

## ARTS

## 'Bat Boy' wings it to Bellingham

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By Denise Taylor | July 28, 2005

"Bat Boy: The Musical." Just those four words should be enough reason to scamper over to **Bellingham's** new Steps Off Broadway Theater for a little entertainment this weekend. But for inquiring minds, here's the full story.

In 1992, the World Weekly News (your trusted source for reports on Elvis sightings) shocked the nation (or at least a few people in grocery lines) with the news that a half-human, half-bat had escaped from a government lab.

Meanwhile, a couple of playwrights got wind of the breakout, and as any normal citizen would do, they wrote a musical about the little pointy-eared beast.

So there he was, Bat Boy -- dancing, singing, and baring his teeth in an off-Broadway show about his troubled life. It was an instant hit, took London by storm, and has remained a cult favorite ever since.

Call it "My Fair Lady's" evil twin. Just as Eliza Doolittle is rescued from her unmannered self, Bat Boy -- discovered in a West Virginia cave in a rather unruly state -- is groomed into a civil guy, and the local vet's daughter even falls for him.

But Bat Boy's schooling does have its problems. (Let's just say one song is called "Another Dead Cow.")

"It's a little bit edgy. Kind of like this generation's 'Tommy,' but our version is PG-13," says production manager Chris Lowey.

Keith Mottola's Steps Off Broadway Theater, which is so new the chairs were being bolted down at press time, hosts the show. Performing is The Un-Common Young Adult Theatre Company, which casts experienced New England performers between the ages of 15 and 21.

Most of the leads are college drama students, including Kevin Hanley of Hopedale, who plays Bat Boy. "He has a fabulous singing voice," says director **Christa Crewdson** of **Watertown**. "But more so, he's so versatile. He can go from being this grisly animal singing to a beat to singing a beautiful love ballad."

*"Bat Boy: The Musical" runs tomorrow and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at Steps off Broadway Theater, 799 Main St., Bellingham. Tickets are \$18, or \$15 seniors, \$12 students 18 and younger. Call 508-698-3098 or visit <http://uncommontheatre.com>.*

**ART WHERE SHE FINDS IT** -- She dyes her artwork with raspberry Kool-Aid, rhapsodizes on the sensuous beauty of coffee creamer lids, and lately, her main artistic medium is the bathtub mat. **Catherine Evans**, self-proclaimed "object artist," dwells in the realm of overlooked things.

"I focus on the objects that matter so little that the most thought we put into them is 'Does this go into recycling or regular trash?' " says Evans, whose show "Objects Solo" opens at Dunia Ecostore in **Maynard** this week.

Soda cans, nails, half-squeezed toothpaste tubes -- the flotsam of daily life -- finds its way into her work, for "the grace of it, the magic of it, the shape of it. There's music and integrity in everything," she says.

But the Maynard artist does not shred or cut up and build something new out of her found fodder. "I like to preserve the integrity of an object and then take it out of context," she explains. "If you take an object, any object, and look at it with eyes that don't see the reason it was created, then you see what the object really looks like, and it takes on a whole life of its own."

Take her current obsession with the suction-cupped underside of rubber bathtub mats. She creates mixed-media pieces by pouring and brushing latex paint onto them and jiggling them to see where the color goes. For other works, she uses the mats to print onto paper and wood.

"I really like the pattern of the circles," she says. "And because all the ups and downs and valleys and nipples and everything are different on each one, the paint starts moving, and you never know where it's going to go. If you paint a line, it might pool into a circle. So it's this artist-object dance."

Evans, 56, says she's been an artist her entire life but only pursued the work full time after she rented a studio at ArtSpace Maynard when it opened in 2001. She was raised on a dairy farm in Rhode Island, where she learned to see the potential of everyday things.

"You have to improvise on a farm, because you always have something that needs to be done but you never have the part to do it," she says. "Plus, you had to amuse yourself. So I walked through the woods and hung acorns on strings and made collages out of moss. I've been putting things together since I was little."

Work in social justice then sharpened her ideas about material excess. "If I am opposed to anything in life, it is the concept of the throwaway," she says. "We're just this world of mad consumerism where nothing is even looked at anymore. Everything is just eaten up and thrown away -- people, ideas."

Evans's work manages to both criticize consumer culture and encourage a hyper-aware state of awe about it.

Dunia Ecostore is a fitting locale for this show. Open since February, the store specializes in earth-friendly products including inventive recycled works (watches made of typewriter keys, brooches from cookie tins, and so on), many by local artists.

*"Objects Solo" runs Aug. 2 through Oct. 1 at Dunia Ecostore, 43 Nason St., Maynard. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., open until 8 p.m. Wednesday. Opening reception is 7 to 9 p.m. Aug. 15. Admission is free. Call 978-897-8850 or visit [www.dunia-ecostore.com](http://www.dunia-ecostore.com).*

**ARMENIAN SALSA DANCING** -- When members of Black Sea Salsa say they're going to play an Armenian and Afro-Cuban Latin jazz salsa show, it means you should wear dancing shoes.

This Sunday, all 15 members -- four vocalists, six horns, and a five-piece rhythm section -- will fill **Newton Centre Green** with the rhythms of three continents.

Trumpet player and band founder **Dan Teager** of Arlington is responsible for the highly unusual mix of music. Teager (whose family name was Tergukasian until his grandfather "got tired of spelling it") has been breaking musical boundaries since he was a child interpreting Armenian liturgical music with his jazz trumpet.

After years playing jazz and Armenian music separately, in 1996 he finally merged his two musical passions for a one-time concert. "I've always wanted to take elements of Armenian music and fuse them with Latin music because the rhythmic differences are not that big," he says.

The show was such a success that the ad hoc group recorded a CD and started doing shows. "We do Latin sambas with Armenian lyrics. We do Armenian dance tunes played with Latin instruments. But above all, we focus on the dance element," he says.

Recently "at Ryles Jazz Club we had the whole crowd linking pinkies and line dancing Armenian-style through the tables," he says. "And Ryles is usually not a dancing crowd."

*Black Sea Salsa performs Sunday from 6:15 to 8:15 p.m. as part of the Sunday Heritage Festival series at Newton Centre Green at Langley Road and Centre Street, Newton. No rain date. Admission is free. Call 617-796-1540 or visit [www.blackseasalsa.com](http://www.blackseasalsa.com).*

**SNEAKERS WITH ZYDECO SOULS** -- Free dancing tunes can be heard in **Hudson** this week as well. After a mini dance lesson, Slippery Sneakers zydeco band will break out accordion and fiddle and set them to a washboard beat drawn straight from the Louisiana bayous.

The Sneakers are New England-based, but the band members, including accordion player and founder Robert Leonard, often play down South with zydeco's best. Only Leonard's Rhode Island accent gives them away.

"I started playing accordion in the fourth grade but quit in the seventh grade because it kind of made you a nerdy person," says Leonard. But later, zydeco got him back to those accordion keys. "It's different than all other music except reggae, because it's played on the upbeat, only faster than reggae, so you have to get up and start dancing."

After a stint in Nashville as a country-music writer, Leonard checked out the zydeco scene in Lafayette, La., and everything changed. "I knew Lafayette had the best players but, whoa, I couldn't believe it," he says. "I thought, 'This is great; this is what I want to play all the time.'"

Now he plays the Louisiana countryside, from Lake Charles to Lafayette, and lucky for us, he brings those upbeat

rhythms back home, too.

*Slippery Sneakers performs 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at Wood Park, off Park Street in Hudson. (The rain location is Hudson Town Hall, 78 Main St.) It's free. Call 978-562-1646 or visit [www.upwitharts.org](http://www.upwitharts.org) or [www.slipperysneakers.com](http://www.slipperysneakers.com).*

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