

## A Storied Train

THEY HAD TALKED ABOUT IT FOR YEARS. Then early this year, Rod Siino who lives in Somerville sent a friend and fellow Emerson College graduate an e-mail saying, "Hey, so let's start that literary magazine we've been talking about."

And the friend, Rusty Barnes who lives in East Boston, replied, "Let's do it."

They planned a fiction magazine, put up some \$6,000 of their own money, and gathered 26 short stories for the premier issue. Last week copies arrived from the printer, heralding the birth of "Night Train." Siino came up with the title while listening to Oscar Peterson's version of the jazz classic with the same name.

As fiction editor, Barnes wants to publish a range of stories from realism to magical realism to writers whose work shows where fiction's future will be. He also wants to print fiction by writers who have self-published on the Internet. These writers win little respect for taking what seems like a tawdry road to publication. But Barnes says important writers are publishing in cyberspace, and he wants their work in Night Train.

The magazine is also a chance to honor established but lesser-known writers. Night Train's Richard Yates Short Story Award is a nod to Yates, a novelist and short-story writer whom other writers love but who remains obscure to many readers.

Now the challenge is to get the magazine to readers and start raising funds, since Siino and Barnes can't afford to bankroll another issue. There are two kickoff parties this week. And Barnes and Siino are working on getting the magazine into bookstores and writing grant requests for future issues.

Starting a literary magazine in a beeping, blaring world of computer games and music videos can seem like a dream of yesteryear. But Night Train promises to rumble through important territory.

Along with its older magazine colleagues such as Ploughshares and Agni, this new magazine insists on the importance of American literature and promotes writers who aren't just churning out blueprints for blockbuster movies. These magazines amplify small moments and the funny, twisted lives of families. Point of view and a distinct voice matter. Worlds are carefully sketched in paragraphs as in Paula J. Webb's story "Maracaibo," which begins:

"My mother never actually said out loud that it was my father who ate all that chocolate, but I was thirteen already and not completely in the dark about how serious a fat man from Oklahoma could be about needing to hunt down sweets at night."

A new literary magazine is a fragile endeavor. But it is as exciting as a well-thrown rock that punches a hole through the musty fortresses of the status quo.

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