

august 2009 Vol 1 Issue 11

# MUSIC EAST

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*Jenn Grant*

nova scotia's  
sweetheart

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## MUSIC EAST AUGUST 2009

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**No Paper, No Ink, No Waste**



## *Can I have this Dance?*

by Jill Schettler

 Putting aside any past reservations, Jenn Grant boldly steps into the limelight with a new happy-go-lucky approach to life. “I’m writing new songs for myself-- happy songs,” says the singer of her latest efforts. “I want to dance around.”

In this month’s edition of *Music East*, join the down-to-earth songstress as she slides down a sand dune into an ocean of creativity. Find out what makes her tick, what has inspired this new approach, and what keeps her focused day-by-day.

**Jenn, you were handpicked to perform at the 2009 Grammy Week. What did you garner from this experience?**

It was great to go somewhere new and play outside. I also liked wearing my new dress. I also garnered gold spray paint which I put on my shoes.

**You've been the media's sweetheart since *Echoes*. Any interview advice you can offer to fellow musicians?**

Just be yourself or have a great publicist named Caitlin who can remind you how to be yourself when you get tired.

**Both *Echoes* and *Orchestra for the Moon* feature some really cool artwork. Who is responsible for said creativity?**

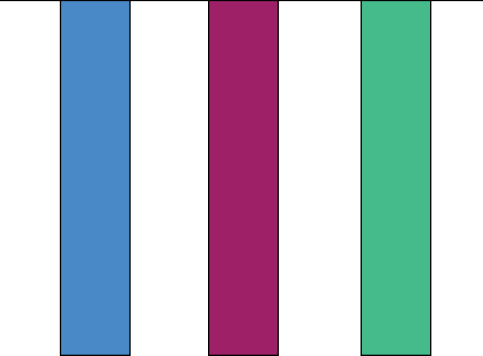
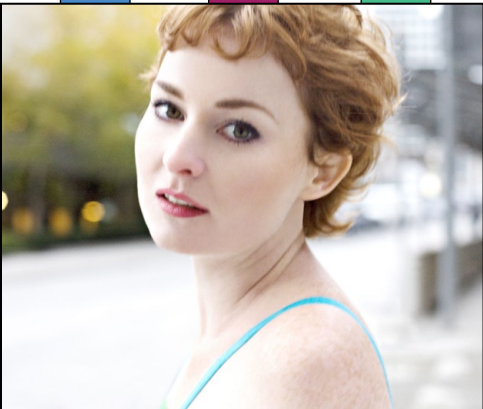
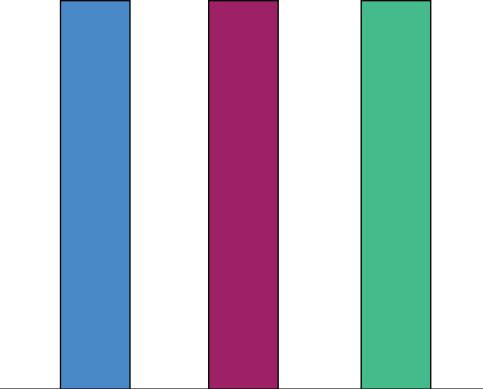
That would be me. I have a painting degree from NSCAD, not that you need a degree to paint pictures.

**Your career has seen a high-speed acceleration as of late. How do you deal with this fast-paced ride?**

I enjoy my time at home when I have it, and then I can enjoy touring as well. It's important to find your own balance, and for me that has a lot to do with the food I eat on the road and getting enough sleep and exercise. If that stuff is under control then I can feel good and put my best food forward, as they say.

**Talk about the Six Shooter crowd. How has the release of your second album with this major backer differed from *Orchestra*, your first album?**





Six Shooter is an incredible team, and they have really supported me in the lead up to *Echoes*. It's nice to know your art is in good hands. I also love the artists on the roster. We're a big family.

**The Toronto Star has made comparisons between you and the Sarahs (both Harmer and McLachlan), Leslie Feist and Patsy Cline. Who were your actual influences in the musical game?**

I love those artists and many more, but I had no specific influences when recording. I'm just trying to sound like myself, but those artists have seeped into my soul, for sure, and have helped make me better.

**At first glance, one would deem you a folk artist but *Echoes* seems to include elements of jazz, swing, and doo-wop. Was this intentional?**

I think so. We were thinking about the sounds of the 50s and 60s and wanted to make a classic record like ones I grew up listening to with my parents.

**What kind of artist do you**

**see yourself as?**

An open minded one because I want to try as many things as I can in my career. I like to work with other artists and love to connect to the audience when I can. They are a great audience, and I am very thankful for them. Glad they are still coming to the shows.

**Describe the writing process. What inspires this "weird-corner-taker"?**

I write pretty quickly, as in when it comes and comes, and if I don't let it out then it drives me crazy in my head until I do.

**Can you pin-point the moment where you first thought, "Ah-ha, this is exactly what I want outta life!"?**

Probably this morning when I woke up.

**Jenn, you decided to record *Echoes* on entirely analog equipment—as "live" as possible—at Puck's Farm in Schomberg last summer. What prompted this decision? And can you describe the setting and the process**

**for us?**

The setting was a farm which was important because I love animals and being outside, and I wanted to be somewhere I felt happy and comfortable. I also wanted the warm quality of a live performance which I feel we achieved. I don't like staring at computers for too long-- I like to feel the music instead. I wanted to document our experience there.

**Rumor has it you still fight slight cases of the butterflies onstage. Any tips for overcoming the jitters?**

I started out small but now I love playing shows, whether they are big or small. I am thankful for the little jitters; they remind me that I am alive anyway. It's never boring. I love performing.

**How long have you been writing songs? When did you first perform your creations in public?**

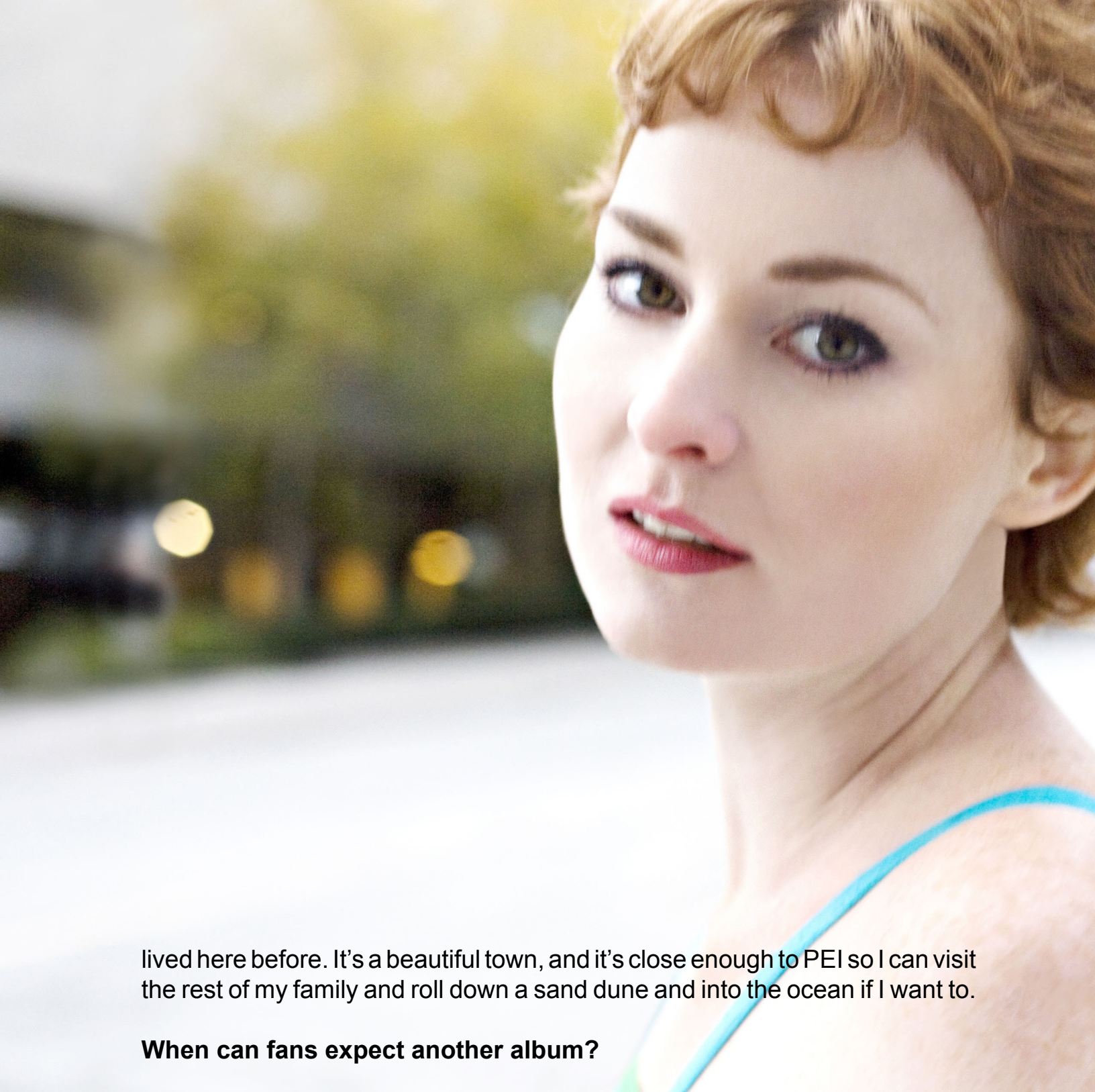
I've been writing songs since I was about 8 and the first time I performed was in Grade 9 at the Gorsebrook Coffee House in front of my school, in the gym. Location: Gorsebrook Junior High, South St.

**Can you see yourself remaining a Nova Scotia resident during the duration of your career?**

I can. I love Nova Scotia and the Maritimes. I need to be close to the water, and the people I love. Halifax feels like home. I know how to get around, and I don't have to drive a car or get lost in crowds. The old buildings are amazing and make me feel the history of the people who



*Click  
Here to  
visit  
Jenn  
online*



lived here before. It's a beautiful town, and it's close enough to PEI so I can visit the rest of my family and roll down a sand dune and into the ocean if I want to.

**When can fans expect another album?**

I am currently working on a writing project with Buck 65, and who knows what that will lead to, but it's opened my heart into a new love for co-writing. It's very exciting. And I am also writing new songs for myself--happy songs. I want to dance around.

**What does 2009 hold for Jenn Grant?**

Renovating, wheat-free recipes, yoga, swimming, touring, writing, friends, dinner parties, festivals, collaborations, videos, concerts, and hopefully some shows in America as well as Canada and Europe. ☆



# T@B

## *Mad Geniuses of the New Millennium*

by Wanda Waterman St. Louis

The first time I heard T@b (Thugs at Bay) was at a live performance at last year's Sister Fair in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia. There was the serenely self-assured Ariana in her Olive Oyl stockings, singing in that pure, pitch-perfect voice, marathons of brilliant lyrics tripping lightly off her tongue, switching effortlessly between soprano sax and fiddle like it was music period at nursery school.

There beside her stood Andy, a jester irony permanently implanted on his face, simultaneously singing backup, playing

guitar, and drumming (he plays the drums backwards, his feet working the pedals as his body sways in a canny, weaving two-step).

Like the equally necessary folk trio, the folk duo is a structure that dare not die. In the world at large the number of folk duos is at this moment burgeoning with a vengeance. With T@b it has been not propped up and resuscitated but ingeniously recreated.

Why would, say, a poet listen to T@b? This music is substantial and radically

***“I’m almost on the brink  
of being  
on the verge of being  
very nearly close  
to bordering  
on the edge  
of doing what I really  
wanna do.”***

playful, simple and ripe with associations, intellectual and unpretentious, deep and light. Such music can help the poet get over the false sense of the weightiness of life while kindling her own creativity.

Calling their music polymetric folk-jazz, as unwieldy as that sounds, is still the tip of the iceberg lettuce leaf; try polymetric-folk-jazz-gypsy-klezmer-torch-lounge-noir-cabaret-children’s. But I’m probably leaving something out.

*“Shelving words by the letter, lining up syllables better, being setter of bones of reality, the tones of the t’s and the a’s and the e’s, oh please!” ~ from “Words” by Flinn and Nasr, *New Teeth on Stage**

Although Ariana and Andy describe themselves as merely “potluck” Ariana did come from a Society of Friends family. Now knowing this, I can’t listen to T@b’s music without thinking of all those people who went to prison in England centuries ago for refusing to doff their hats to nobility.

Because of their frequent incarcerations Quakers became great reformers of the prison system and other bastions of human cruelty.

Plus, it eventually became okay for people not to take off their hats in the presence of Lord or Lady Diddly-Squat.

As if it weren’t enough to manifest an amazing creative force, Ariana Nasr and Andy Flinn are at the vanguard of a global and local movement to transform the music industry from a castle fortress to a sprawling, *thriving*, peasant village.

*\*The following are notes from a conversation with Andy Flinn.*

## ***Meeting Ariana***

I had a recording studio in Toronto and I was doing a recording project with some former bandmates. I asked Ariana to play saxophone on it. Right after that we started a project called Tic-Tac, which was like T@b music only instrumental.

We toured with that all across the country, in bookstores like Chapters and Indigo. There were people peeping out from behind the bookshelves going, *“What in the h— is that?”*

We were very slow learners in playing music that people might like. We’re still learning. Good music doesn’t necessarily mean popular music or music you can live off. But we’ve come a long way since playing polymetric instrumental music in 13/4 and 7/4 time—at the same time—for unsuspecting library and bookstore dwellers.

## ***I Write the Songs***

I’m sort of the primary writer, and for our songs to make it out of our house Ariana has to say, “Yeah, I might sing that.” So there’s an automatic review. I’ve tried making her sing stuff that she didn’t like to sing



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and it didn't work.

She can sing anything but the message in the song has to be worth her while. For the most part we think *If it ain't good, don't say it*.

We are constantly negotiating what we're going to play. It's the consensus-building thing; the larger the group, the more difficult it is to build consensus. Two is the easiest number within which to reach consensus, other than with yourself.

## ***How Did I Get Here?***

I played garage rock first. I was forced to take piano lessons for half a year. That didn't pan out because I'd come back and play the piece pretending to read the music but I was playing in the wrong key and it became obvious to the teacher.

My piano teacher ended up taking me to all these old cathedrals around where I grew up. We would go play the church organs and stick our fingers in the pipes and see if we could make them do overtones. That teacher was probably one of my bigger musical influences. He played baroque music, and that kind of polyphonic and multi-threaded music. That's partly where my polymetric obsession comes from.

Ariana comes from an altogether musical family. Her sisters, Sara and Kamila, are a folk duo. Their mom's a music teacher. Ariana had lessons on the violin and a few lessons on clarinet and saxophone, but she obviously ran away screaming and did her own thing.

For both of us, performing has not come easily. We were the classic shoe-gazers; we would play a really complicated song

and stare up from our shoes only to mumble something incomprehensible to the shoes in the audience then return our eyes to our own shoe tips and continue with our show.

I remember once we were driving with Ariana's mom. We had just finished a show with Sara and Kamila in Toronto and were heading for Montreal. We asked, "Why did they sell eight CDs and we only sell one? Why do they love them more than they love us?" We got a lecture, of course.

## ***An Act of Love***

We're still working on our performances, to tell you the truth. We even took an acting improv class. There are so many details; it has to do with the clothing you wear, etc., making an effort. All of these things matter because we're asking people to be quiet while we play and to give us money, and when they come to a show they actually want the show to be good.

I think one of your responsibilities is to give them what they hope for. Some people may think that this sounds commercial, but it is in a sense an act of love.

## ***What Do You Need to Be Creative?***

We probably need some space. And each other.

We need Wolfville. I think there is no higher density of artists per capita than here in Nova Scotia. What we like about

Wolfville is the community thing. We feel pretty damn stimulated by this town in terms of gender, society, alternative economy, alternative growing. Most of our friends are second generation hippies.

I don't think we've ever flourished artistically as much as we have in the last three years.

Wolfville is certainly more stimulating than Toronto was. In Nova Scotia you can't piss somebody off or burn your bridges because there's plenty of others out there who can pull the same stunts on you.

The urban environment is very forgiving of social dysfunction; in Toronto we could have gone on and on with our shoe-gazing, but here we basically have to get along with everybody, and it's cool. We discovered stuff here that we didn't know we needed.



## ***The Thunderings and Rumbles of a New Music Economy***

We've talked to artists who came, say, from Montreal, to play at festivals here and they've said, "Yeah, we were paid two thousand dollars to get here and we spent seventeen hundred on the flight." Then there were other expenses. So the military-industrial complex ended up with 80 per cent of the grant money for the festival and the artist only got 5 per cent.

So right now we're working on the AMP (Acoustic Music Producers) Festival.

This is a new baby. Basically it's a Night Kitchen on steroids. It has the same pay scheme as Night Kitchen except all performers are recorded on a digital 8-track, shot with multiple cameras. Like Night Kitchen no one gets a set larger than three songs.

We favour local artists, in that we don't pay for travel. Your own community is the most stable network in your life. If somebody is in that phase of their lives when

they wander and happen to pass by, then you're likely to be very welcoming, but you probably won't accept the financial burden of Air Canada shipping them from there to here.

At the AMP Festival everyone has to play original music, because that's not legally encumbered, and all performers sign a release form to allow all the professional photographers to use the pictures any way they want.

Also, the photographers sign a release allowing the performers to use their photos for CD covers, etc., without paying. And the performers don't have to pay a sound engineer to record them. It's basically a barter framework of artistic services.

It's like creative commons, only event-bound. It's only one event, but unions form: a photographers union, a musicians union, an entertainment-staff-and-door-people union, and they all sign up for an AMP accord. With this you can now upload stuff to YouTube that is 100 per cent legally publishable.

The website doesn't look as subversive as the concept is.



## ***The Care and Grooming of an Insurgent Song- writer***

I really despised war, but I was raised a soldier. I was drafted into the Swiss army when I was 18 or 19. And soldiers are people too, right? It takes decades to get over that kind of thing.

Then I met Ariana, who came from a Quaker background. They're a bunch of pacifists. At the time that I met her, this was the only organized religious group that never offended her, that didn't have a sour taste for her. And none of us is really a Quaker because Quakers don't evangelize. Ariana and I are potluck Quakers at best, but we love those guys and we go to their weekends. We do music with the kids while the adults do their business meetings.

Our biggest fans are toddlers, interestingly enough. Toddlers, I think, are more open-minded. A lot of our friends have kids and they're always being exposed to our music, at farmers' markets and at Night Kitchen. There's never a Night Kitchen where you don't hear a baby howling. ↗



Click on the links below to visit Wanda's sites  
[www.themindfulbard.wordpress.com](http://www.themindfulbard.wordpress.com)  
[www.myspace.com/mindfulbard](http://www.myspace.com/mindfulbard)

## ***Click here to visit T@b online***

T@b is a Nova Scotia-based folk-jazz duo (comprising Ariana Nasr and Andy Flinn) that writes fiendishly clever songs, performing them to wizardly accompaniment and engaging its audiences in mesmerizing performances. They've also made a name for themselves as music promoters, offering local musicians an excellent venue in Night Kitchen, their popular live weekly variety show in Wolfville, and the AMP (Acoustic Music Producers) festival.

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# RANDOM USELESS KNOWLEDGE



- There is a city called Rome on every continent.
- Winston Churchill was born in a ladies bathroom.
- “Spheno Palatine Gangleoneuralgia” is the technical term for an ice cream headache.
- The points of light that you see behind your eyelids when you shut your eyes really hard are called Phosphenes.
- The top of the Empire State building was built to anchor blimps.
- The best time to go fishing, according to weather experts, is during a full moon cycle. A full moon causes increased electromagnetic energy, which in turn triggers traveling, feeding, and spawning responses in fish and their prey.
- In 1988, Elvis earned an estimated \$15,000,000.
- Baths in the 1500s equaled a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women, the children and last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually loose someone in it. Hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water”.
- England is old and small and in the 1500s they started running out of places to bury people. So, they would dig up coffins and would take their bones to a house and reuse the grave. In reopening these coffins, one out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they thought they would tie a string on their wrist and lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night to listen for the bell. Hence on the “graveyard shift” they would know that someone was “saved by the bell” or he was a “dead ringer”.
- Murphy’s Oil Soap is the chemical most commonly used to clean elephants.
- One of the reasons marijuana is illegal today is because cotton growers in the 30s lobbied against hemp farmers -- they saw it as competition.
- A snail can sleep for three years.
- American Airlines saved \$40,000 in 1987 by eliminating one olive from each salad served in first-class.
- If the population of China walked past you in single file, the line would never end because of the rate of reproduction.

# SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

If you dream it,  
you can achieve it."  
Walt Disney

