

# Think Global, Click Local

Lexington is, for a world capital, pretty small and well-hidden

By Kakie Urch

We are indeed — despite the (TM) claims of that burg in Florida — the Horse Capital of the World. And in some far-flung corners of the Internet, we are stake a pretty good claim as well. From well, right here.

As we go to press, Drew Curtis, the local founder of Fark.com takes his victory lap around Austin's South By Southwest Interactive after being nominated for a lifetime achievement Bloggie (10 years is a lifetime on the Internets, fer sure). Ace brought you the "Fark Turns 10" cover story of the humorous news aggregator site's 10th anniversary on Feb. 5.

It's time to shine the spotlight on some other local digital projects that reach that "world-class" standard, or at least are local Best of Show contenders.

This as an interactive endeavor. Let us know — through the Ace Blog comments ([aceweekly.blogspot.com](http://aceweekly.blogspot.com)) or on Twitter (@profkakie) about which locally produced sites are the best. This is a list starter, like sourdough. Not "The List." Add to it. Aggregate. You know, Internet it up.

Oh, and yes, we are very, very aware that the Ace Weekly site is not even close to being on this list. (20 years is a lifetime in the alt weekly biz, fer sure). But it will earn its spot, with the 20th Anniversary re-launch of a new site, currently under construction by an eminently local, award-winning design firm. (Just use [aceweekly.blogspot.com](http://aceweekly.blogspot.com) in the meantime.)

What follows, is a starter list:

## You Ain't No Picasso

[www.youaintnopicasso.com](http://www.youaintnopicasso.com)

As the mainstream media tries to understand what it means when it says "Content is king!" and hands out pink slips to those who produce it, this one man band shows us all. This site is not pretty. It ain't no Picasso. But it provides, for the significant alternative music fanbase, breaking news and tunes. Matt Jordan, a recent University of Kentucky Journalism and Telecommunications grad whom you also may recognize as the knowledgeable-but-NOT-snobby record store clerk at CD Central, is the conduit.

You don't know where he is, but there, the next morning, is the video, set list, mp3, photo and latest gossip from the Of Montreal tour across the U.S., the list of greatest covers ever done and favorite mp3s chosen by leading alt music

artists. Youaintnopicasso is often mentioned in the same breath as Brooklyn Vegan and Pitchfork, the king killer alt-music site of them all. One look at the advertisers and you know it's reaching the fans of this music that grows so next big thing on a little word of mouth. This week, Jordan ain't Picasso at the SXSW Music festival in Austin, Texas, so watch for that breaking on the site.

## The Bloodhorse

[www.bloodhorse.com](http://www.bloodhorse.com)

Google up any racehorse name, even the sometimes-ran registered with the Jockey Club as "Dancing Kakie," (don't ask, I won't tell), and the first thing the search engine serves up is The Bloodhorse. (That's what we call great SEO — Search Engine Optimization). Yes, again, content is king and this is where we keep the world's major repository of thoroughbred racing and breeding news. We make it right down the street. The Bloodhorse, like many sites in the racing industry, knows how to use a phat database that holds what its reader is looking for and have the ... horses to serve it up fast. Considering the importance of bloodlines to the game, this would be enough. But [www.bloodhorse.com](http://www.bloodhorse.com) also has absolutely up-to-the-minute breaking horseracing news and deep significant feature stories that can only be produced in an environment made up of experts who are working the digital angle well.

## Keeneland

[www.keeneland.com](http://www.keeneland.com)

Fast information, well-presented on the entries, odds, activities and promotions at the world's greatest racecourse. Complete with daily video, expert analysis, booking information and features. (Spring meet starts Apr. 3.)

## Digital Chumps

[www.digitalchumps.com](http://www.digitalchumps.com)

This review site, with a heavy emphasis on the latest in video games and movies and a rating on [Gamerankings.com](http://Gamerankings.com), is run by local geeks who take their gaming, anime, Manga, iPhone apps and other elements of digital life seriously. Straightforward and fast-loading, the site offers numerical reviews and is extremely well-served by the gaming industry and others. The result: lots of credible reviews, fast about products, along with a well-edited newsfeed. Nathan Stevens, a UK media

employee, Final Cut Pro expert and former news producer, leads his team on annual coverage outings to CES in Las Vegas and E3 in California, posting breaking information in real time from these key trade shows for geeks and gamers.

## gotreadgo

[www.gotreadgo.com](http://www.gotreadgo.com)

Taking some of his artistic cues from the late photographer Ralph Eugene Meatyard, who also based his world-acclaimed practice here in Lexington, the photographer known as Tread runs a stunning "toy camera" photoblog called Go Tread Go. The site has been honored at least three times with a Photobloggie Award, chosen out of all the photoblogs in the world as the best in particular categories — including best writing, for the brilliant, fast-paced and sometimes off-color commentary that accompanies photos created with cameras named Diana, Holga and Polaroid, to name a few. Organizing hundreds of daily images/comments across several years, the site presents some of the best in the fine art photography being shot with the simple cameras that use film.

Tread's technically amazing images range from those that show his sons as they grow through boyhood to those that capture the very South of it all that we live every day in Lexington to those that are laugh-out-loud gaudy, ironic and perfect in every way. Produced by the photographer who is a columnist for lo-fi photography "Light Leaks" magazine and was also half of the great "Brains on Film" Web site (an original *Ace* column in the 80s and 90s) and television program team, the site also offers links to strong sites run by Tread's toy photography peers, including Warren Harold SP, Bill Vaccaro, Ed Wenn, Susan Burnstine, Aline Smithson and Rebecca Pendel.

## Tonic, WUKY's online arts and music magazine

[www.uky.org/tonic.html](http://www.uky.org/tonic.html)

Produced by Kopana for the local NPR station at University of Kentucky, this site combines the best of an online magazine with the access provided by WUKY-FM to the types of musical, theatre and aesthetic artists whose work is world-class. And the site is truly multimedia. It features a weekly in-depth audio interview that becomes one of the 50 NPR podcasts offered nationwide. (And the site contains a great back catalog with some of your favorite artists who have performed locally or have local shows). Video elements, images and links to WUKY streaming round out the richness here.

## Barefoot and Progressive

[www.barefootandprogressive.blogspot.com](http://www.barefootandprogressive.blogspot.com)

When Hillary Clinton was still in the race and standing in Frankfort at a rally, I got the whole story in real time and with full description of plaid sport-coatage in Palm Springs, CA on this blog. They were, aeons ago, and before "Cover It Live," live blogging her last ditch appearance at the Frankfort civic center. Of course, it was a story with an edge. Barefoot and Progressive announces that edge and its very Bluegrass orientation in its blog title, takes its political blogging seriously and knows its stuff. While very much on the left, the commentary is always based in strong local and politi-

cal knowledge. "Jim Bunning sends local belles to their fainting couches," was the headline on the Republican senator's recent use of expletives in front of the press corps. This, according to Barefoot and Progressive, "made the baby Jesus cry." Joe Sonka, who runs the blog, is now based in Washington, but keeps one bare foot firmly in the Bluegrass muck. (For balance, the more "moderate" and now-defunct [www.bluegrassreport.org](http://www.bluegrassreport.org) is another example

of Kentucky leading the way on a digital front — Mark Nichols' blog, which began as a prop for a particular candidate's view, evolved into a national example of how to channel minute-by-minute political content for the cognoscenti — and get federal election committee funding from major parties while doing it.) Barefoot and Progressive also offers one of the best listings of Kentucky's political blogs for those who like to click around.

#### LexGo

[www.kentucky.com/lexgo/](http://www.kentucky.com/lexgo/)

This cultural calendar site, created and run by the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, placed in the some of the most competitive digital media awards last year and the affiliated blogs below were also in the running. So while most of the Lexington-area digital leaders are the upstarts you'd imagine, this one is the classic mainstream media attempt to enter the infotainment biz ... done right. Building and maintaining a site like this, which is at once a muscular information gathering and information displaying database trying to serve the community that wants to get the word out and the community that wants to get the word, is difficult enough. But the Kentucky.com people have done it, with a fast site.

Then, the site is able to do what many of the "cookie cutter" newspaper calendar sites still struggle with: actually BE local. Someone is culling and editing and planning and positioning articles surrounding the calendar with real knowledge that we are a wonky, artsy, intellectual town with a taste for a truck-pull, a po' boy and a funnel cake, followed by a drag show and an avant-garde performance of the "Thriller" dance and some free jazz before church. The blogs produced by Rich Copley ("Copious Notes") and Walter Tunis ("The Musical Box") add to the local relevance.

(Yes, and it's on purpose that it's not emblazoned everywhere with "Herald-Leader." Consultants keep telling newspapers that they are so uncool that it hurts their reception to use their brand on their digital ventures.

#### Secretary of State Trey Grayson

[www.sos.ky.gov](http://www.sos.ky.gov)

Did you know that it is easier to find out who owns a particular corporation on the Internet in the Commonwealth of Kentucky than it is in the ever-so-Silicon HQ great state of California? It's true and it's been that way for years. The Secretary of State's office, first led by Jonathan Miller and now by Trey Grayson has one of the most digital forward offices in the Commonwealth for years. You can quickly digitally search for articles of incorporation information online, 24-7 and do other things, like register a business. In

California, you have to establish an account, send a request, wait three days, etc., just to find out who owns BlandTellingYouNothingCorporateName ABC, Inc.

Also, the Kentucky Secretary of State's office is the office that presides over elections, voting and election results. Every year, for more than a decade, Kentuckians have voted electronically, gone home, and gotten their results with lightning speed, either on the Web site or as tallied by the Web site and reported by electronic media. Every year, in California, they vote digitally, on paper, or in some combination of scratching out selections on the back of the injunction against the current maker of broken voting machines that are supposed to fix it all and singing their vote in the hopes that Simon doesn't humiliate them and then they go home and wait. And wait. (I will testify that as a newspaper editor, I routinely received the tallied vote of the Amish paper and pencil vote, carried by horse buggy to the nearest municipal building in Central Pennsylvania well before 10pm, the time we might start to look for the first digital returns in Riverside County, Calif.)

#### Kentucky Registry of Election Finance

<http://kref.ky.gov>

While the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance site is not the mightiest of them all for Election Finance ... that honor goes to the national and non-profit OpenSecrets.org site produced by the Center For Responsive Politics in Washington, it has been, for years, thanks to BopTrot, one of the best in the nation. When there's real corruption, you need a real big flashlight. The election finance and lobbying reporting reforms Kentucky brought into law following that scandal years ago have been well-followed by the professionals at KREF, who are also helpful to members of the public seeking information. High marks in political openness also to the Bill Tracker element of the Kentucky Legislature's Web site, to the addition of streaming video from the legislature to KET's longtime excellence online with its streaming of political returns and crucial shows like "Comment on Kentucky." While Kentucky politics is crazy, the work done on these sites make it truly a spectator sport.

#### Kentuckians for The Commonwealth

[www.kftc.org](http://www.kftc.org)

This site is a key information and action source for the group that has had such success in fighting, in a truly grassroots fashion, for Kentucky's environment, most recently against mountaintop removal and for enforcement of the Clean Water Act. It is updated very frequently, offers information, articles, links, legislative updates and accurate and timely information on legal decisions, protests and campaigns, all well cross-referenced on Facebook and e-mail blast lists. It's a model of a well-run, effective, non-profit, activist site. ■

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## Twitter = Transparency at LFUCG

Although setting up a blog has become as easy as sending an email, the occasional barrier to entry does still exist: time? design? maintenance?

Twitter removes every barrier, and every excuse for every Luddite with a phone.

Twitter is a 140 character "micro-blog" that can be used to send large groups of people regular updates.

It's hands on for publications (you'll find everyone from *Ace* to *Wall Street Journal* there), public servants (Congress doesn't know when to stop), and celebrities (that's NOT Tina Fey by the way).

Here's a sample "tweet" *Ace* posted last week: "Ace congratulates longtime friend and mentor Gurney Norman on his appt at KY Poet Laureate."

Toward the goal of improving transparency in local government, encourage your Urban County Council Members — and the Mayor, and all mayoral candidates — to maintain Twitter accounts.

They don't have to be great writers: it's 140 characters.

There's no design or maintenance involved — they can update from their phones; they don't even need a laptop.

The can't complain there's no time: it's 140 characters.

No one suggests we be allowed to invade their privacy. They don't need to tweet what they eat, or what they're wearing, or any stalker-friendly minute-by-minute whereabouts — just the stuff their constituents have a right to know: how they're voting; IF they're voting; and how they're spending.

Email your Council Member today. To email all council members, email [councilmembers@lfucg.com](mailto:councilmembers@lfucg.com) (or go to [LexingtonKY.gov](http://LexingtonKY.gov)) and ask them for transparency via Twitter.

You can also follow many *Ace* contributors/*Ace* friends via Twitter:

[twitter.com/aceweekly](https://twitter.com/aceweekly)

[twitter.com/ChefDaveO](https://twitter.com/ChefDaveO) (*Ace* food writer)

[twitter.com/TransformLex](https://twitter.com/TransformLex)

[twitter.com/Findkjt](https://twitter.com/Findkjt)

[twitter.com/Wyllie](https://twitter.com/Wyllie)

[twitter.com/ProfKakie](https://twitter.com/ProfKakie) (see Cover Story)

[twitter.com/RealityTruck](https://twitter.com/RealityTruck)

More are signing on everyday. ■



—Editor

([aceweekly.blogspot.com](http://aceweekly.blogspot.com) and [twitter.com/aceweekly](https://twitter.com/aceweekly))

## Honorable Mentions From Ace Readers

(submitted via Facebook and Twitter)

**Politics:** [NewMayor2010.com](http://NewMayor2010.com)

**Environment:** [GreenLex.org](http://GreenLex.org)  
(Rick Gersony's clearing house for local environmental efforts)

**Sports:** [SeaOfBlue.com](http://SeaOfBlue.com) and [KentuckySportsRadio.com](http://KentuckySportsRadio.com)

**[maryjeanwall.com](http://maryjeanwall.com)** Kim Thomas writes, "Of course, Mary Jean is an award winning Lexington journalist who was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize a couple of times, she's just a treasure trove of information about the world of Thoroughbred racing and she shares that on her website everyday in her most charming way."

**[hautemommastuff.com](http://hautemommastuff.com)** (fashion and shopping)

Cited as an example for Lexington: **[ILiveInLouisville.com](http://ILiveInLouisville.com)**

