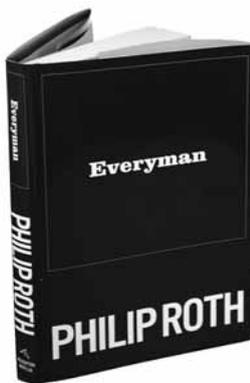


What's on the bookshelves today?



NEXT WEEK'S BOOK RELEASES

- 'The Husband' by Dean Koontz (Bantam) \$27
- 'Dark Side of the Moon' by Sherrilyn Kenyon - Dark-Hunter series \$19.95
- 'Book of the Dead' by Douglas J. Preston and Lincoln Child (Warner) \$25.95
- 'Cowboy Logic' by Kinky Friedman (St. Martin's) \$17.95



POLITICS AND PROSE BEST-SELLERS

FICTION

1. Digging to America
2. **Everyman**
3. Suite Francaise
4. Black Swan Green
5. The Sea
6. Absurdistan
7. Elements of Style
8. Blue Shoes and Happiness
9. The March
10. Through a Glass, Darkly

NONFICTION

1. Iran Awakening
2. Book by Book
3. Clemente
4. My Life in France
5. You Must Set Forth at Dawn
6. Oracle Bones
7. The Mighty and the Almighty
8. American Theocracy
9. Politics Lost
10. Mayflower

Q&A WITH A LOCAL WRITER

New indie press launches in style

By Robin Tierney
Special to The Examiner

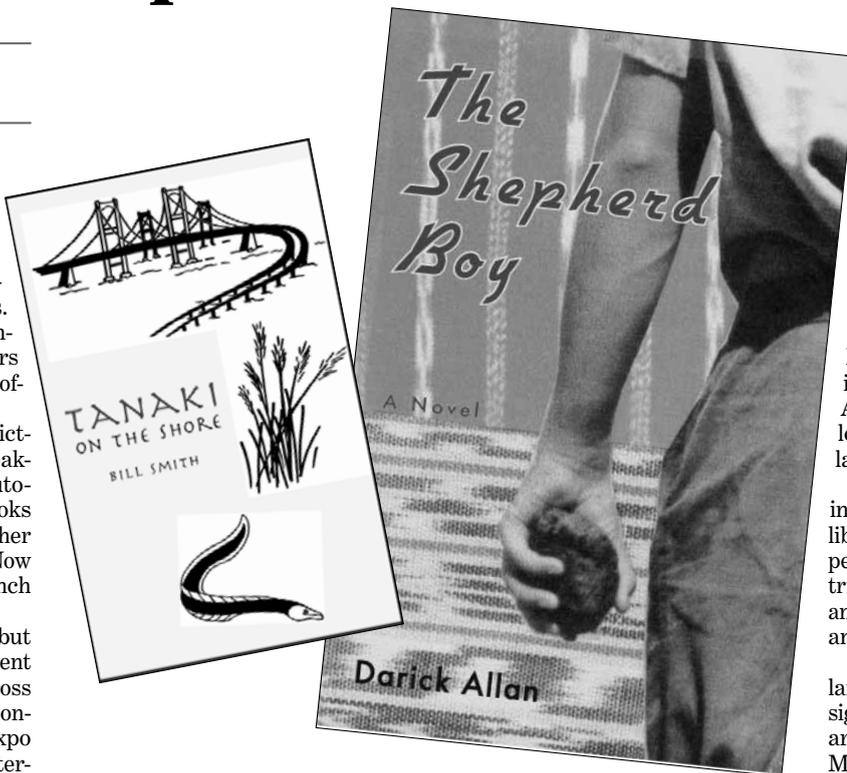
It was anything but a dark and stormy night. Music pumped as visitors filled three floors of the Warehouse gallery, enjoying brews and views of the latest spectacles from local artists. Convivial models strolled in vintage fashions; the usual scenesters mingled with bookbag-toting out-of-towners.

Beneath a colossal canvas depicting a biblical-Renaissance-freak-show mash-up, two authors autographed copies of their new books while the artist signed posters of her apocalyptic, mesmerizing work. Now this is how to throw a book launch party.

The launch celebrated the debut of Washington's newest independent publisher, Portal Press. Being across the street from the Washington Convention Center during BookExpo America — the nation's biggest literary event — Warehouse offered the best piece of real estate around.

"It's going great," beamed Portal chief Darick Allan as he signed the 50th copy of "The Shepherd Boy." During his first day on the Expo floor, librarians, independent booksellers and Washington-Baltimore region book lovers were exceptionally supportive.

In his company's first two books, cross-cultural differences drive the



action in unexpected directions. Allan's own novel, "The Shepherd Boy," was informed by experiences growing up while traveling the world as a diplomat's son. The storyline: While in Ecuador, a young American boy suffers brutal consequences when reacting to what he views as a shepherd's mistreatment of animals.

Bethesda writer Bill Smith's ecological thriller, "Tanaki On the Shore," follows a biologist on Mary-

land's Eastern Shore as he uncovers a plot involving the destruction of wetlands.

Having spent much of his youth in Latin America, Allan has lived the last 30 years in the District, transitioning from journalism to fine art management.

"When I wrote the first version of 'Shepherd Boy' 10 years ago, I had an agent," he notes. Eventually he chose not to "assign the fate of his book to

someone else."

During the last two years, Allan researched and planned, striking a gold mine of insight at last year's BookExpo America in New York. The timing was right for launching Portal. While few independent publishers work in the area, the Internet has made quality publishing easier and more affordable. He chose a printing company in Michigan, but has received solicitations from as far as India. And Allan knew plenty of imaginative local artists happy to help with the launch at Warehouse.

The new publisher is now working on deals with Eastern Shore libraries and mid-Atlantic independent bookstores. An Internet distribution system will offer discounts and waive shipping/handling fees for an introductory period.

"This is a very local venture," Allan says. The book covers were designed by Emily Tellez, whose poster art is available through Portal, and Mike Semyan, who pulled together the launch party art show, "Different Directions," on view through June 5.

"I'd like our books to reflect the sense of wonder meeting reality that you see in Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and Experience,'" Allan says. "There's something startling in everyone's life, and a story, whether fiction or not, should give a sense of how unique every person's experience is of being alive."

Mixing politics and religion

Review of Michael Kazin's "A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan." (Knopf; 374 pages; \$30)

By Stephen Goode
Special to The Examiner

In late June 1912, the Democrats held their national presidential nominating convention in Baltimore. It was a tumultuous affair (fistfights broke out among delegates) and one of the most important political events of the 20th century.

William Jennings Bryan, three times the Democratic Party's failed candidate for president — in 1896, 1900 and 1908 — dominated the con-

vention.

Though not a candidate himself, "The Great Commoner," as he was known to millions of ardent admirers, made a passionate speech urging the Democratic delegates never to forget "the plain every day citizen, who earns his bread in the sweat of his brow."

It was a standard Bryan oratory. For decades, he had lambasted the evils of great wealth and of the big corporations in speech after speech, and proclaimed his love for the common man and woman.

But in 1912, in Baltimore, those familiar themes resonated strongly, pushing the Democrats further left than the party had ever been and setting the stage for what that party



became later in the century, the advocate and creator of the welfare state.

The Convention nominated Woodrow Wilson, who went on to win the presidency, in great part thanks to a Republican Party divided between Theodore Roosevelt and the incumbent President, William Howard Taft.

Bryan served as Wilson's first secretary of state. In the excellent and very readable "A Godly Hero," Georgetown University history professor Michael Kazin offers a detailed look at Bryan and his times, in so many ways different from our own.

Bryan's political career was not a cakewalk. His reputation suffered

severe damage (unfairly Kazin believes) because he led the attack on teaching Darwinism at the famous Scopes Trial in 1925 in Tennessee.

And for many contemporary Americans, Bryan's intense Christian faith, which The Great Commoner spoke about constantly and acted upon in every aspect of his life, may be difficult to comprehend.

But Kazin deftly handles all the aspects of Bryan's extraordinary biography, and shows how much later Democrats such as FDR and Lyndon Baines Johnson owed Bryan, who was the first major American political figure to call for deep government involvement in the lives of its citizens, from cradle to grave.

If you liked David McCullough's biography, "John Adams" because of the many-sided and readable account it gives of the second president, you'll like Michael Kazin's "A Godly Hero."

AROUND TOWN

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

By Geoff Emerick and Howard Massey (Gotham Books; 387 Pages; \$26)

Just when it seemed that everyone who had any role in the rise and breakup of the Beatles had written a book or two, along comes a name familiar only to hardcore fans.

Luckily for the rest of us, Geoff Emerick is able to spin an entertaining tale of his life behind the control room dials during the Beatles' recording sessions at EMI's Abbey Road studio in London.

Emerick's story, as told in "Here, There and Everywhere," is a charming one, in a "Forrest Gump" sort of way. Hired at 15 by EMI, he started his career as an assistant engineer and found himself very much in the right place at the right time.

He was lucky enough to get tabbed to sit in on the first Beatles recording session in 1962 before being promoted to engineer at 19 and taking on a larger role in the most famous Beatles sessions, including "Revolver" and "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band."

Although Emerick is not as familiar as Beatles' producer George Martin, he makes a strong case that he, too, was integral to creating the band's sound that has become so well-known. Much of that required bending protocol and finding ways to create in the studio what band members heard in their heads.

Emerick's description of the lengths he traveled to meet the band's demands are engaging. He is adept also at breaking down the recording industry lingo into language that can be easily understood by those whose audio engineering skills don't extend far beyond knowing how to press "Play" on a CD player.

Emerick was the fly on the wall at these sessions, privy to the arguments, bursts of creativity and painstaking attention to musicianship that marked the Fab Four's recording career.

And while Emerick clearly enjoyed the band most during their heyday, his displeasure with their behavior toward the end — including the arrival of Yoko Ono — is clear. — *Associated Press*

