

A new voice for China's news

Durham man provides alternate take

BY COURTNEY ROLLER
STAFF WRITER

In an effort to circumvent the sanctions on Chinese journalists, a Durham man, Weican "Watson" Meng, runs a massively popular site for news about China, supported by contributions from average citizens, many of whom conceal their identities for protection.

Restrictions placed on Chinese media outlets by the Chinese government censor a wide range of topics, and put journalists at risk of losing their jobs or being incarcerated.

In 2000, Meng, 42, started the site, called Boxun.com, (pronounced "bow shwin"), which includes coverage of top news, entertainment, finance and travel stories and by Meng's count gets 500,000 daily views.

Meng, who graduated from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, is both the chief editor and manager of Boxun.com.

"What is true or not is whatever the government says," Meng said of

the situation in China. "It's important to have a different voice."

Meng, born in Hebei, China, moved to the United States in 1996. A few years later he noticed a dearth of news about China, and created the site.

Meng said the people who write for the site find it encouraging to have an outlet.

"We cover their story and then they start to have hope about their lives," Meng said.

Bob Dietz, the Asia Program Coordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said that there is both an official and unofficial system of guidance for journalists.

"People who turn to the internet and post on sites like Boxun.com are people who know that they can't get into print," Dietz said.

"They have no other alternatives." Dietz explained that many people in China do not have access to Boxun.com due to a governmental ban.

But people can use proxy systems to view the site, and some read arti-

BOXUN ONLINE

- ▶ www.boxun.com original version
- ▶ www.boxun.us English translations
- ▶ www.boxun.tv video clips

cles in their e-mail, which Dietz said is the most common method.

Boxun.com prides itself on "independence" and "objectivity," though Meng realizes that this might not always be the case.

"We try to be independent but it's difficult and therefore we rely on citizen journalists," Meng said. "Many of them — they have their opinions."

Lack of credibility is one of the drawbacks of independent forms of media, said UNC journalism professor Paul Jones.

"The problem is always to what degree is this journalism and to what degree is it accurate?" he said.

When it comes to sites that rely on citizen journalists like Boxun.com, Jones said site managers can build credibility by taking mea-

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WEICAN "WATSON" MENG,
BOXUN.COM CREATOR

sures like citing sources and allowing reader comments, which serve as a means of fact checking.

People who post on Boxun.com can redact their names and the English version does not allow readers to post comments on stories.

Meng, for all his efforts, does not see himself as a political activist. "I consider myself a businessperson and a newspaper," he said. Meng said he hopes people use Boxun.com, among other news sources, to get "the whole story."

"We work hard. We earn little," Meng said. "It's very rewarding to see that we do have an impact."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

TALK ABOUT A BUMPY RIDE



DTHALLAN SHARPE

At approximately 10:40 a.m. Tuesday, a man driving down Cameron Avenue collided with a stone and chain barrier. The car ripped the barrier from its cement base, causing the car to flip over completely. The driver then crawled out of the car, apparently unharmed.

Local artists drop summer albums

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS
DIVERSIONS EDITOR

Summer's here, and with it comes lazy days by the pool and cookouts on back patios throughout the Triangle.

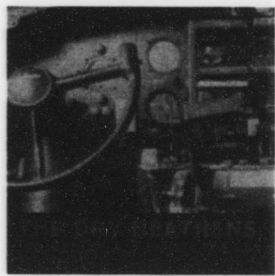
And what would either of those endeavors be without some great music?

The local music scene certainly doesn't take the summer off, with releases scheduled from some of the area's heaviest bands. Granted, most wouldn't make for the best pool-side jams, but, hey, maybe you have the type of friends that want to crank things up.

Here is an incredibly subjective, and completely incomplete, list of the records that we at Divisions think will be worth your money this summer.

All of these share a penchant for amazingly personal power and are the types of discs that will inspire emotion, whether it be the youthful abandon of The Dry Heathens, the cathartic power of Bellafeia or the beautiful guitar of Jenks Miller.

The Dry Heathens



Durham band The Dry Heathens is set to release its debut long player, *First Contact With Ground*, a collection of raucous punky gems that call to mind all the debauchery of The Replacements with a hint of Uncle Tupelo twang.

It is the type of record that celebrates all of the defiance of youth, delivered with an amazingly palpable sense of place and time.

The record will see its official release May 31 at a CD release party

at Durham's James Joyce Pub also featuring local powerhouses Red Collar and Dirty Little Heaters.

Bellafeia



Although *Cavalcade*, the sophomore LP from powerful Chapel Hill trio Bellafeia, has already been celebrated with a CD release party, it doesn't hit shelves until June 3.

It is a powerful release, to say the least, combining Heather McEntire's amazingly cathartic vocals with her heavy guitar.

The band's equally powerful bottom end is provided by recent addition Eddie Sanchez, who contributes to the more meaty sound of this record, which follows the band's more minimal, but equally incredible, debut EP, *Family Tree*.

It is a force to be reckoned with.

Jenks Miller



Jenks Miller, of Horseback and Un Deux Trois among others, will release a solo LP titled *Approaching the Invisible Mountain* on June 24 at Nightlight in Chapel Hill.

Billed by label Holidays for Quince as an "improvisational guitar record," *Approaching the Invisible Mountain* sees a departure from the gorgeously dreamy noise of Horseback's 2007 release, *Impale Golden Horn*.

Miller's latest work sees him working his electric guitar for all it's worth, stretching its capabilities far left of center without ever forsaking listenability. And that has become Miller's reputation, making the seemingly avant-garde accessible.

It wouldn't be a stretch to call Miller one of the area's most versatile and innovative musicians.

Contact the Divisions Editor at dive@unc.edu

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Easley panel calls for longer e-mail storage

Critics say mass deleting occurs

BY DEVIN ROONEY
STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

The panel assembled by Gov. Mike Easley to review public records law regarding e-mails made its recommendation to the governor Tuesday.

The panel recommended that Gov. Easley extend the storage period for e-mails from 30 days to 5 years, and that he require all state employees to complete public records training.

The panel proposed a system for data back-up that would also be archived to make the records searchable and more readily available to the public.

But critics say the plan falls short because it doesn't require employees to save all e-mail correspondence related to state business, and employees will still be able to delete e-mails that could be significant to the public.

Sue Wilson, president of the Sunshine Center at Elon University and the chief of the North Carolina and South Carolina Associated Press bureau, is among those critics.

"I'm disappointed that they did not recommend policy changes that would have better protected e-mails from the kind of deleting that some in the administration

have told us has gone on rather routinely," Wilson said.

"They're not their documents, they're our documents and whether they're on e-mail or on paper they are documents that belong to the public."

State Auditor Leslie Merritt wrote to Franklin Freeman, the chair of the panel, stating that e-mails aren't just important for the general public.

"They tend to confirm the occurrence of actual events and provide a unique window into the operation of state government," Merritt said in the letter.

"E-mails serve as information in the audit trail," he added.

The issue of saving e-mails has brought to light a fundamental disagreement about what constitutes a public record.

Gov. Easley has said that documents without lasting administrative value do not have to be saved.

This argument has been challenged by 10 N.C. news organizations who filed a lawsuit in April, alleging that Gov. Easley has willfully violated public records law.

Easley filed a motion on May 13 asking that the suit be thrown out because it fails to prove that the records exist, and that the demands of the suit are too far-reaching.

This motion means the suit could ultimately end up in court.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

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