

## Choices

# Life Splits For Working Stiffs Who Pursue Art

By BILL CESSATO  
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**A**nthony DeRosa is changing. The 24-year-old from Fairfax loses his business suit and dons jeans and a simple T-shirt. He inserts a silvery bullhorn-shaped object, known as a labret piercing, directly beneath his lower lip—where rests a full goatee.

Then he loses his name. Anthony, who by day serves as an information management specialist for the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators in Northwest Washington, becomes Tony, lead singer in a heavy-metal band, Three Faces of Eve.

For DeRosa, the group's name, which refers to the 1957 Joanne Woodward film about a woman suffering with multiple personalities, captures his lifestyle perfectly.

"It has so many meanings to me, the most prominent being the way that I have compared my daily life to multiple personality disorder—having the professional face, the rebellious face of the artist and the face behind the scenes that orchestrates both lives. . . . The face of the shadow," DeRosa said.

Though exciting, maintaining such a multifaceted life can be a challenge, he said. "The hardest thing is when the two lives bleed into each other. When I go to work and have a stressful day, that affects my show performance that evening. Or when I stay out at a show too late, I feel groggy at work the next day. The most difficult task is keeping one persona at bay, while the other is working."

Around the Washington region, many creative types stretch themselves thin trying to live out these diverse personas.

In the style of Wallace Stevens—the Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet who was also vice president of Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company in Connecticut—lobbyists rock out as band members, scientists pursue fashion design, and librarians dream of movie stardom.

Rebecca Villarreal, 34, a Georgetown University graduate and a Dupont Circle resident, appreciated DeRosa's band name and its applicability to her own life.

Each day, she manages community service programs for AARP's retired educator division. But in her free time she writes and teaches poetry. Most recently, her work appeared on the spoken-word CD "Gargoyles 46" and in the anthology "D.C. Poets Against the War." This fall she's teaching a poetry course for middle-schoolers at the Writer's Center in Bethesda.

"The reality of working inside of an office is that it's very regimented," Villarreal said. "And you need to perform on a certain level that's about delivering results that are driven by an organization's priorities."

"But when you're doing your art, you're driven by this force that's part of you, and that's not really regulated by time. So having to carve out a certain amount of time every day for work or having to



BY ROBERT A. REEDER—THE WASHINGTON POST

**Office worker by day, rocker by night Tony DeRosa cuts loose with his band, Three Faces of Eve.**

leave your home regularly for work travel limit the energy for your craft."

Yet Villarreal's job offers financial stability.

"You're not going to be able to explore your art to the level that you want, with the intensity that you want to, if you take a day job," she said. "But at the same time, if you choose straight art all the time, you have those day-to-day anxieties about food, rent and health insurance. That detracts from your art as well."

Edward Miller, 25, agrees.

A registered lobbyist and the congressional research director for Cauthen and Associates in Washington, Miller plays acoustic guitar and sings in a nascent rock band, usually at the Grog & Tankard in upper Georgetown.

"As a function of paying rent [and] wanting real security for myself and for a family one day . . . my survival and convenience instinct is to go with pensions and 401(k)'s over VW vans, if you get my drift," said Miller, who studied public policy at Duke University.

To Miller, advantages and drawbacks emerge out of his Jekyll-and-Hyde work life.

"If I am at a lobbying function with folks who are into rock music, we can shift from blase political speak to Radiohead and Wilco shows going on in Vancouver," said the Dupont Circle resident. ". . . It can be a good way to show whomever you're working with that you are a whole person and have an identity beyond congressional research director."

"On the flip side of that coin, it can pull at you when you need to be doing job-related things. There is nothing worse than sitting in a committee hearing on the future of 'telecom spectrum auction' and not being able get a certain song that you are working on out of your head."

Yet Miller says the greatest tight spots for him, as an aspiring singer, exist outside of the office building.

"The major challenges that I encounter musically in this town are lack of practice space, venues that cater to narrow genres and finding good drummers," Miller says.

John Hanshaw, 36, of Thomas Circle, noticed a similar lack of venue for area filmmakers who wanted one event where they could both show their work and network with others.

Hanshaw, whose day job involves ensuring that companies who make DVD players pay royalties to patent holders, also serves as president and self-proclaimed "top monkey" at Monkey Biz Films, a local independent production company.

This spring, he decided to remedy the venue sit-

uation and developed the Guerrilla Film Fest, which premiered in June at Visions Cinema and ran again last month at the Goethe-Institut. The fest brings together filmmaking hopefuls for a night of screenings and schmoozing.

"I think networking is crucial, but most don't realize it," Hanshaw says. "Many artists have tremendous creativity and talent, but frequently they don't know how to bring their work to an audience. They don't know how to get it distributed, seen or published. It's tough, let's face it, to do those things."

At least one person has no trouble finding a place for her work—Holly Tominack, 32, a performance artist living in Baltimore's Little Italy neighborhood.

"It's the great thing about performance art," says Tominack—"you can act like a goon anywhere."

When her official day ends on the information desk at the Enoch Pratt Free Library's central branch, Tominack might be found belly-dancing, flying from a trapeze or doing a synchronized swimming routine.

She acted recently in the Fluid Movement performance group's "The Go-Go Pirate Show," a retelling of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island" with a go-go dance theme. The show was performed on board the USS Constellation, a 19th-century ship docked at Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

And one of her latest brainstormers, she said, is to dress up like Cinderella, zoom around the Inner Harbor wearing one glass slipper, look nervously over her shoulder and ask passersby if the strange man is still following her.

Though her husband, Joe Bienvenu, a Johns Hopkins psychiatrist, helps support her creative passions, Tominack said she holds down her full-time job to pay for the expensive vintage costumes and accessories that go along with her acts.

Like others who work full-time jobs to help subsidize their art, Tominack gets tired.

"By the time I get out of work, and I do have the time to put together a one-woman show or put together my portfolio, then I have to perform the functions of everyday life—like eating and sleeping," she said.

Despite that stress, Tominack enjoys her pursuit of a multiple-personality existence.

"Most people are not who they truly are in their 9-to-5 jobs," she said. "I think that people would be happier if their jobs allowed them to be themselves—inherently creative and playful and quirky and whimsical and strange."

Said Tominack: "It's a lot of fun being me."



BY STEPHANIE K. KUYKENDAL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



BY CECILIA MANDRILE

**John Hanshaw (left, with Molly Van Campen) hasn't let his day job interfere with his filmmaking. Rebecca Villarreal signs a book after a poetry reading.**