered it in the most unexpected place: right in front of him. The wild parrots found him and showed him their unique adaptation to life, and he responded by closely observing them and respectfully serving them. That's the right way to treat your muse. Now we benefit from Bittner's experience.

With very highest recommendations, *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* opens at the Bijou on Friday, July 15. Don't miss. **EW**

If you think you can't fall in love with a bird, you haven't met the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill, the exotic companions of a warm, modest, long-haired man named Mark Bittner. Comical, colorful creatures on land and feisty, noisy birds when the flock is moving, Bittner's wild birds travel about four miles along San Francisco's north waterfront and over the hanging gardens on either side of a several hundred-step wooden staircase that rises up Telegraph Hill to Coit Tower.

Bittner didn't start out a birdlover. He didn't aim to be a writer, either, but a musician. When he was first visited by the flock of 26 wild cherry-headed conures, he couldn't know he would narrate a nonfiction feature film about his friendship with them. But a dish of birdseed placed on his deck attracted the parrots. They came again, then every day, and over time accepted his presence, eventually eating from his hand.

The conures' original habitat was a tropical dry forest that stretches from northern Ecuador into northwestern Peru. The birds' freedom from captivity cannot be documented, but Bittner definitively notes, "All the birds that started the flock were originally wild-caught cherry-headed conures shipped up from South America to be sold as pets." His research indicates the first pair came together around 1987 and started breeding by 1989. Others of the same species joined them later, as well as a blue-crowned conure.

The parrots cope well with winter in San Francisco, and food is plentiful in the lush gardens surrounding the old cottage perched amid the trees Bittner lives in, rent-free. They eat strawberry guavas, pears, apples, loquats, blackberries, pine nuts and various blossoms. By mid-summer the flock expands its usual range by another three miles and roams down into the center of the city, looking for fresh Hawthorne berries.

Make The Write Connections

The 36th Annual
Willamette Writers Conference
The Northwest's premiere writers' event.

August 5-7, 2005

Embassy Suites
Portland Airport Hotel

Over 60 literary agents and editors, plus film producers and managers, are taking pitches...and they're all looking for their next big project. Don't miss this opportunity to reach the decision makers who can get your work in print or on the big screen.

Over 90 workshops and panels on the business and craft of writing for nonfiction, fiction and film. No matter what genre you're working in, we have informative workshops to help you polish your professionalism and prose.

Register Now!

Limited capacity. Space sells out fast. For more information, visit www.willamettewriters.com/wwc or call (503) 452-1592

Sponsored in part by

