

A celebration of humanity

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The unity of a town or neighborhood festival.

As summer begins to creep in, towns and neighborhoods across America both small and large will perpetuate an annual ritual: the town or neighborhood festival. I love these festivals. They're a celebration of what's best about humanity. In this part of the world, most seem to feature a band, fireworks, carnival rides, and mini donuts. Still, each gathering is representative of the town or the area they take place in, and provides an insight into who lives there, what they value, and how they like to party.

Today marks the beginning my town's festival, a week of music called the Homegrown Music Festival. Every year, the people of Duluth celebrate their shared love of music by having every musician in town perform over the course of a single week. Duluth isn't a large town, but that still works out to over 150 acts over 8 days. Both the number of spectators and the number of talented performers is humbling and amazing.

This month's issue features a look by Hillary Brenhouse at how (and where) muslim cab drivers in New York manage to pray in the midst of Manhattan traffic, called The Holy underground. Elena Rushing contemplates what the census and its racial reductiveness means for her child, in her piece Not enough boxes. Finally, Seiji Ishguro takes us to the islands of southeast Asia in Cebu, Philippines.

What I like best about town festivals is that they do manage to instill a sense of camaraderie, a sense of togetherness that so often seems to be lacking from our lives. As cities grow, and people become more and more fractured from their neighbors, these small gatherings remind us that even though we are Republicans and Democrats; Christians, Muslims, Jews, and atheists; black, white, Latina, and Indian; we can still find a way to party together. In those moments, we can cast aside our differences and remember instead how we are the same.