

TIMEOUT



Words to notes

Ann Patchett's "Bel Canto" bestseller inspires a new piece of music./ PAGE 3

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SPIN CYCLE

Fluffing and folding the news

iPup



Your pup has an iPod, right? Then you know how hard it is to fit those earbuds in their soft, floppy ears. Plus, there's only so much Kenny G a golden retriever can listen to before his hearing is damaged beyond repair. That's the argument being used, anyway, to promote Pet Acoustics' newest product. It's an iPod-compatible speaker system (\$249.95) for cats, dogs and horses that's specially geared toward reducing their "stress, anxiety and aggression caused by their reaction to sound."

Or you could turn off the Kenny G. We're just saying.

Flitter twit



A slew of Twittering Canadians found romance last week at an event designed for the shy-lovelorn demographic. The event, which combined Twitter and flirting, was dubbed Flitter — gahhh. (We are so over these coinages. Plus, what can you tell about a person in 140 characters?) Flitter founder and dating guru Justin Parfitt said he hoped that using "work devices" — we're assuming he means cell phones and PDAs, rather than staplers — would make people feel more social.

Plus, propositioning someone via BlackBerry and having it projected on a big screen is so much more romantic than, like, making eye contact and asking if they come here often. Case in point: One classy gent put the moves on three women at once by tweeting, "#129, you're so fine, but #152, you're hot too... what will #72 do?"

Apparently, we were wrong — 140 characters is plenty.

Heartfelt dung



Mister "#129, 152 and 72" could take a cue from the Minnesota farmer who celebrated Valentine's Day by drawing a heart, a half-mile in size, for his wife of 37 years. On the back 40. Using fresh manure as his, er, creative medium.

Beth Andersland says it's the largest and most memorable Valentine greeting she's received from her longtime sweetheart — and that it would be darker and more prominent if a snowstorm hadn't mixed precipitation with the, er, ordure.

Husband Bruce spent two days on his masterpiece, using a tractor and a manure spreader. No word on how many cows contributed to the effort, or whether they were listening to Kenny G at the time.

Spin Cycle is a weekly, random riff on daily news and everyday happenings. Contact Jackie Burrell at jburrell@bayareanews.com.



RAY CHAVEZ/STAFF

KCBS radio news anchor Jeff Bell, who suffers from obsessive compulsive disorder, just released a self-help book on how to deal with doubt and worry.

Making belief

KCBS anchor with OCD shares how he dials down anxiety

By Laura Casey
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FOR RADIO news anchor Jeff Bell, the greater good is being a face, a voice and an example of hope for people who suffer from obsessive compulsive disorder.

Now, the Benicia-based writer, who can be heard on KCBS, wants to offer his voice to everyone who suffers from doubt or worry — he wants to help.

He wants to eliminate the stigma of OCD and other mental illnesses and he's attempting to do so with his second book, "When in Doubt, Make Belief: An OCD-Inspired Approach to Living With Uncertainty" (New World Library, \$14.95).

"That fuels me in a big way," he says. "It keeps me in the right direction."

Call it a mission or a do-gooder goal, but Bell is serious when he says helping people helps him.

A few years ago, Bell went public with his story about suffering from OCD and released a memoir about how the mental illness brought havoc to his daily life.

"Rewind, Replay, Repeat" detailed how Bell, a charming man with a smooth voice that is perfect for radio, was consumed by anxiety and worry. He constantly fretted that he would accidentally hurt someone, was once even terrified that he might have caused brain damage to a child he accidentally bumped into at a mall.

That wasn't the only way Bell's

"What I have found over the years, when I am stuck in doubt, (is) if I can find a way to be of service, I can break out of that state of mind, that shadow of doubt."

— Jeff Bell

LEARN MORE

Visit the International OCD Foundation on the Internet at www.OCDFoundation.org. Visit Jeff Bell's Web site at www.BeyondtheDoubt.org.

OCD manifested itself. He used to check and recheck his garage door to see if it was closed. Actions like that brought up his comfort level, he says, even if they didn't make any sense.

Bell had suffered for years not knowing what was wrong with him. Finally, after working with therapists and other sufferers, he learned how to manage his complicated condition.

"Rewind, Replay, Repeat" was a hit with people who suffer from mental illnesses — and those who love them. Over time, Bell connected with the nonprofit International OCD Foundation, and its leaders asked him to be one of their

national spokespeople. In recent years, Bell has traveled around the country speaking to people about the disorder and how he manages the incurable illness.

"Jeff Bell is a great example of a person who had very, very challenging OCD," says Jeff Szymanski, executive director of the international foundation. "He gives great talks and he's very engaging and really entertaining. He's also a really good advocate of the importance of getting good treatment — and how challenging getting the treatment is."

While his first book was more a story of Bell's life than a self-help/personal-growth book, "When in Doubt" gives readers tools to control doubt and worry. He distinguishes between what he calls "intellect-based doubt," which can be positive, and "fear-based doubt," which can lead a person into a cycle of unnecessary worry. Then he urges readers to make "belief" a term they can use to escape the sticky pit of negative thoughts.

Belief involves realizing you're not always going to feel comfortable or assured, he says, and accepting your situation.

"Making belief, for me, is a willful process in which one chooses to accept the discomfort of uncertainty for greater good purposes," he explains. "Greater good," as Bell puts it, is service to others and the enhancement of one's sense of purpose in the world.

Black and white blend in buddy film formula

DEBUTING in theaters this week is "Cop Out," a film that revives an ancient odd-couple formula: One white guy (Bruce Willis), plus one black guy (Tracy Morgan), equals instant buddy-flick mojo. We haven't seen "Cop Out" yet, but we can only guess that it will play upon clichés and stereotypes and strain to find the funny in the characters' glaring differences. Are you laughing yet? The genre might reek of staleness now, but a handful of trendsetting films made their mark and stood out from the crowd. — Chuck Barney



'Lethal Weapon'

Long before he became tawdry tabloid fodder, Mel Gibson starred with Danny Glover in this frenetic cop movie that featured a lot of car chases, explosions and shootouts. All the mayhem — and their remarkable onscreen chemistry — paid off. "Lethal Weapon" spawned three sequels and one memorable toilet-bomb scene.



'48 Hours'

Eddie Murphy made his big-screen debut in this raucous saga as a smooth-talking convict on a two-day furlough from prison to help a burned-out, cop (Nick Nolte) take down a dirtbag thug. Some punches and (politically incorrect) words were exchanged along the way. And we heartily cheered when Murphy boldly shut down that red-neck bar.



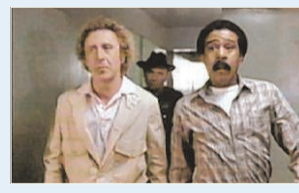
'White Men Can't Jump'

Woody Harrelson proved he had game in this winning sports film. He and Wesley Snipes played a pair of trash-talking basketball hustlers who make a tour of LA's playgrounds to challenge the homeboys. Of course, Wesley initially questions the white guy's hoop skills: "You can put a cat in an oven, but that don't make it a biscuit."



'Men in Black'

Will Smith is a street-smart NYC cop recruited by a grizzled secret agent (Tommy Lee Jones), who is assigned to keep tabs on Earth-dwelling extraterrestrials. It was a hip and hilarious twist on the sci-fi invasion tale, complete with kooky creatures, cool special effects and snappy banter. And sales of Ray-Ban sunglasses skyrocketed.



'Stir Crazy'

Richard Pryor and Gene Wilder struck comedic gold with this kooky tale that had our heroes bungling their way into prison. It was the second of four films teaming up the funnymen — and the most successful. Not only did it finish No. 3 at the box office in 1980, it had us blurring out the line, "Yeah, that's right! That's right! We bad!"