

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE: MACEDONIA'S HEATHER ROBERSON

By Claire Sanders Swift

GIVING PEACE A CHANCE: Macedonia's Heather Roberson; Villard, \$17.95.

Macedonia's lead character and co-author Heather Roberson, is on a mission. She and her co-author, underground comic book legend, Harvey Pekar (American Splendor) in their recently released graphic novel, tell the unique story of how this land-locked country in the Balkans (Macedonia) was able to stave off war. The story is based on Heather's real-life experiences, then a Peace Studies major at Berkeley, as she travels there to discover first-hand the secret to attaining peace and resolution over war and conflict. What does Heather have to say about all this?

She shared her story with us amidst her book tour.

Q. What it is like being a comic book character telling a serious story?

A. It's fun. I like giving readers a way to jump into the story right along with me. They get to see what it's like to arrive in an unfamiliar country and to figure out how to get around and how to get answers.

Q: Why Macedonia?

A: I heard about this country that had every reason to go to war and yet didn't. I thought, What do those people know that the rest of us don't? Also, this story really hadn't been told before and people really need to hear that Peace is possible.

Q: Why do you say that Macedonia would have gone to war?

A: Macedonia had a lot of the same problems as the other states coming out of the former Yugoslavia—especially Bosnia. It was multi-ethnic, had an almost no military, and was surrounded by aggressive neighboring states.

Q: So, how did Macedonia prevent these wars in such a war torn region?

A: The country's leaders saw that Macedonia was headed for trouble when it seceded from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, so they requested what became the United Nations' first-ever preventive peacekeeping force.

Q: In the book, a lot of people warn you not to go to Macedonia, saying that it won't be safe. Why did you go anyway?

A: I had to go to Macedonia, or I never would have learned its story. Besides, it turned out to be the most welcoming place I've ever traveled.

Q: You encounter a lot of lecherous men in the book. Why did you want to show that?

A: It was actually much worse than what I show, but the thing is, when you're traveling alone as a woman, you get a really keen eye into a place.



People see you as vulnerable and so some try to take advantage of you and some do anything to help you. When you're traveling with a big group or with a man, you're buffered from a lot of that.

Q: Can Macedonia's success be translated to other conflicts?

A: Sure it can. It's diplomacy we're talking about, not rocket science. The Macedonians chose negotiation over violence every step of the way, and that is definitely something that can and should be replicated.

Q: What was it like working with Harvey Pekar on this?

A: It was a dream come true. I wanted so badly for people to know about Macedonia's success and yet 'Peace' is a pretty hard subject to pitch. All of a sudden, along came Harvey and a book deal dropped into my lap. Talk about the opportunity of a lifetime.

Q. What's next for you?

A. I really enjoy getting out there and speaking about this subject. This week, I'm joining a panel exploring "Successful Third World States" here in DC at the University Club. My biggest challenge, though, will probably be presenting the book at a conference in Macedonia. That will definitely be my toughest audience!

For more information go to www.macedoniaatthebook.com.

Claire Sanders Swift is an award-winning broadcast news producer and national media consultant. She assists other media organizations, corporations, law firms and individuals tell their stories and protect their stories to and from the national media. She is currently working with Heather Roberson. For comments contact claire@georgetowner.com

"FILMS ON THE VERN" AT GWU

The George Washington University Mount Vernon Campus on Foxhall Road presents "Films on the Vern," its free summer outdoor movie series. GW, Foxhall, Palisades, Foggy Bottom, and West End community members are especially invited to bring a blanket and enjoy outdoor screenings. This summer's series takes you through time to view some of film's most beloved (and most despised) characters through our theme, "Heroes and Villains."

WHEN: Wednesday evenings at 8:30 p.m., July 25 – August 22, 2007

WHERE: The George Washington University Mount Vernon Campus Quad (rain location: Eckles Library Auditorium)

*unless otherwise noted
2100 Foxhall Rd., NW, Washington D.C.

FILMS:

Wednesday, July 25, 8:30 p.m.

Casino Royale (2006), rated PG-13, 144 minutes

Wednesday, August 1, 8:30 p.m.

The Incredibles (2004), rated PG, 115 minutes

Wednesday, August 8, 8:30 p.m.

Rocky (1976), Rated PG, 119 minutes

Wednesday, August 15, 8:30 p.m.

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest (2006), rated PG-13, 151 minutes. Dive-In Movie, shown at the GW Outdoor Pool at Mount Vernon

Wednesday, August 22, 8:30 p.m.

Spider-Man 3 (2007), rated PG-13, 156 minutes

COST: Free and open to the public.

For more information about "Films On The Vern," visit <http://gwired.gwu.edu/mvcl>, e-mail mvcl@gwu.edu, or call (202) 242-6673.

For more news about GW, visit the GW News Center at www.gwnewscenter.org.



July 26-28

Flamenco Festival

Taberna del Alabardero's "Noches de Andalucia" (Nights of Andalucia) pays tribute to the Andalusian region of Spain's ancient art of Flamenco with a special menu and performances. During the Flamenco festival, guests will enjoy this passionate and seductive art form with performances by renowned Flamenco singers Manuel Leiva and Almudena de Malaga, guitarists Cidi de Malaga and Arturo el Gitano and dancers Sara de Jerez and Ana Menendez. Seatings are at 7:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 8:00. Taberna del Alabardero, 1776 "Eye" Street, NW. The special menu is priced at \$65 per person (exclusive of tax and gratuity). For reservations, call 202-429-2200.

Sunday July 29

Michael Feinstein and Linda Eder

Pop musician Michael Feinstein makes his way to Wolf Trap for the first time since 2000 to perform with Linda Eder following the 2005 release of Hopeless Romantic, which debuted in the Jazz Top 10. As a boy under the tutelage of the masterful Ira Gershwin, Feinstein honed his skills as a performer, composer, and arranger of pop classics to become one of the best interpreters of American popular music. After working in Gershwin's archives as an assistant for six years, Feinstein launched his career in 1984 as a pianist and singer of music from the '30s and '40s.

Sunday, August 5

Play Ball

11 a.m. until game ends
"Play ball" the umpire shouts, and the game begins. From the start of spring training to the wind-up of the World Series, baseball captures the hearts and minds of millions of Americans—and it has done so for more than 100 years. In a behind-the-scenes afternoon at RFK stadium—seating is in the Miller Lite Beer Pen—

meet some of the key players who have given Washington, D.C., a team again, and take part in the question-and-answer session that follows. Feast on an all-you-can-eat buffet of baseball fare before the start time of 1:50 p.m., when the Nats play the St. Louis Cardinals. Price includes all food, beverages, and game ticket in sections M1-M5. RFK Stadium/Miller Lite Beer Pen, 2400 East Capital Street, S.E. Members \$65, Gen. Admission \$100. For tickets and information call 202.633.3030 or visit www.smithsonianassociates.org.

August 4 & 5

Chesapeake Bay Blues Festival

The area's biggest celebration of the blues takes place at Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis. Featuring a killer blues line-up including Aretha Franklin, Buddy Guy, John Kay & Steppenwolf, Robert Randolph & The Family Band, Three Dog Night and many more. Festival information: www.bayblues.org

August 6-12:

DC Restaurant Week

Many of the region's top restaurants offer three-course menus, specially priced at \$20.07 for lunch and \$30.07 for dinner.

August 10-12:

National Museum of the American Indian Pow Wow

Dance competitions and musical performances by thousands of Native performers at the Verizon Center.

August 30-Sept. 29:

Kennedy Center Prelude Festival

The Kennedy Center previews its 2007-2008 season with a month of special performances, including free readings and concerts. The 23rd annual Kennedy Center Open House Arts Festival takes place Sept. 8.