

# Globe Review

THE GLOBE AND MAIL ■ CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ■ GLOBEANDMAIL.COM ■ MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2003

A funny  
girl's  
hopeful  
journey

JOHN DOYLE,  
R3



Gladiator  
can do  
more than  
grunt

RUSSELL CROWE,  
R3



GARY WIEPERT/REUTERS



ANDREW MEDICHINI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

With pressure on the likes of Britney Spears and Shania Twain to hit all their notes accurately, singers are piping their voices through hardware that corrects their vocal flaws during concerts

## Delivering perfect pitch

BY SHOWWEI CHU

It's the latest controversy to hit pop music, and it doesn't have anything to do with sex or drugs or trashed hotel rooms. Instead, the music industry is divided over the use of computer hardware called autotuners, used by acts such as Britney Spears and 'N Sync to make sweeter music on the days when they can't quite hit those tricky notes.

Pop stars and punk bands alike are piping their voices through the hardware, which corrects and improves their vocal pitch during concerts and on records. "It's actually been used on stage for quite a while," said Marco Alpert, vice-president of marketing at Antares Audio Technologies, a major supplier of autotuners. With musicians on the road touring for weeks on end, the autotuner has become a safety net that catches

es the occasional clinker on days when their voices may be off. (In a nutshell, the autotuner is told what key the vocal is in and analyzes the wave form in real time. If the singer is off-key, it will adjust the pitch to the closest note in that key.) Reba MacIntyre and Cher are unabashed about travelling with a rack of autotuners, Alpert said. Other performers, such as Shania Twain, are rumoured to use the electronic coach. But there is an

unwillingness to trumpet this fact because of the presumption that it's somehow cheating. But they are being used because Antares alone has sold "thousands and thousands" of them. However, to some people in the industry, these devices are the work of the devil. "It's satanic," said producer R. S. Field, who has used it sparingly on records. "Digital vocal tuning is contributing to the Milli Vanilli-fication of pop music. It's a

shame that people just do it by rote." Field produced Allison Moorer's *Miss Fortune* CD, which comes with a label warning fans, "Absolutely no vocal tuning or pitch correction was used in the making of this album." Gord Adams, a Toronto music engineer, set up the sound system at last summer's Harley-Davidson 100th Anniversary Open Road Tour, which featured artists such as Journey and April Wine. He wit-

nessed autotuners being employed there by about half the major recording artists. "If I'm a professional singer, I don't want to say, 'Hey, nice to see ya. I've got this thing on my sound board that makes my voice sound a little more accurate,'" Adams said. Alex Andronache manages a roster of record producers for management agency Worlds End Canada. See AUTOTUNER on page R5

From Cher to Britney, songstresses aren't shy about using technology to stay on key.

## My love and I had words, and then it was all over



DAVID MACFARLANE  
CHEAPSEATS

Falling in love with a book in the summer is a bit like falling in love with a girl in summer. As I recall. There is, at first, a period of what appears to be irritated wariness. In my case, with Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, I had almost convinced myself that I wouldn't read it because — and this does seem suspiciously grouchy, I have to admit — it followed me around the

house all the time. There are some books that enter our home, and that, having made their way to the pile of quicksand by the telephone, are never seen again. And then there are others, such as *Kavalier and Clay*, that loom on my horizon wherever I turn. I would not have been surprised had I found it in the fridge. Its cover — modelled on the graphics of the golden age of comic books that Chabon's novel celebrates — is striking. This may have something to do with why I kept finding it when I thought I was looking for something else. As I said: It's very much like what happens with girls. I ignored it. Of course, that only made things worse. I was dismissive of it when it came up in conversation, for no reason other than the natural jealousy that a writer might feel for a book that lists the

Pulitzer Prize as only one of its many accolades. And I was rude when packing for our summer holiday — throwing it unceremoniously into a travel bag with a jumble of notepads and work at the last second before driving northward. And even then — at the lake, unpacked and with the traditional summer rain pelting down on the cottage roof — I continued to find other things to read: an interesting article in the current *Atlantic* about bear hunting and Nicolae Ceausescu; *Happy Days with the Naked Chef* by Jamie Oliver (the broccoli and anchovy orecchiette caught my eye); the Volkswagen owners' manual — obligatory reading for anyone who might some day be called upon to deal with a German tire jack. And then, finally — oh, all right, I might as well have said — I picked

up *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* and started to read. On page 1, I got something that felt like the shivers. By page 2, I had arrived at the literary equivalent of catching myself looking into her eyes while we talked about the weather and, uh, the weather. By page 3, it was all over. I was already at the mooning around outside the building where she has a summer job stage. More than once I have heard *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* described as "a guy book." There is some truth in this, insofar as comic books and a nostalgic enthusiasm for them are guy things, I suppose. But as dubious a notion as gender-specificity is when it comes to novels, it becomes really dubious when the books in question are really good — as male readers of Jane Austen

and George Eliot and female readers of Ernest Hemingway and Michael Chabon know perfectly well. I will concede though that men probably have an inside track when it comes to falling quickly in love with *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* — and this predisposition does have to do with their reading comic books as boys. Not so much with the actual content of comic books — at least not in my case. I was only a moderate user, and beyond respect for the work of Art Spiegelman and a mild curiosity about the work of Robert Crumb, I have not kept the flame of my interest in comic books very bright in my adult life. But what did always catch my interest as a kid reading comic books on rickety cots at summer camp was the presence of New York in their pages. There it was, the ad-

dress on a comic book's masthead, and there it was, the address on the ads that surrounded the stories — a city that no doubt looked very much like Gotham or Metropolis, but that was so splendidly and mysteriously diverse in its industry and commerce that it produced Whoopee cushions, and X-Ray spectacles, and muscle-building chest expanders, and hypno-discs — and comic books! I was never half as curious about Krypton or Lex Luthor's lair as I was about what went on in offices on West 22nd Street. And as much as anything, Michael Chabon's novel is a lovingly detailed portrait of that New York — the one that a kid wondered about while flipping through the new Batman, or Superman, or Fantastic Four. See MACFARLANE on page R2



# Obituaries

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**BRAHM WIESMAN 1926-2003**

## A pioneer in urban planning

B.C. teacher-architect promoted a rational view of planning and took his profession from a focus on cities at home to the study of human settlements around the world

BY DAMIAN TARNOPOLSKY

Brahm Wiesman was a pioneering urban planner who followed a distinguished career in city planning with an equally influential one as an educator, inspiring and shaping a generation of Canadian city planners. In retirement, Brahm Wiesman continued with his roles of planner and teacher: He contributed immensely to planning education and practice in Asia, particularly in China.

Mr. Wiesman was one of the first professional planners in Canada; indeed, he was the first incumbent in every one of his principal career posts. Born on June 13, 1926, he studied architecture as an undergraduate at McGill University. His interests lay in city planning and city building, but urban planning was not taught in Canada at that time. Already keen to advance his profession, Mr. Wiesman found a way to set off those studying architecture within the faculty of engineering from the majority of engineers.

"It was Brahm's idea that all architecture students wear bow ties to classes — which is a custom many of us still maintain to this day," his long-time friend and colleague H. Peter Oberlander recalled.

Mr. Wiesman continued his studies in McGill's first experimental Masters Degree in Planning, and in 1950 became the first professionally qualified urban planner to work in Edmonton. As assistant director of planning, he established the city's first land-use survey, which is still used as the basis of planning proposals in Edmonton.

From 1954 to 1961, he worked in Victoria as director of planning,

after which he joined Vancouver's first independent, professionally staffed planning board. Starting his career at a time when most major Canadian cities lacked in-house planning staff, Mr. Wiesman's expertise and integrity ensured that he left behind a significant legacy.

At Mr. Oberlander's invitation, in 1967 he joined the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia. He stayed there for 20 years, serving as acting director from 1971-4 and director from 1978-87.

At the school, Mr. Wiesman established a reputation as a committed teacher and mentor who made sure assignments and thesis topics were grounded in real-life contexts. He continued to promote his view of planning as a rational rather than a strictly political process, and over time, broadened the purview of his profession from cities in Canada to the study of human settlements around the world.

The late 1960s were a turbulent time on university campuses and there was significant unrest at UBC. Political activist Jerry Rubin's visit in 1968 provoked an overnight sit-in at the Faculty Club, and planning students staged a revolt demanding (unsuccessfully) that their curriculum be redesigned.

Mr. Wiesman was a shy and self-effacing man who preferred to redirect praise toward others. Professor Peter Boothroyd, a colleague at UBC who worked with Mr. Wiesman on projects in Thailand and Vietnam, remembered that he was always able to connect and communicate with people from different cultures and backgrounds, whether academics, officials, or villagers. Mr. Wiesman and his wife



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Brahm Wiesman took up urban planning at architecture school at a time when the subject was not even taught in Canada.

were intrepid travellers, Prof. Boothroyd recalled.

"Once, after a hard trip in the dusty plains of northeast Thailand, we were given the news that our ac-

commodation would have to be in the form of some rather crowded space on a temple floor," he said. "To the surprise and delight of our somewhat anxious hosts, Brahm

simply replied 'Wonderful!'"

After his retirement, Mr. Wiesman took his skills to Asia, advising universities on planning curriculums and consulting to several cities in China, including Guangzhou and Changsha.

Once again, Mr. Wiesman's character, teaching and practice — especially his insistence that cities be designed on a human scale — influenced a generation of young planners.

Also in China, Mr. Wiesman participated in urban-design projects with Vancouver architect Bing Thom in Dalian and Yuxi.

"Brahm emphasized the human element in urban planning and felt that technology by itself would not solve all problems," Mr. Thom recalled. "I'll always remember his tenacity for getting things perfect. Ninety-nine per cent was not good enough for him — it had to be 100 per cent."

Mr. Wiesman's interests were local as well as international: In May, 2003, not long before his death, he spoke out vigorously as a citizen against the proposed rapid-transit connection between Richmond, Vancouver International Airport and downtown Vancouver.

"You are justified in saying no to this project," Mr. Wiesman wrote in a forceful submission to Vancouver City Council.

"One, you do not have your share of the cost; two, the public-private arrangements are bad for the city; three, you do not need to spend the money; four, the airport line is a mistake."

Mr. Wiesman argued that neither a rational analysis of alternatives nor a sober cost-benefit analysis had been completed. His strong opposition to the link stemmed from the rational, non-political approach to planning that had guided his entire career.

He died peacefully on July 20 at the age of 77. He is survived by his wife Madge.

Special to The Globe and Mail

## IN BRIEF

CARLOS REINA, 77

**Political prisoner became president of Honduras**

**Tegucigalpa, Honduras.** Carlos Roberto Reina, a former political prisoner who rose to the Honduran presidency, died Aug. 19 after gall-bladder surgery. He was 77.

A Liberal Party activist while still a teenager, Mr. Reina was imprisoned for six months in 1944 for protesting against dictator Tiburcio Carias. He also was imprisoned in 1963 and 1968.

Mr. Reina was elected president in 1993 with promises to crack down on corruption and reduce the role of the military but achieved few of his aims. *AP*

MAX PUTZEL, 93

**Writer and teacher was expert on Faulkner**

**Captain Cook, Hawaii.** Max Putzel, a noted author and scholar who once made his home in Canada, died Aug. 19 at 93.

Mr. Putzel wrote *The Man in the Mirror: William Marion Reedy and His Magazine*, a biography of the turn-of-the-century editor, and *Genius of Place; William Faulkner's Triumphant Beginnings*, a study of Faulkner's writings. For 20 years, he taught English at the University of Connecticut. He retired in 1980, moved to France and then built a home in Georgeville, Que., where he lived until moving to Hawaii some years ago. *AP*

## DIED THIS DAY

**Hall, William, 1904**

Soldier born on April 25, 1829, at Horton Bluff, N.S.; son of escaped American slaves; in 1852, enlisted in Royal Navy; served in relief force sent to besieged Lucknow, India; ignoring fierce enemy fire, and with one helper, manned heavy gun until reinforcements arrived; 1857, awarded Victoria Cross; remained in navy until 1876; retired to farm at Horton Bluff, now called Lockhartville.

**JACK KESLICK 1922-2003**

## Pilot ‘displayed utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty’

BY TOM HAWTHORN

Jack Keslick, a pilot who won a Distinguished Flying Cross for his several daring bombing missions over Germany in the Second World War, has died in Richmond Hill, Ont. He was 81.

Mr. Keslick, a flying officer, had several scrapes with disaster, losing engines on two sorties and being hit by flak on two others.

On Aug. 9, 1944, he lost an engine

during an attack on a launch site for the V-1 flying bomb at Prouville, France, but managed to return safely to base at Leeming, Yorkshire, home of No. 429 (Bison) Squadron. The following month, he again lost an engine on a mission. Though he had yet to reach his target at Calais on the French coast, Mr. Keslick continued with his bombing assignment before returning to England.

Four days later, on Sept. 28, a

wave of 38 Lancaster and 214 Halifax bombers was assigned to take out coastal guns at Cap Gris Nez. Many crews had to return with their bombs because of poor weather, but Mr. Keslick was able to strike the target.

On Oct. 12, Mr. Keslick's Halifax was hit by flak while joining 95 others in a sortie against oil plants at Wanne-Eickel, Germany. His plane was not seriously damaged.

His crew also took part in the

massive attack on the Wilhelmshaven naval base on the night of Oct. 15-16, as 119 Halifaxes and 19 Lancasters dropped more than one million pounds of incendiaries and high explosives on the port city.

From July 28 to Nov. 6, 1944, Mr. Keslick logged more than 165 hours of flight on 31 sorties, but his most harrowing mission was yet to be flown. On Nov. 24, his bomber was one of a baker's dozen on a mining operation on the Kattegat, the strait

separating Denmark and Sweden. His Halifax was hit by flak, damaging the bomb bay and the starboard outer engine. He nursed his Halifax back to Scotland.

John Leask Keslick was born in Toronto on May 25, 1922. He enlisted on July 29, 1942, and had been promoted to pilot officer by the time he left military service.

He was presented his medal at Government House in Ottawa by Governor-General Vincent Massey

in 1953, according to research by the military historian Hugh Halliday. The citation noted that Mr. Keslick had "invariably displayed the utmost fortitude, courage and devotion to duty."

Mr. Keslick died of congestive heart failure at Richmond Hill, Ont., on July 15. He leaves a son, a daughter and a sister. He was predeceased by his wife, Evelyn.

Special to The Globe and Mail

## ‘It’s a lazy way of achieving results’

**AUTOTUNER** *from page R1*

He said he first noticed the use of autotuners a few years ago when he took his daughter to see Britney Spears in Toronto.

He couldn't help but notice three Antares tuners lined up in a row at the engineer's sound board that evening. But he said he couldn't say for certain they were there for her vocals. They could also be used to tune backup singers or their instruments.

The driving force behind this trend has been the fans themselves, who now have a more educated ear and can tell if something is off-key, industry experts said.

To attract concert-goers, artists

will do whatever it takes sometimes to please demanding customers, who often pay upwards of \$100 a ticket to hear their favourite musicians.

The presumption that autotuning is somehow cheating is just that, proponents argue, since the technology won't transform a bad singer into a good one.

"If you're a bad singer and sing out of tune, it'll turn you into a bad singer who's now singing in tune," Antares's Alpert said.

Until recently, autotuners or pitch-correction tools have been mostly used in the recording studio. Most albums nowadays are made using the autotuner, which is also found in computer-based re-

cording systems to fix flat notes and off-key vocals or to create an entire performance by digitally cutting and pasting numerous takes. Its ubiquitous presence has courted criticism sometimes from the very people who use the technology.

"I think it's abused," said Daryn Barry, who has mixed or engineered music for Blue Rodeo and the Weakerthans and has used the autotuner in an album he is producing with Toronto singer-songwriter Lindy. "But I think like any tool that's fairly new that people will hopefully get sick of [it]."

Barry said he relies on the autotuner when a musician's performance is nearly flawless except for that one flat note "that's going to

drive everyone crazy" or when there are time constraints. In the old days, it would take months to make a record.

Producer Brenndan McGuire, who produced and engineered several Sloan albums, also avoids them as much as he can.

"As a producer, you like to coach a performance, and I think it's a lazy way of achieving results through electronic means," he said.

But, like many, he is not opposed to using autotuners. In fact, McGuire, who produced Sam Roberts's *We Were Born in a Flame*, said there was the odd note in that album that "may have been stretched out with that device."

Electronic tuning took off in the

mid-1990s after the introduction of computer-based recording systems, such as Digidesign's Pro Tools, Emagic's Logic Platinum and Steinberg's Cubase. Their owners allowed others to develop additional features on their flagship systems, one of which is the autotuner.

But it's important to remember that sounding flat or sharp is as much a musical expression as being in tune, industry experts said. The Doors' Jim Morrison and Bob Dylan rarely sang in pitch, but they're still music icons. The same goes for Johnny Cash, Muddy Waters and Billie Holiday.

Would fans still like them if the producers had decided that a curl-cue or buried roll or slightly out-of-

tune phrasing was flawed and ran it through a vocal tuner, Field wondered. Still, the newer punk bands, such as Sum 41 and Good Charlottes, would sound awful if they weren't corrected with an autotuner. Last week, Field was back in the studio, producing another album with Moorer, and they were sticking to vintage analog gear to record what they want, "a fat, aggressive sound."

Only this time, they've decided not to label the new CD with a warning. "We can't put a sticker that says no computers were used in the making of this record," he said. "It'd really make us look like jerks, but there's not going to be any of that."

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