

EPIC RITES PRESS

can't stop now!

poetry by John Yamrus

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Exterior artwork is a depiction of a 17th century perpetual motion machine.

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For Kathy

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The art of John Yamrus

All great painters, indeed artists in every medium, have the ability to make the ordinary remarkable. Such artists enlighten us with their own personal perspective, even philosophy, by means of their craftsmanship, making the commonplace extraordinary.

Another universal attribute of excellence in any field, be it riding a horse or writing a poem, is that the very best make it look easy.

On both the above counts I must rate John Yamrus in the highest category. Firstly he writes of the people, animals, and events in his life, with humour, passion, and even anger; with irony, smiles, and compassion. He shines his lamp on his world, and makes that world universal.

Secondly he does all this with a remarkable economy of style. But unlike many who make their minimalistic style poems curt, he manages to cause his to flow. The poems fall down the page with grace and read with deceptive ease, painted in plain language with strong brush strokes. He makes it look easy; craftsmanship of fine quality.

I feel no need to go further with this, and refrain from inserting any particular poem. John Yamrus has been writing for many years, and just gets better and better. The proof is in the pudding, as they say, but there's nothing

stodgy in this one. Just read and enjoy his work, and I warrant you'll be beguiled by his subtle simplicity, sharp insight; his honesty, his humour and his truly unique voice.

– Milner Place, author of *Caminante* (Wrecking Ball Press, 2003)

right around the ninety minute mark

the poetry reading
got nuts.

it was one of those
blog-talk radio
things

and there were
four of us,

all on the phone
from wherever
we were,

and,
(like i said)
right around the
ninety minute
mark

the wine and beer
kicked in,

and Plath,
(still on the phone)
ran out of
smokes,

so,
he went
to a mini-market,

and,
in the lot
he sees this girl
who was kinda cute
and he starts talking to her...

“hey,
you like poetry?
i’m on the radio right now.

you wanna
hear some poems?”

and he
puts her
on the phone,

and
Carstens
starts reading,

and you can hear Plath
in the background
trying to talk her
boyfriend

out of decking him.

and
when she
hands the phone back,

Plath
says to us:

“i’m gonna grab another.”

and
he finds this
old juice-head
sitting in the lot,
and Hardung reads him
one about his junkie days,

and the old guy’s almost in tears,
when he hands back the phone,
saying:

“god bless ya,
man.

god bless
ya.”

that’s just the way

it goes.

sometimes
you're lucky
and find the poem.

and, sometimes
it finds
you.

that was when she went

absolutely bat-shit crazy
on him,

throwing things,
kicking the walls,
sometimes even
setting his
clothes
on fire.

she didn't do it
very often,
but,

when
she did,

it
sure was
something.

for seventeen years
he kept his
mouth
shut,

and

put up
with it.

if you
asked him

he'd say
he always will.

besides,
it could have been worse.

she could have
married

someone
else.

every year

someone
sends me
an entry form
for the local
Poet Laureate competition.

unable
to throw the thing out,
but unwilling to co-operate,
i take ten minutes
and fill out the form,

sending in
the required
number of entries,

all the while
making sure
that each and every poem
is about hemorrhoids,
a hair on the tip of my nose,
bad breath
or my dog
taking a dump in the yard.

i know the poems
won't be what they want,

but they
just might be

precisely
what they
need.

the other day he

said to
me:

the
only
subjects
i have left
are sex, drinking
and the writer's life.

and
i'm sorry
to have to say

i'm now writing
better than
ever.

i spent the night

sitting in my chair
listening to this
set of tapes
i bought
earlier
in the
day...

old radio shows from the
1940s and '50s...

hardboiled
detectives.

Philip Marlowe,

Boston Blackie,

Johnny Dollar.

tough guys
who

knew their way
around a knife
and a gun
and a

dame.

men who
talked fast
and walked slow...

men of wit and
courage

and
charm.

for three hours
i listened...

then,
tired,
i finally took
one last slug of beer
and walked out onto the back porch,
hoping that someone
would be stupid
or foolish

or desperate
enough

to try and
sneak up

and slug
me

from
behind.

about John Yamrus

John Yamrus has been a fixture on the poetry scene since 1970. He's published eighteen volumes of poetry, two novels, and his poetry is widely published in magazines around the world. His poems have been taught at both the high school and the college level and selections of his work have been translated into several languages, including Spanish, Swedish, Italian, French, Japanese and Romanian. His work has been described by the great Milner Place as "... a blade made from smooth honest steel, with the sharpest of edges."

