

Reviews

Homeschooling, A Family's Journey; ECOpreneuring, Putting Purpose and the Planet Before Profits; Nation Beat, Legends of the Preacher; The Paul Carlon Octet, Roots Propaganda; 1000 Journals; A Jihad for Love; Orgasmic Birth; A Man Named Pearl

BOOKS

Homeschooling: A Family's Journey

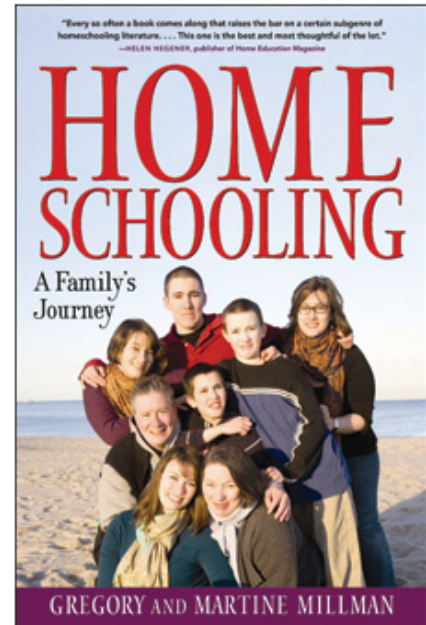
By Gregory and Martine Millman
(Penguin Group)

When one of the Millman's kindergarten-aged daughters used her yellow and green crayons to color apples just like the fruit she saw at the farmer's market, she was given bad marks. According to her teacher, apples were red. After several similar incidents, the Millmans decided to follow in the footsteps of thousands of Americans and homeschool their ever-expanding brood, which eventually grew to six kids. Thus began their attempt to create a classroom out of everything from their kitchen (where they tasted maple syrup after talking about tapping trees and boiling sap) to an overseas vacation (what better place to study Renaissance history than wandering the cobblestone paths of Florence?), through techniques that invited imagination and curiosity. The Millman family's flexible approach to education, recounted here with humor and bulleted takeaway points, is not, as some may believe, only a "choice for communal hippies, separatist Christians, [or] paranoid libertarians." It's a chance for parents — yes, anyone can do this — to give each "student" personalized attention, encouragement and love in the midst of math problems, sporting events and vocabulary words. — *Jenny Rough*

ECOpreneuring: Putting Purpose and the Planet Before Profits

By John Ivanko and Lisa Kivirist
(New Society Publishers)

If ever you've dreamed of giving up the nine-to-five grind to travel your true-blue path, integrating life and work and art and travel and childrearing and do-gooding and, and, and, then ECOpreneuring could be a dangerous read. It might just inspire you to actually act on your wildest dreams. Ivanko and Kivirist, who are married, and whose own path led them from middle-class upbringing to conventionally respectable educations to posh jobs at an ad agency, both took a sharp turn when they reached thirty. Reevaluating their values and how well their way of being in the world was living up to those values, they decided to get out of town, open up a B&B (run with renewable energy), grow an organic garden, consult, write and homeschool their kid. Their book is part manifesto — highlighting what's problematic about business-as-usual dogma — and part manual for readers serious about opting out of the rat race and finally living the life they thought they could only dream about. — *Eric Larson*



MUSIC

Nation Beat

Legends of the Preacher

(Modiba)

In one of the more interesting mergers of styles, Brooklyn-based sextet Nation Beat takes a hard look at two regional sounds — Brazil's percussive maracatu and New Orleans' second line rhythm (an American derivative of the Afro-Cuban son clave) — and creates an album as impressive as its highly regarded live shows. This is dance music in its primal, untainted state, pulling from various music styles — both celebratory and devotional. Liliana Araujo's powerful presence as front woman casts a spell atop an assortment of Latin percussion as well as Skye Steele's excellent violin playing, which gives the record a Cajun/bluegrass feel. The festive "A Cowboy in Brazil" exemplifies this fusion, opening with a minute of lap steel guitar and country harmonies before the congas set the tone for an electric guitar rampage reminiscent of the other side of New Orleans: hard-edged blues. If every house of worship featured a preacher of this magnitude, church would be a lot more worthwhile. — *Derek Beres*

The Paul Carlon Octet

Roots Propaganda

(Deep Tone)

While the connections that saxophonist/flautist Paul Carlon attempts on *Roots Propaganda* are in no way new — merging the jazz idiom with Latin and African roots music — he brings them together to smashing results. Launching into the classic "Canto de Xangô," Carlon sets a tone that remains for the duration of the album: focused, passionate and sonically pleasing. His tenor saxophone playing is perhaps only bested by William Baush drumming on "Mambo pa' Kanoa." When the horns and bass drop out of vocalist Christelle Durandy's "Backstory," her sensual voice takes center stage atop a light attack of drums, making the imminent build to the octet all the more worthwhile. Full circle, she closes out the last minute of the album in "Yorubonics," another attempt by Carlon to connect with the Orishas the best he can while straddling jazz worlds. — *D.B.*

DVD

1000 Journals

Written and directed by Andrea Kreuzhage

1000journalsfilm.com

Even in the wired world — the world of pure information and the disembodied networks along which that information travels — there are those of us who yearn for things tangible, things that carry expressions from one person to another through their pure, solid actuality. Undoubtedly this yearning is what made the idea for the 1000 Journals Project so irresistible to Someguy — a San Francisco based artist — in 2000. Over a two-year period, Someguy released into the world 1,000 journals with this declaration: "This is an experiment and you are part of it" and instructions to contribute, pass it on and return it when it was filled. Some journals he left on park benches, others were specifically requested through the project's website, and all of them, he hoped, would find their way back home. As of the beginning of Kreuzhage's film, a strikingly seamless doc for a first-time filmmaker, only one journal was back in Someguy's hands. But, as the film proves by tracking down dozens of people who once had a journal (or still have a journal), the project was an astonishing success — not just as a venue for stories, expressed in words, painting, collage, but also as a catalyst for new stories and as a fascinating social document. — *E.L.*

A Jihad for Love

A film by Parvez Sharma

First Run Features

81 minutes

ajihadforlove.com

Homosexuality is almost uniformly condemned in the mainstream Islamic world, rendering a documentary film that explores the topic both necessary and risky. Thankfully, in the hands of Indian filmmaker Parvez Sharma, who is both Muslim and gay, the topic gets the careful treatment it deserves. *A Jihad for Love* profiles a handful of gay and lesbian Muslims — living, as refugees, in Paris and in Turkey en route to Toronto; living in India, in South Africa and several other countries — each of whom is attempting to resolve the seemingly inherent conflict between their sexuality and their fervent religious faith. Avoiding the easy way out, which would have resulted in a film whose characters abandoned the faith altogether, Sharma has chosen subjects who go toe-to-toe with their creator — questioning, interpreting and arguing, but never doubting. The result is a tenderhearted and, at times, troubling film that is content to ask more questions than it answers. — *E.L.*

Orgasmic Birth

A film by Debra Pascali-Bonaro

87 minutes

orgasmicbirth.com

Nowadays, many view childbirth as a feat of endurance, a nine-month marathon culminating in contractional torture. Mothers exchange pre-epidural tales of terror with the expectant as if they were Quint and Hooper swapping scar stories in *Jaws* to horrify Police Chief Brody. Never fear, *Orgasmic Birth* makes it safe to break water again; the movie demonstratively reclaims the titular miracle of life as a glorious, sensual rite of passage. Through the intimately-shot deliveries of eleven disparate couples and the expert testimony of natural birth advocates, authors and obstetrician/gynecologists — including Ina May Gaskin, Christine Northrup, Marsden Wagner and Robbie Davis-Floyd — we are reminded that the act of having a baby can be as sexual as the act of conceiving the child. Just dimming the hospital lights can set a more romantic mood. And, surely, the blessed, blissed-out expression of one tub-soaking woman in labor convinces; her climactic accouchement is as transcendent an experience as one can have in a theater without wearing a raincoat. Occasionally, director Debra Pascali-Bonaro loses focus, but never sight of the big picture: Childbirth is inherently erotic, and labor is the ultimate coming attraction. — *Warren Etheredge*

A Man Named Pearl

Director: Scott Galloway and Brent Pierson

78 minutes

amannamedpearl.com

Divine inspiration tops formal education. Pearl Fryar — the eponymous star and subject of this sweet-spirited documentary — is not blessed with a horticulture degree and yet, the simple, self-taught gardener is amongst America's foremost topiary artists. Perhaps it is because he was never taught how to prune "right" that he can magically transform bushes and trees, bending them to his will, shaping them with his shears in defiance of accepted norms. Perhaps it's because Mr. Fryar doesn't know how plants are supposed to behave, that he can retrain them to grow to new heights and to be trimmed into incredible sights. Yes, his garden must be seen to be believed; precisely why folks from all over flock to Bishopville, South Carolina. Of course, the humble, hard-working gentleman was not accepted, at first, within the predominantly white, relatively affluent rural community. Initially, they doubted whether a black man could properly keep up his garden. Oh, how wrong they were. Jackie Robinson declared "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." Heeding his hero's words, Pearl Fryar has touched many, crafting art from nature while thoroughly reshaping others' prejudices. — *W.E.*